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Hotel or rented flat: A profile of purchasers of accommodation services in Warsaw

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ABSTRACT

The spreading of short-term flat rentals has brought about changes in the accommodation market, often seen as a threat to traditional accommodation providers. This is particularly true in large cities which have a considerable accommodation capacity and also a large stock of flats. The aim is to indicate to what extent short-term rentals are influencing the tourist accommodation market in Warsaw. The idea behind the study is the assumption that the differences revealed between those using hotels or such flats will provide an answer to the question of the influence of the latter on Warsaw»s tourist market. Such information should be useful in the marketing activities of interested parties and in the policies of the city authorities. Analysis of the data from a survey carried out in 2021 using the CHAID decision tree indicates that the choice of accommodation type was mainly determined by situational variables. The only statistically significant demographic predictor relates to a greater interest in flats among those aged up to 34 years old. Planned expenditure per person per overnight stay proved to be a statistically significant predictor only for non-residents of Poland, with the cut-off amount set higher than the median interval for this segment. Flats were more often chosen by people travelling in a larger party or alone and those planning to stay longer than four nights, thus looking for a different offer than that of traditional city hotels.

KEYWORDS

short-term rental, segmentation, hotel users, short-term rental users, Warsaw tourism market, CHAID decision tree, COVID-19 effects on tourism

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1. Introduction

Changes in consumer expectations and the emergence of new offers are a feature of any developing market. A special situation is the emergence of so-called disruptive innovations which open up a market to new players, on both demand and supply sides (Christensen, Raynor, McDonald, 2015). The popularity of online platforms that mediate the renting of rooms and flats to tourists, usually identified with the sharing economy and Airbnb, is often seen as such an innovation (Guttentag, Smith, 2017; Prayag, Ozanne, 2018). Its success has attracted the attention of both potential imitators, existing market participants and researchers (Guttentag, Smith, 2017; Prayag, Ozanne, 2018). Several of the most common themes can be identified in academic and popular publications: the threat to traditional accommodation providers, an increase in housing prices, touristification, the loss of neighbourhood ties, and the development of the grey economy (Jaremen, Nawrocka, Żemła, 2020; Pawlicz, 2019). On the positive side, an increase in the accessibility of tourism for certain market segments, better utilisation of housing resources, an increase in residents' incomes, and greater flexibility in the supply of accommodation services are mentioned (Dolnicar, 2019; Pawlicz, Prentice, 2021).

One of the main issues addressed in the research is the question of whether and to what extent the services of brokerage platforms are a threat to traditional service providers, primarily hotels. The issue of competition or complementarity between hotel services and those offered by flats is also a subject of this study whose aim is to indicate to what extent the availability of flats for short-term rent affects the market for accommodation services in Warsaw. The idea behind the study is the assumption that the revealed differences or similarities between users of hotel or rented flat services will make it possible to answer the question of the influence of the latter on Warsaw's tourist market, providing information useful in the marketing activities of interested entities and in the policies of the city authorities.

Renting flats to tourists is usually equated with the sharing economy but this is debatable for several reasons. Firstly, the provision of accommodation is generally paid; free exchange or hospitality programmes are poorly developed – among the nine platforms listed by Adamiak, only two mediate free exchange (Adamiak, 2021), and Airbnb, a symbol of the sharing economy has in fact become a commercial corporation (Dogru et al., 2020c). Secondly, housing is often a form of investment and the provision of accommodation is a type of economic activity for the owners or is handed over to specialised companies (Adamiak, 2022; Cocola-Gant et al., 2021). For this reason, the term 'short-term rental' is more appropriate and this work uses this term.

2. Literature review

Renting flats or rooms to tourists is nothing new, but the emergence of online intermediary platforms, combined with the ideology of the sharing economy and globalisation, has resulted in a surge of interest in the phenomenon. This is accompanied by a growing number of academic publications, which themselves have become the subject of several literature reviews (Belarmino, Koh, 2020; Dolnicar, 2019; Hati et al., 2021; Hossain, 2020; Prayag, Ozanne, 2018; Sainaghi, 2020; Sainaghi, Baggio, 2020a). From the point of view of the purpose of this study, publications on the impact of rental housing on the accommodation market and the characteristics of its consumers are of particular interest.

Articles dealing with rental housing can be divided into two groups: those describing the situation in selected cities and those providing an overview, summarising the results of different studies or covering a wider area or a larger number of locations, primarily large cities. The results of these studies are not conclusive and to some extent depend on which metrics are used to measure the impact of short-term rentals on the hotel market: occupancy rate, ADR (Average Daily Rate) or RevPAR (Revenue per Available Room). Yang et al. (2022) collated the results of 13 studies, most of which (7) focused on the United States, while others analysed the situation in Barcelona, Paris, London, Busan, Tokyo and cities in Norway. Their meta-analysis suggests that, in general, the impact of short-term rentals on hotels is small, and this applies to all indicators of hotel performance. In a different vein, the results of their study are interpreted by Dogru et al. (2020a) who, after conducting analyses for the entire United States and selected cities from other countries, indicated that the negative impact of short-term rentals on hotel performance is widespread, not only geographically, but also in terms of hotel category and type (Dogru et al., 2020b). At the same time, they point out that previous studies were not authoritative because they analysed data on the early stages of the phenomenon, when its scale was relatively small.

In all the studies discussed, the authors analysed the phenomenon from the supply side using panel data and regression models, in which the independent variable was the scale of Airbnb listings in a given location and the dependent variables were indicators describing the performance of hotels. These quantitative analyses show the possible effects of the growth of short-term rentals but do not provide information on the nature of competition between them and traditional hotels. An attempt to fill this gap was made by Jiang et al. who interviewed executives from selected hotels in China (Jiang, Law, Li, 2020). Analysing their statements, they concluded that the responses of hotel managers depend on the category of the hotel and its status (independent, in an international or national chain); however the key to maintaining their position should be an active use of the internet and leaving employees more freedom to individualise the services.

A different approach to the issue of competition between traditional service providers and short-term rentals was presented by Sainaghi and Baggio (2020b) who analysed the situation in Milan, the business capital of Italy, a fashion centre and a popular tourist destination. Inbound tourism to this city includes both business and pleasure travel. Both types are characterised by differing seasonality and distribution patterns through a week. According to the authors, an analysis of these patterns should help to find out if hotels and short-term rentals are direct competitors. Their approach is based on the assumption that leisure travellers are more interested in Airbnb than business ones. The results suggest that with regard to business travel, there is no substitution between hotels and short-term rentals, but that it is clear in the case of leisure travel.

The second theme addressed in this work, i.e. the characterisation and segmentation of short-term rental service users and how this relates to the profile of hotel service users, is also reflected in academic publications. Sainaghi (2020) in his review of the literature on sharing accommodation services points out that research focuses mainly on the motivations and characteristics of its users, especially those that distinguish them from hotel customers. Most often these are online surveys with a limited sample size or analyses of users' online postings (Bagieński, Chlebicka, 2019; Lutz, Newlands, 2018; Young, Corsun, Xie, 2017). These studies are exploratory in nature, and the results suggest that in the realm of value sought by users of rented flats, price comes first. As for the rest of expectations, the answers have been influenced by the themes covered in questionnaires that mostly concern motivations related to the idea of the sharing economy (Sainaghi, 2020; Young, Corsun, Xie, 2017). Segmentation studies focused on expectations about stays in hotels or flats in relation to buyer characteristics (Lutz, Newlands, 2018; Mody, Suess, Lehto, 2019). According to Sainaghi (2020), however, the segmentation of purchasers of short-term rental services is insufficiently understood, and particularly true for those using paid services of this type. This includes the characteristics of the users, as well as the differences or similarities between them and hotel customers.

An important topic addressed in research on short-term rentals is an analysis of its distribution at the scale of selected localities (Adamiak, 2021, 2022; Gutierrez et al., 2017; Rabiei-Dastjerdi, McArdle, Hynes, 2022) or within countries (Adamiak, 2022; Kowalczyk-Anioł, Pawlusiński, 2018) and Warsaw has also been a subject of such studies (Derek, Dycht, 2017; Gyódi, 2017, 2019). The authors of some of these investigations interpret the results obtained in the context of the gentrification of urban space, competition with traditional accommodation, impact on housing prices and long-term rentals (Cocola-Gant, Gago, 2021; Gutierrez et al., 2017; Rabiei-Dastjerdi, McArdle, Hynes, 2022). The publications postulating regulations restricting short-term rentals (Chen, Huang, Tan, 2021; Falk, Yang, 2021; Yeon, Song, Lee, 2020) are in line with these themes. The opinions presented are varied and they are not always sufficiently documented. The media play a not insignificant role in shaping the negative image of short-term rentals, while residents do not have such a clear-cut attitude. The results of a study conducted by Mody, Suess and Dogru (2021) suggest rather that it is positive, and that the problems that arise are of a micro-geographical character and should be addressed at this scale.

The COVID 19 pandemic added a new impetus to research on short-term renting, and interest focused on its quantitative and spatial impact on the phenomenon (Adamiak, 2021, 2022; Benítez-Aurioles, 2021; Gyódi, 2021; Kacprzak, 2021; Romano, 2021).

It is worth noting that the vast majority of publications, especially those addressing the issue from a quantitative side, are based on Airbnb data and generally focus on this platform. This is to some extent understandable and justified for practical reasons (Adamiak, 2022), but it limits the scope of the analysis. This is particularly true in terms of narrowing the perspective concerning the direction of accommodation market development, as well as viewing the motivations and behaviour of flat renters primarily in the context of the sharing economy.

3. Background to the study – Warsaw as a tourist city

The "Tourism Policy of the Capital City of Warsaw" (City of Warsaw, 2020) is the basic document defining the directions of tourism development in the city. It assumes that tourism is part of the city's development strategy and postulates, inter alia, building marketing communication around selected products referring to the history of the city, MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions) and city breaks, hence it is an offer aimed at various market segments. Warsaw is one of the cities with a mixed tourism model: business tourism is dominant in April-June and September-November, and arrivals for pleasure and other personal reasons in July and August and partly in September.

Based on the results of the survey from which the data used in this study were derived, it was estimated that 10.1 million tourist arrivals took place in 2019, of which 28% were of those non-resident in Poland, while in 2021, there were 5.1 million tourist arrivals (a drop by 49%), of which 24% were non-resident (City of Warsaw, 2020). In 2019 arrivals to accommodation establishments with more than 10 beds amounted to 3.8 million and to 2 million in 2021 (a decrease by 47%). In 2021, these establishments had 37,600 beds, 84% of which were hotels (Statistical Office in Warsaw, 2022).

An important difference between rented accommodation and hotels is the availability of additional services and facilities in the latter. In 2021, 100 (58%) tourist accommodation establishments were prepared to host conferences. Among hotels, it was 75% (75 establishments). In 83% of the venues with conference facilities, technical support was provided in addition to equipment. Wi-Fi on the premises was provided by 68% of tourist accommodation establishments, including 81% of hotels. Concerning sports and leisure facilities, tourist accommodation establishments most often had a gym – 41 (24%) and a sauna – 35 (20%). Spa treatments were offered in 18 (10%), the same for rehabilitation, and there was an indoor swimming pool in 12 (7%) facilities (Statistical Office in Warsaw, 2022). An analysis of the data published by STR (Smith Travel Research) shows that during the period covered by the Warsaw Tourist Office (SBT) survey (June-December 2021), the average room-price (ADR) in Warsaw from June to August was lower than the overall average for selected large cities in Poland, however from September 2021, Warsaw took the lead and maintained it until the end of the year (Warsaw Convention Bureau, 2022).

Information on rental accommodation is much more modest and incomplete. Airbnb's offer is relatively the best described, while information on flats provided on other platforms is patchy (Adamiak, 2022; Pawlicz, Prentice, 2021). Determining the number of such flats and their distribution would require collecting data from all platforms and then eliminating duplicate listings. In addition, some of the accommodation provided is only available periodically. Adamiak estimated that in Warsaw, in July 2021, 15,700 bed-places were made available on Airbnb and Vrbo platforms, which meant 0.88 bed-places per 1000 inhabitants, and was a much lower ratio than analogous ones for Kraków (2.33) or the Tricity: Gdańsk, Sopot, Gdynia (2.88). In terms of the absolute number of beds, it was less than in Kraków (18,100), or Tricity (22,400) (Adamiak, 2022). In 2020, during the period of the greatest constraints related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of flats on offer decreased by 35% (Adamiak, 2022).

A review of the listings available on TripAdvisor (September 2022) suggests that much of the offer is located around the Old Town and in the city centre. Flats available on Booking.com (in mid-October 2022 it was possible to make bookings at 544 properties) were also located mainly in the centre, although there were also proposals for flats in several other districts. On the Nocowanie.pl platform, 214 offers were available in and around Warsaw. In the case of the latter, many offers were labelled "Top Host", indicating that these are offers managed directly by the owners.

The controversy surrounding short-term rentals prompted the Warsaw authorities to conduct a survey among residents on their perception of tourism. The survey was conducted using the CAPI (Computer-Assisted Personal Interviews) technique in 2019 and 2021. One of the questions concerned short-term rentals (Airbnb) and residents' attitudes towards this phenomenon. In 2021 9% of Warsaw residents admitted that there were flats or houses rented out to tourists in their immediate vicinity (+6 percentage points compared to 2019). Slightly more than half of them (55%; +3 p.p.) believe that this phenomenon had a positive impact on their daily life, while 42% state that they were indifferent. In 2019, none of the respondents assessed this phenomenon negatively, in 2021 2% of respondents felt that it negatively affected their living conditions (City of Warsaw, 2021).

4. Methodology of the study

This study uses survey data made available by the Warsaw Tourist Office (SBT), from a survey of tourists visiting Warsaw in 2021. Data used to characterise the accommodation market segments were taken from the survey in 2021, which was the first year when larger-scale tourism was possible following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Data from the 2019 survey was used only to learn if the pandemic had altered tourists' behaviour concerning accommodation during visits to Warsaw.

The survey commissioned by SBT is a field survey conducted at 11 selected locations in Warsaw. These places are conventionally referred to as "attractions", "gateways" (Central Railway Station and Chopin Airport) or "tracts" (selected places popular among tourists). These were the same in both surveys which were conducted in weekly 'waves' from April to November 2019, and from May to December in 2021. The survey uses a systematic random sampling scheme, but it is impossible to discover whether this scheme was always followed. The questionnaire covers a wide range of questions, including type of accommodation used, purpose of travel, etc. The definitions of 'residents' (domestic tourists) and 'non-residents' (foreign tourists) used in the study are in line with the recommendations for tourism statistics (UNWTO, 2010), i.e. classification is determined by how long a person has lived in Poland or abroad, rather than nationality or citizenship. All variables are based on respondents' statements, including the type of accommodation used and the planned amount of expenditure during their stay in Warsaw. All analyses were conducted separately for residents and non-residents, as these are two fundamentally different market segments from the point of view of marketing activities. Segmentation of accommodation users in Warsaw was carried out with the CHAID algorithm available in SPSS 28. This algorithm was built on the basis of the chi-square test and has the advantage of being able to create models using non-parametric variables and without pre-set hypotheses. Its output indicates which of the analysed independent variables are the best predictors (with the lowest p) for the dependent variable. There are no restrictions on the distribution of variables, so that untransformed data are used (in contrast to many models using regression). The CHAID algorithm is particularly useful as a tool to aid segmentation, as we choose the variable by which we want to segment (in the case of this study, it was staying in either a hotel or a rented flat). Another advantage of the CHAID algorithm is the straightforwardness and ease of interpretation of the results (Díaz-Pérez, Bethencourt-Cejas, 2016; Legohérel, Hsu, Daucé, 2015).

All tested sets of variables were cross-validated with ten sub-samples. This procedure generates ten trees, each time without one sub-sample of randomly selected cases. For each such tree the risk of misclassification is calculated. To this end a tree is built for 90% of cases and then the rules from this tree are applied to the remaining 10% of cases. The final result produces a single tree based on the initial sample with a risk estimation as the average of the risk for all of the trees (IBM Corporation, 1989, 2012). In this study the growth of the tree was limited to three levels beneath the root node with the default number of a minimum of 100 cases for the parent node and 50 cases for child nodes. Growth of the tree stops when all the most statistically significant predictors are identified within a pre-set confidence level (95% in this study). The algorithm merges nominal and ordinal predictors of similar highest significance and transforms scale variables into discrete ones searching for the value which has the strongest relationship with the dependent variable (cut-off value).

Several sets of independent variables were considered in the segmentation process, including those taken into account by other authors working on this issue (Lutz, Newlands, 2018; Mody, Suess, Lehto, 2019; Sainaghi, 2020; Sainaghi, Baggio, 2020a). The set of potential predictors embraced: planned length of stay, transportation mode to Warsaw, planned spendings, organisation of the trip, purpose of travel, month of arrival, sources of information about Warsaw, size and composition of the travelling party, the number of previous visits to Warsaw, age group, type of the place of permanent residence, education, gender and economic status. They were tested in different configurations so that the most useful marketing information could be obtained. The size and structure of the sample is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample used for segmentation by main purpose of travel and economic status, 2021 (%)

Purpose of travel	Evaluation											
	residents n = 1752						non-residents n = 648					
	very good	good	bear--able	rather bad	bad	total	very good	good	bear--able	rather bad	bad	total
Leisure	4.0	9.6	1.9	0.1	0.0	15.5	4.3	9.1	1.9	0.0	0.0	15.3
Visiting historical sites	3.8	13.5	4.1	0.1	0.0	21.4	5.7	8.0	4.3	0.2	0.2	18.4
Learning about culture, history	0.5	1.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	2.1	1.1	2.6	1.2	0.3	0.0	5.2
Visiting family or friends	0.3	2.2	0.8	0.0	0.0	3.3	1.9	4.0	0.8	0.0	0.0	6.6
Entertainment	0.4	0.9	0.7	0.0	0.0	1.9	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
Participation in a cultural event	0.5	1.7	0.3	0.0	0.0	2.6	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.9
Participation in a sporting event	0.3	0.9	0.1	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.0	0.6	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.9
Participation in a training course	0.6	1.1	0.5	0.1	0.0	2.2	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.5
Participation in a conference trade fair	0.4	0.7	0.3	0.1	0.0	1.5	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.5
Business	2.2	4.7	0.9	0.0	0.0	7.8	2.2	2.5	1.2	0.0	0.0	5.9
Transfer	0.6	1.8	0.1	0.0	0.0	2.5	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.9
Other	0.7	2.5	0.3	0.0	0.0	3.5	1.2	0.8	0.2	0.0	0.0	2.2
Unspecified	10.6	17.5	6.1	0.1	0.1	34.4	12.5	18.2	10.8	0.5	0.5	42.4
Total	24.9	58.0	16.7	0.3	0.1	100.0	29.8	47.2	21.3	1.1	0.6	100.0

Source: author.

On the basis of the answers provided by the respondents, it was estimated that the median of the planned expenditure per person per night was PLN 250 for residents (95% confidence interval, $n = 1747$, bootstrap of 1000 samples; the length of the estimated interval is less than 1 PLN) and for non-residents between PLN 257 and 304 (95% confidence interval, $n = 648$, bootstrap of 1000 samples).

5. Results of the analysis

As the data used in the analysis was gathered during 2021, when COVID-19 pandemic travel restrictions were still in place, its impact on travel behaviour should be taken into account. The data in Table 2 shows changes in the pattern of accommodation used by residents and non-residents visiting Warsaw in 2021 compared to the relevant data for 2019. The popularity of hotels was characterised by an opposite trend: among residents, their share increased by 2.4 p.p. to 34.8%, while among non-residents it fell strongly from 49.1% to 34.8% (–14.3 p.p.). The share of rented accommodation increased in both groups of tourists. In the case of residents, this was an increase of 1.9 p.p. (to 16.8%), and for non-residents by 3.5 p.p. (to 16.4%). If relatives' or friends' dwellings are excluded, hotels and rented flats were the most popular types of accommodation in both tourist segments. It is worth noting that flats far outweighed rented rooms, whose share among accommodation used by residents in 2021 was 3.2% (down 1.8 p.p.) and non-residents 5.1% (up 1 p.p.).

In order to determine the profile of hotels and rented apartments, CHAID analysis was conducted for five sets of variables. The first set included the planned length of stay, means of transport for travel to Warsaw, purpose of travel, how many family members and/or friends were participating in the travelling party, number of previous visits to Warsaw, organiser of the trip, expected expenditure in Warsaw per person per night, gender, age, type of place of residence and economic status. The results for residents are presented in Figure 1 and for non-residents in Figure 2.

In the tree shown in Figure 1, the CHAID algorithm identified the following variables as statistically significant predictors for stays in hotels or rented flats (apartments):
– organiser of travel as a first-level node,
– on the second level, the duration of stay in Warsaw in the case of self-organised travel,
– on the third level, the number of people participating in the trip.

Flats are more frequently used by people organising a trip on their own. The share of those using rented flats was 38.3%, compared to 0% for schools and travel agencies and 8.9% for a family, workplace or other institution. Among travellers organising a trip on their own, the planned duration of the stay in Warsaw had a strong influence on the choice of accommodation – when it amounted to at least four nights there was a clear increase in interest in renting flats. For such stays, its share was 51.2% against 24.5% for stays of one night. The choice of a rented flat was more often made by those travelling with their families, with flats being chosen least often by couples. The presented set of variables proved to be 84.6% accurate when classifying hotel guests but to a lesser extent for those choosing flats – 28.6%.

For non-residents (Figure 2), despite using the same set of variables, slightly different predictor variables were identified as statistically significant. At the level of the first node, the planned length of stay in Warsaw turned out to be the differentiating feature. For 6–10 nights, the use of flats was 42.9%, compared to 16.7% for 1 night. At node level 2, travelling with more than one family member appeared to be a feature

Table 2. Share of different types of accommodation in 2019 and 2021 (%)

Year	Accommodation type										
	hotel	guest-house	motel	hostel	resort, camping	relatives, friends	rented room	rented apart-ment	own flat	other	total
non-residents $n = 1284^{***}$											
2019	49.1	2.1	0.5	8.8	0.5	20.5	4.1	12.9	1.4	0.3	100.0
2021	34.8	1.9	0.5	4.9	0.8	32.1	5.1	16.4	2.7	0.7	100.0
residents $n = 3528^{***}$											
2019	31.0	2.7	1.6	13.5	0.3	30.2	5.0	14.9	0.5	0.4	100.0
2021	33.4	9.1	0.9	8.7	0.1	27.0	3.2	16.8	0.5	0.2	100.0

Note: In the paper, the following notation was applied: $^{*}\ p < 0.5$, $^{**}\ p < 0.01$, $^{***}\ p < 0.001$.
Source: author.

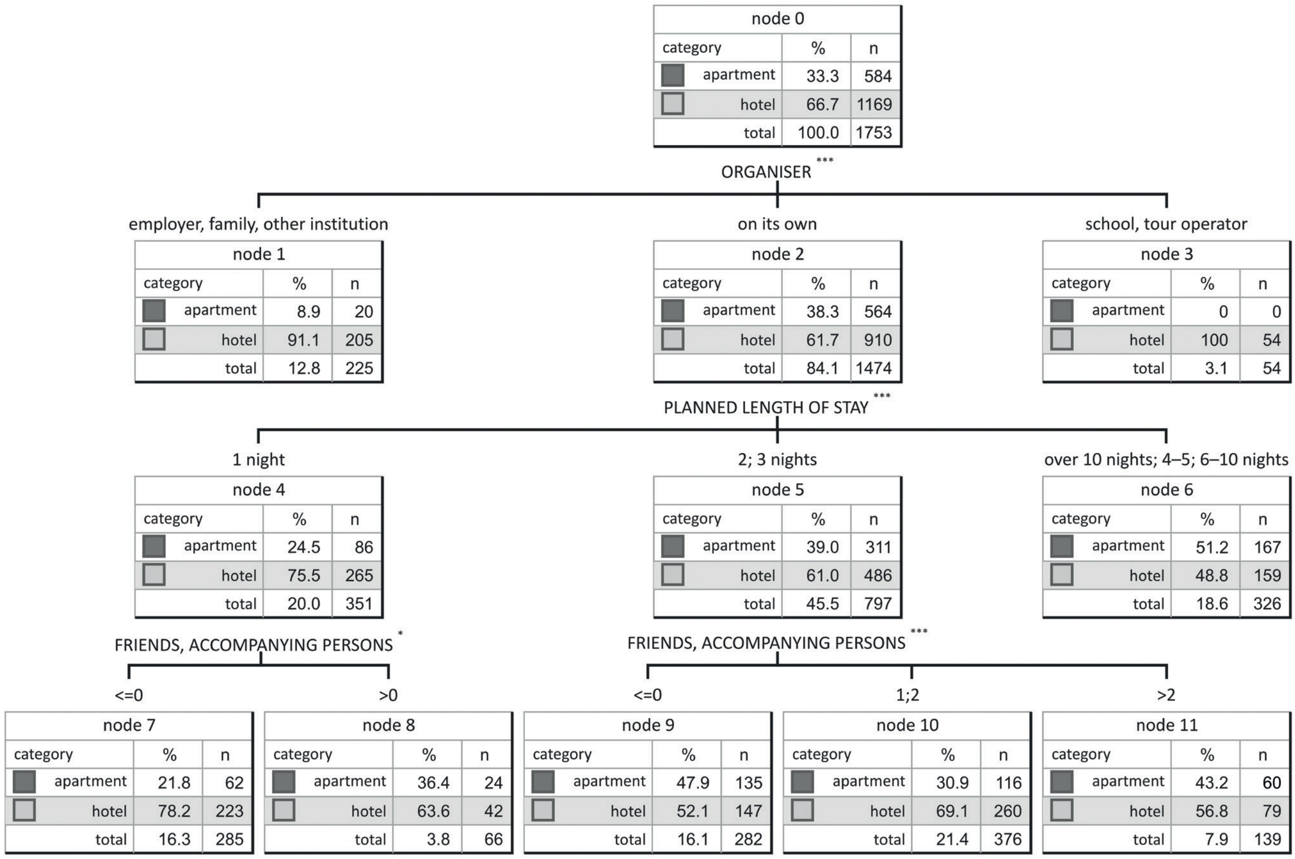

Figure 1. Resident users of hotel or short-term rental accommodation by travel characteristics
Source: author

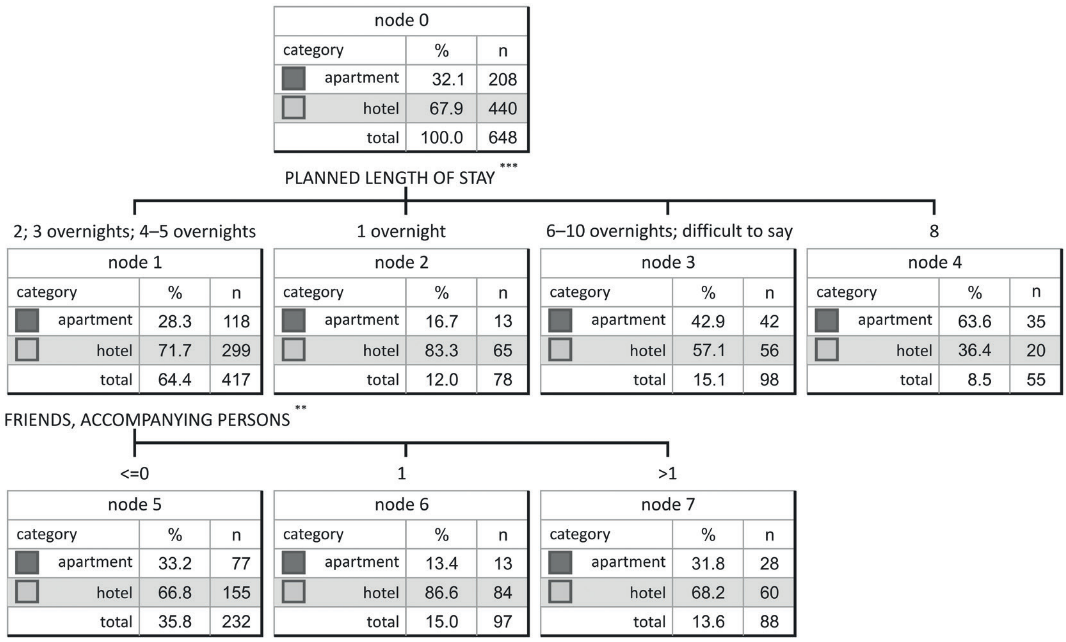

Figure 2. Non-residents users of hotel or short-term rental accommodation by travel characteristics
Source: author

that increased the propensity to use a flat. A node at level 3 was not identified. The analysis of this classification accuracy turns out to be high for hotels (95.5%) but rather low for flats (16.8%).

The second set of tested variables focused on sources of information (city websites, family and friends, social media, mobile apps, tourist portals, guidebooks, maps, the number of previous visits to Warsaw, travel agencies, other, none). The output of the analysis is shown in Figure 3 for residents and Figure 4 for non-residents.

The data presented in Figure 3 shows that among residents at the first node level, social media played a role, with their users being more likely to use flats than hotels (42.6% vs. 30.7%). At the second node level, the scale of flat use was differentiated by the use of other online sources, with a particular focus on the city's website. However, the accuracy of identification of flat users according to the identified predictors was 0% (in the case of hotels it was 100%). This means that the identified predictors were statistically significant for the sample but not for the random sub-samples taken by the algorithm during cross-validation.

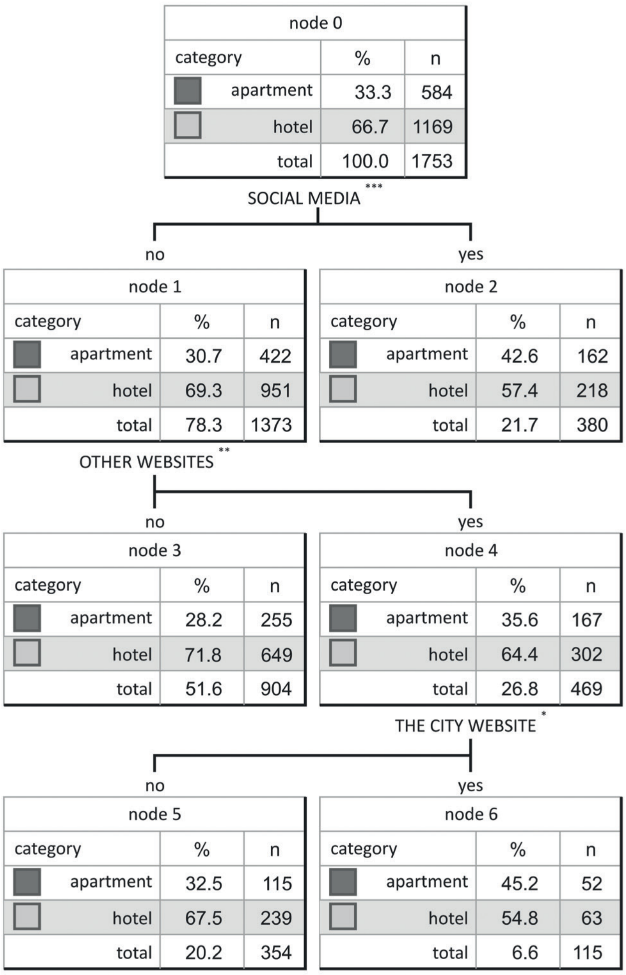

Figure 3. Sources of information used by resident users of hotel or short-term rental accommodation
Source: author

In the case of non-residents, the use of information from family or friends was found to be a statistically significant predictor of the choice of specific accommodation, clearly leading to greater interest in apartments. At the second level of nodes, the use of guidebooks was identified as significant predictor, which favoured the use of hotels (84.6% vs. 69.6%). As in the case of residents, the accuracy of the classification of flat users based on the identified sources of information was 0% and that of hotels was 100%.

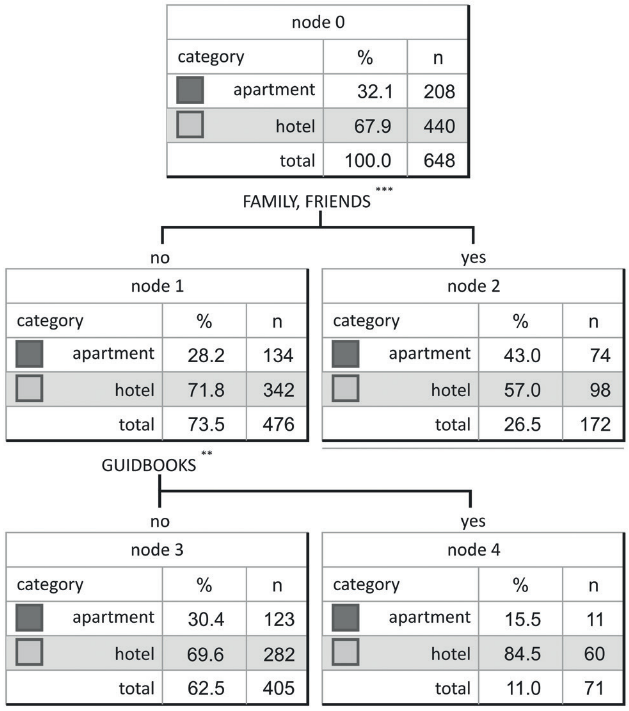

Figure 4. Non-resident users of hotel or short-term rental accommodation by source of information
Source: author

An important element of market segmentation is the characterisation of users in terms of demographic and socio-economic characteristics. This set of variables includes gender, age, type of residence, economic status and the planned length of stay. The CHAID algorithm identified age as statistically significant predictor. For residents, those aged 15–24 (46%) showed the highest propensity to use flats, with the 25–34 age group in second place. Older age groups preferred hotels. The accuracy of the classification of those using flats based on this variable was, however, 0% (for hotels it was 100%). A similar pattern has been identified for non-residents.

In the literature, it is often assumed that apartment users are mainly tourists travelling for personal reasons, while hotels can count on customers travelling for business. In the sets of variables used for the development of the trees described above, the purpose of travel was not identified as a statistically significant predictor. However in the fourth set including the main purpose of travel, month of arrival, number of people in a travelling party and planned length of stay, the purpose of travel was identified as a statistically significant predictor for residents' travel. At the third level of nodes in those who planned to spend one night in Warsaw, flats were more frequently used by those whose main purpose of travel was to attend a sporting or cultural event, entertainment or other purpose (38.5%). Those travelling on business were less likely to choose apartments, similar to those planning to sightsee, experience culture, visit family or friends and those with no specific purpose (15.7%).

The fifth set of variables was tested to determine the extent to which planned expenditure per person per night affects the choice of a particular type of accommodation. This set proved to be significant predictor only for non-residents, with a cut-off value of PLN 357, that is above the median value estimated for this group. Those who planned to spend more were more likely to opt for a hotel (78.4% against 60.9%). Education, type of place of residence, frequency of visits to Warsaw and material situation did not prove statistically significant predictors in any of the tested sets of variables in which they were included.

6. Discussion

The characteristics of the behaviour of those using accommodation in Warsaw (Table 2) confirm the COVID-19 effect noted by many authors, which is an increase in interest in accommodation that guarantees a certain isolation (Bae, Chang, 2021). During the general decrease in the number of tourist arrivals to Warsaw, in the case of residents this meant primarily a decrease in interest in hostels and rented rooms, and a relative increase in the share of guesthouses, as well as hotels and rented flats. With regard to non-residents, the trend was similar, except that the increase in interest in flats was accompanied by a marked decline in the share of hotels. However, it should be remembered that 2021 was the first year when international travel on a larger scale was possible, thus the first opportunity in two years to visit relatives and friends. The data shows a large increase in the share of relatives' and friends' dwellings (Table 3) and this may be one of the reasons for the reported decline in interest in hotels. The trends described are confirmed by data published by Eurostat, where for the first time information on the number of nights spent in rented accommodation is provided. They show that the number of nights in flats provided to non-residents in Warsaw fell by 58% compared to 2019, and to residents by 31%, while the figures for nights in hotels were 66.5% and 34% respectively (Eurostat, 2022; Statistical Office in Warsaw, 2022).

When it comes to statistically significant predictors that differentiate users of accommodation in hotels or flats, the set of variables for residents identified by the CHAID algorithm is much richer than for non-residents. A partial explanation may be provided by the described peculiarities of non-resident arrivals in 2021, the smaller size of this sample, as well as the fact that the study used data-driven segmentation, the results of which depend, inter alia, on the work of the algorithm that groups the data (Dolnicar, 2008). Several computational procedures were performed with the different sets of variables most commonly used in segmentation studies (Dolnicar, 2008, 2013). In the case of the set including variables describing travel and the demographic characteristics of tourists (Figures 1 and 2), the results of the analysis did not isolate any demographic characteristic as influencing the choice of hotel or flat. For both residents and non-residents, the statistically significant predictors proved to be the planned duration of the trip and the number of people travelling together. This confirms the findings of Mody, Suess and Lehto (2019) who called these variables situational, stating that they have a greater influence on the choice of accommodation than individual characteristics. In contrast, the findings of Lutz and Newlands (2018), who found that houses (flats) are rented by the affluent and those with higher education, were not confirmed. In general, it can be concluded that the longer the planned stay, the higher the frequency of the use of flats, with a cut-off figure of 4–5 nights for residents and 6–10 nights for non-residents. For shorter stays, interest in flats increased if at least three people were travelling together and, surprisingly, also for solo travellers. This may be due to the fact that hotels, especially city hotels, offer mainly double rooms, so both solo travellers and those travelling in a larger group may be looking for a more appropriate offer.

For residents, however, the most important variable influencing the choice of accommodation type appeared to be the way the trip was organised. If the organiser was a travel agency, school, workplace, or even a family, a hotel was by far the dominant choice. Only those organising the trip on their own (having the largest share in the study population) made more use of flats, and the variable influencing specific choices was the planned length of stay described above and the number of people travelling together. This means that competition between hotels and flats is in practice limited to self-organised travel. Although they have a dominant market share, hotels can more actively seek to increase cooperation with travel organisers and improve their offer for those planning a longer stay.

For marketing activities, it is important to identify which sources of information are used by buyers. Similar to the analysis described above, the decision tree describing the behaviour of residents was more elaborate with regard to this issue. In this case, the use of electronic media was associated with greater interest in flats. To the greatest extent this applied to social media, but also to other websites, including the city's. Rental intermediary platforms were not included in the survey; it is possible that respondents classified them as 'other websites'. More people used this named source of information than social media, but the percentage of those who opted for a flat was lower. Analysis of the non-resident data yielded different results. The source of information that most influenced the choice of flats was family or friends, while the choice of hotels was influenced by the use of guidebooks.

The analysis conducted confirmed the findings of other authors indicating that rented flats are a particularly attractive option for large families and those planning a longer stay (Dolnicar, 2019). Similarly, it confirmed the view that business travellers are the clientele of hotels, while possible competition is for personal travel (Sainaghi, Baggio, 2020b), except that in the case of Warsaw, resident tourists interested in sightseeing were also more likely to choose hotels. It was also confirmed that the youngest groups of tourists, users of social media and online information sources, were more likely to use flats (Young, Corsun, Xie, 2017). In contrast, no relationship was found between education level and the choice of any of the analysed accommodation types. Research often highlights the importance of low price as an important factor influencing the choice of apartments (Bagieński, Chlebicka, 2019; Dolnicar, 2019; Young, Corsun, Xie, 2017), unfortunately the available data did not include information on accommodation expenditure. The importance of the economic factor can be inferred from the amount of planned expenditure per person per overnight stay in Warsaw. This variable turned out to be significant only for non-residents, and the limiting expenditure value of those preferring flats was higher than the median expenditure of non-residents in general. Thus, even if these are people looking for lower-priced accommodation, their expenditure during a stay in the city is high.

If the results of the segmentation analysis are looked at from the point of view of its usefulness for marketing activities, it provides important clues for the marketing of hotels, especially with regard to residents, while being limited for apartments. Firstly, in all analyses, the accuracy of the classification of hotel users was much higher than for flats, and secondly, their characteristics and behaviour in many cases enable the identification and targeting of particular microsegments. This applies to institutional buyers and traditional intermediaries i.e. travel agencies, offers for travelling couples, as well as for those interested in visiting the city. Hotels should therefore be active in those media that popularise interesting places in Warsaw. In the case of flats, no such clearly defined microsegments were identified. Their hosts should use online channels, including social media and recommendation systems. It will be more important to highlight benefits that are not offered by hotels, such as the possibility of a longer stay with a larger group of people. Participants in cultural or sporting events may also be an interesting microsegment, and whose interest in apartments may arise from travelling with others interested in these events.

The segmentation described is based on revealed preferences for the type of accommodation, classifying hotel and flat guests according to selected characteristics. When interpreting its results, it is necessary to take into account the conditions associated with the data used. First of all, they cover only one year, and a specific one, because it was marked by the COVID 19 pandemic, so tourist behaviour may have been partly forced by the situation. This is especially true for non-residents, as international travel was more restricted. The second limitation relates to the method used, which is an example of segmentation based on collected data (data-driven), which means that the identified segment characteristics may prove to be unstable, i.e. the patterns found only apply to the analysed data set and are the result of the algorithm used (Dolnicar, 2008, 2013).

7. Conclusions

The presented analysis of the characteristics of accommodation users suggests that in Warsaw the two types of offer are complementary, rather than directly competing. Those using flats are mainly travelling with several accompanying people and planning a longer stay, while, at least with regard to non-residents, their expenditure per person per night is quite high, higher than the median expenditure for residents and non-residents visiting Warsaw in general. From the point of view of the contribution to the city's economy, this is therefore a valuable segment of tourists. The phenomenon analysed is subject to evolution and the findings of the study may change as they relate to a specific city and did not cover issues related to the impact of short-term rentals on the social environment, and thus they are difficult to generalise. Nevertheless, they suggest that efforts to regulate or eliminate short-term rentals are driven by lobbying rather than a real threat to other service providers, and that any regulations should be introduced locally and based on a sound analysis of the situation. The COVID-19 pandemic additionally revealed another characteristic of flats, i.e. the flexibility to adapt supply to current demand (Adamiak, 2022), which is much more difficult in the case of hotels.

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The effect of overall service quality on customer satisfaction: The moderating role of travel experience

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between overall service quality and customer satisfaction, further, this relationship is examined in terms of travel experience as a moderator. The study mainly focuses on eco-tourism and collected data from tourists travelling to China. Convenience sampling was used for data collection and a questionnaire used from previous studies. AMOS software analyzed the data collected from 341 respondents. The results highlighted that there is a significant and positive relationship between overall service quality and customer satisfaction. Moreover, the presence of travel experience as a moderator strengthens this relationship. This research is limited to eco-tourism and future studies could be done from the perspective of any other country with a large sample size.

KEYWORDS

service quality, eco-tourism, customer satisfaction, travel experience

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1. Introduction

The tourism sector is growing rapidly around the globe and now it is considered one of the world's biggest sectors. In 2015, it was estimated that international earnings through tourism reached 1.5 trillion USD from 1,186 million tourists; a 10% increase in total GDP was noted because of the contribution of tourism (World Tourism Organization, 2016). According to Zhang and Lew (2002), China is situated in the rapidly rising Asia Pacific region, therefore, the Chinese economy and tourism in China increased at a faster rate compared to the other countries in the preceding decade. At the end of the 1990s, an unpredictable economic disaster greatly affected this sector. It is estimated by WTO that the average increase in the growth of worldwide tourism in the 1990s was nearly 5% while, at the start of that decade it had been above 8.3% but at the end only 2.7% growth was noted due to the regional economic crisis (World Tourism Organization, 2000). Keeping in view the various cultures, traditions and environments, China has the opportunity to develop eco-tourism and is going to be a place to provide a great opportunity for the rising ecotourism market from developed countries (Zhang, Lew, 2002). It is predicted by WTO that China is going to be a high worldwide destination, ranking 4th in promoting and generating tourism (see Table 1). Moreover, it is estimated that in 2020 there will be almost 137 million tourist arrivals worldwide and above 1 million will be outbound visitors.

Table 1. Top-ten world tourist-generating countries

Rank	Country	Outbound tourist departures (thousands)	Market share (%)
1	Germany	163,500	10.2
2	Japan	141,500	8.8
3	United States	123,300	7.7
4	China	100,000	6.2
5	United Kingdom	96,100	6.0
6	France	37,600	2.3
7	Holland	35,400	2.2
8	Canada	31,300	2.0
9	Commonwealth of independent states	30,500	1.9
10	Italy	29,700	1.9
Total	x	788,900	49.2

Source: World Tourism Organization (WTO) (1997).

The table given above highlights that the market share of Chinese tourism among the top ten world tourist-generating countries is 6.2% which is the fourth biggest share. China gained a lot of recognition as the most favorable destination place for tourists in 2018; the inbound visits were 141 million (Xinhua, 2019).

The increase in the growth of the tourist industry has enhanced competition among suppliers of this service. Now, to get the required benefits, there is a need to satisfy the demand of customers according to their expectations (Amin et al., 2013; Dedeoğlu, Demirer, 2015; Dominici, Guzzo, 2010; Kumar et al., 2008). It is not enough to provide quality service for customer satisfaction it is more important to provide benefits in terms of more profit, less cost, and better performance of administration which subsequently leads to optimistic feedback (Giritlioglu, Jones, Avcikurt, 2014; Seth, Deshmukh, Vrat, 2005). Many methods were developed and planned by marketers keeping in view the variable nature of the services offered (Ali, Amin, 2014; Lewis, Chambers, 2000; Zaibaf, Taherikia, Fakharian, 2013). Therefore, in the literature on marketing the relationship between provided services and the level of satisfaction among customers is one of the major topics for discussion.

It has been reported that the people of China are not satisfied with their lives as a gradual decline in satisfaction was observed from 7.29 to 6.96 (2004 to 2014) (Cheng et al., 2018). Similar behavior was observed in some tourists visiting China. Therefore, this article aims to suggest a new framework by combining various existing models to indicate antecedents of perceived service quality and subsequent customer satisfaction. The three important dimensions of overall service quality are functional quality, technical quality and image and they are discussed in this article. Moreover, the relationship between overall service quality and customer satisfaction is observed through the moderating role of the travel experience.

2. Literature review

2.1. Customer satisfaction

In marketing literature, customer satisfaction has gained considerable attention and emerged as the core performance quality for organizations to assist them to maintain the superiority of their operations and achieve their organizational goals (Gerson, 1993; Munusamy, Chelliah, 2011). There is a saying "The customer is always right" which indicates that customer satisfaction has significant importance for organizations (Fecikova, 2004). According to Boulter (2013), organizations should focus more on retaining new customers for high profitability than attracting new ones. Meeting expectations, according to Lau and Cheung (2013), will not only give customer satisfaction but will also generate customer loyalty which will reduce loss rates and boost retention rates. Customer happiness and the relationship that will develop between the company and its customers are regarded as significant factors to consider while creating service quality delivery (Amin, Isa, 2008). Customer satisfaction is influenced by several factors and service quality is one among them (Rita, Oliveira, Farisa, 2019). Many works have revealed that service quality can enhance customer satisfaction (Afthanorhan et al., 2019; Nunkoo et al., 2020; Prentice, Dominique Lopes, Wang, 2020).

2.2. Technical and functional quality

In the area of service marketing and especially service quality, the model of functional and technical quality introduced by Gronroos (1984) is very popular and many researchers used it in their studies. The technical quality explained by Gronroos (1984) is similar to the outcome quality described by Rust and Oliver (1994). Gronroos (1984) and Fassnacht and Koese (2006) explained it as "what customers are left with after the consumption of service". The literature analysis has revealed that attributes of functional quality are widely studied by researchers using SERVQUAL or its other modified versions including HISTQUAL, SERVPERF, etc. Technical quality is the opposite and is ignored and not discussed by researchers (Yu, Ramanathan, 2012). Therefore, many studies conclude that literature on technical quality is very rare and this dimension of service quality is ignored by researchers (Tamwatin, Trimetsoontorn, Fongsuwan, 2015). Based on the discussion given above, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_1: Functional quality is significantly and positively related to overall service quality.

H_2: Technical quality is significantly and positively related to overall service quality.

2.3. Image and customer satisfaction

A customer's perception of an organization is interpreted as a corporate image. It speaks of a customer's relationship with a service, good, brand or organization (Nguyen, Leblanc, 2002; Simões, Dibb, Fisk, 2005). Many scholars have reported that corporate image is positively related to customer loyalty that this significantly drives their loyalty toward the organization (Faullant, Matzler, Füller, 2008; Han, Hsu, Lee, 2009; Kandampully, Hu, 2007; Kandampully, Suhartanato, 2000, 2003). Additionally, numerous studies define the role of corporate image in shaping customer perceptions and consequent behaviours. Faullant et al. (2008) advocate the findings of Kandampully and Suhartanto (2003) by incorporating both corporate image and customer satisfaction in one single model to highlight the importance of corporate image. This, in turn, leads to a better understanding of consumer perceptions and thus, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H_3: Hotel image is significantly and positively related to overall service quality.

2.4. Overall service quality and customer satisfaction

Many scholars have reported that customer satisfaction leads to an instant increase in consumption; however, studies have defined service quality as a decision of consumers that describes the difference between expected service and perceived service (Culiberg, 2010; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry, 1985). Service quality refers to that perceived relative to customer expectations and perceptions. According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985), customers should be satisfied if the perceived quality of service exceeds customer expectations. There are enough indicators that directly highlight the association between service quality and customer satisfaction (e.g., Lee, Lee, Yoo, 2000; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry, 1985; Saravanan, Rao, 2007). On the other hand, when customer expectations do not meet desired satisfaction, dissatisfaction arises which leads customers to spread negative word-of-mouth toward the organization. Thus, scholars indicate service quality as a key variable that leads to a higher perceived value for the organizations (Cronin, Brady, Hult, 2000; Parasuraman, Grewal, 2000). Overall e-service quality, customer happiness, and repurchase intentions all exhibit a substantial relationship with e-service quality parameters, but not with word-of-mouth. (Blut et al., 2015). Furthermore, based on online shopping experiences in Taiwan, Tsao et al. (2016) investigated the impact of e-service quality on online loyalty and found that system quality and electronic service quality had significant effects on perceived value, which in turn had a significant influence on online loyalty.

It is widely acknowledged that the quality of service provided should be in line with customer requirements (Chakrabarty, Whitten, Green, 2007). Therefore, many scholars believe that delivering customer needs and meeting expectations is the key to measuring the actual performance of service quality (Asher, 1996; Grönroos, 1990; Presbury, Fitzgerald, Chapman, 2005). In their study, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) stated that the difference in perception and expectation of service affects the satisfaction level of customers. Therefore, several studies have revealed that a high-quality service with appropriate performance helps to achieve a higher level of customer satisfaction (Asher, 1996; Ekinci, 2004; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry, 1985; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry, 1994). By the disconfirmation theory, positive disconfirmation is found when the quality of service meets or exceeds the quality expectations of customers. However, when the perceived quality does not meet the expectation of customers, a negative disconfirmation is found and customers are not satisfied. In addition, many previous studies have suggested a constructive association between service quality and satisfaction (Al-Ababneh, 2013; Ekinci, Dawes, Massey, 2008; González, Comesaña, Brea, 2007; Meng, Elliott, 2009; Rojas, Camarero, 2009; Tuan, 2012). Thus, it is fair to claim that high-quality services have a positive influence on the satisfaction level of tourists.

Those working in marketing research believe that it is certainly a difficult task to define the term *service quality* as it seems to be a personal and subjective concept. Additionally, consumer perception is considered an important component of this theory. The study of Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) suggested that global consumer decisions about the superiority of a product or service define the idea of service quality. In this way, it assimilates both consumer expectations and a firm's perceptions about the quality of services (Grönroos, 1994; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry, 1985). Many scholars have determined perceived quality by utilizing the gap model based on the disconfirmation concept of consumer expectations. In their study, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) discussed another common application which involves the use of the SERVQUAL scale, however, there is work that identified reliability and validity issues (Teas, 1993). As a result, Cronin and Taylor (1992) proposed the idea of consumer perceptions to define service quality which seems to offer a high standard of psychometric and predictive assessment (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry, 1994; Zeithaml, Berry, Parasuraman, 1996). On the other hand, if the quality of service is considered satisfactory or as expected, there is confusion over the use of the term 'satisfaction'. Many researchers point to a high correlation between service quality and satisfaction as both have the same meanings (Cronin Jr, Brady, Hult, 2000; Spreng, Mackoy, 1996); however, they differ in certain aspects (Bansal, Taylor, 1999; Oliver, 1980). Recent studies have proposed even clearer definitions that differentiate both these terms: customer satisfaction is the result of individual and global transactions; while, service quality is considered as the judgment of consumers related to the superiority or inferiority of services and their providers (Bitner, Hubert, 1994), or indicates a common approach of customers regarding services and services providers (Bitner, 1990). Therefore, if we are to analyze the relationship between overall service quality and customer satisfaction, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H_4: Overall service quality is significantly and positively related to customer satisfaction.

2.5. Travel experience

Travel experience could relate to tourist exposure (e.g. tourist destinations, residents, history, culture) and the involvement of service providers (attractions, services) at tourist destinations. It also emerges through the presence, understanding and involvement of tourists in activities, events or attractions at the destination. The travelling experience is a personal state of mind felt by tourists/visitors (Jensen, 2012). While visiting a place, many features or attributes can establish travel experiences for visitors at the destination. Many researchers connect these features with pull factors that include not only facilities and services but also the attraction of the destination. Those pull factors might include a wide range of services (e.g. lodging, food, shopping, sightseeing), attractions and the destination environment (Batra, 2009). Many attributes at island destinations are identical to the broad pull factors of those on the mainland but they may have other unique qualities that draw visitors like beach sports, beach tours, island trips, local food and the environment. Participation and interactions of tourists with the attributes of the destination are the main sources of the 'travel experience' that might impact tourists' satisfaction. The travel experience can moderate the relationship between overall service quality and customer satisfaction. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H_5: Travel experience moderates the relationship between overall service quality and customer satisfaction.

Based on the discussion given above, the comprehensive research model was derived (see Figure 1).

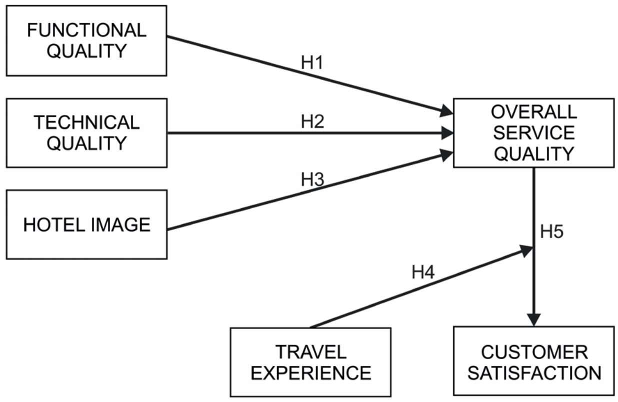

Figure 1. Research model
Source: author

3. Research methodology

The main study aim is to examine the impact of technical quality, functional quality and hotel image on the overall service quality that outcomes in customer satisfaction. Moreover, this study also investigates how customer travel experience moderates the relationship between overall service quality and customer satisfaction. It has utilized an exploratory research design, hence data were collected using a questionnaire survey. The survey technique enabled the researcher to collect data in a shorter time from a larger sample. Items used in the questionnaire to measure the study constructs are adopted from past valid studies.

3.1. Measures and measurements

Overall service quality in hotels was measured using two sub-constructs, functional quality and technical quality. To measure the construct of functional quality, a 26-item scale having five dimensions "tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, confidence and communications," was adopted from the work of Ali et al. (2017), and also previously used by Getty and Getty (2003). 11-items associated with three dimensions of technical quality, "sociability, valence and waiting time", were from the study of Wu and Ko (2013). A 5-item scale was adopted from the work of Nguyen and Leblanc (2001) and Milfelner and Korda (2011), to measure the construction of hotel image. Customer satisfaction was measured with a 4-item scale from the work of Ali et al. (2017). Additionally, the construct of customer travel experience was measured by a 5-item scale from the work of Sedera et al. (2017). Though the validity and reliability of the questionnaire were established by previous valid studies, it was again evaluated through a pilot study analyzing responses from 25 eco-tourists who had recently visited China. The results of this pre-test show excellent reliability as Cronbach alpha values are greater than 0.70 for all constructs.

3.2. Sampling and data collection

The target population of the study was eco-tourists who had recently visited China and stayed at three to five different hotels in the Jiuzhaigou-Sichuan province of China which is well-known as the most visited area by eco-tourists. Data was collected through face-to-face interactions with visitors by involving the help of three research associates. The target was to reach a maximum target population using non-probability and convenience sampling techniques. In a one-month, 500 self-administrated questionnaires were distributed and 362 responses were collected, hence, a response rate of 72% was achieved. Out of these 19 responses were excluded from data analysis due to unengaged responses and missing information. Therefore, the utilizable sample for this study was 341 respondents. Out of these 56% were male and 44% were female; 63% were from China and 37% were international tourists. The majority, 53% were aged from 30 to 40, 23% between 41 and 50, 17% were less than 30, and 7% were above 50.

3.3. Analytical strategy

Covariance-based structural equational modelling (CB-SEM) was used for statistical analysis. AMOS-24 was used to conduct data analysis, as it is considered the latest software to perform structural equational modelling (SEM) that enables the researcher to perform multiple realistic models, instead of developing multiple statistics and regression models. The data were analyzed in two stages, in the first stage data reliability and validity were tested and in the second the hypotheses were tested. The direct and moderation effects were tested using AMOS, while the mediation effect was examined through a slope test using Hayes' process macro.

4. Results

4.1. Description and correlations

Table 2 shows correlations between latent variables providing descriptive statistics. The correlation results demonstrate significant positive correlations between study variables, which provides a hypothetical direction. The results of descriptive statistics show that the majority of the respondents tend to agree that the overall service quality of hotels significantly influences customer satisfaction. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

4.2. Discriminant and convergent validity

Convergent and discriminant validity are determined with the value of average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) (Henseler, Ringle, Sarstedt, 2015). According to Bagozzi and Yi (1988), values of CR higher than 0.60, and 0.50 for AVE indicate excellent convergent validity, while the greater value of the square root of AVE than the construct's correlation, confirms divergent validity (Fornell, Larker, 1981). The results shown in Table 3 confirm excellent convergent and discriminant validities are CR is greater than 0.60, AVE greater than 0.50, and the square root of AVE is greater than the correlation values that are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlation analysis

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. FQ	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2. TQ	0.367**	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
3. IMG	0.506**	0.516**	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
4. OSQ	0.400**	0.417**	0.342**	1	–	–	–	–	–	–
5. TE	0.462**	0.455**	0.589**	0.417**	1	–	–	–	–	–
6. CS	0.409**	0.313**	0.553**	0.439**	0.462**	1	–	–	–	–

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). FQ (Functional Quality), TQ (Technical Quality), IMG (Image), OSQ (Overall Service Quality), TE (Travel Experience), CS (Customer Satisfaction), $n = 341$.
Source: author.

Table 3. Description, reliability and validity

Variables	Mean	S.D	CR	AVE	MSV	Sq Root of AVE
1. FQ	3.74	0.96	0.83	0.51	0.36	0.714
2. TQ	3.13	0.98	0.92	0.50	0.33	0.707
3. IMG	3.91	0.90	0.89	0.61	0.23	0.781
4. OSQ	3.63	0.96	0.83	0.53	0.27	0.728
5. TE	3.97	0.93	0.81	0.58	0.34	0.762
6. CS	3.59	0.93	0.88	0.54	0.22	0.735

Note: $n = 341$, FQ (Functional Quality), TQ (Technical Quality), IMG (Image), OSQ (Overall Service Quality), TE (Travel Experience), CS (Customer Satisfaction).
Source: author.

4.3. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

Before testing the hypotheses CFA was conducted to analyze measurement model fitness. The results shown in Table 4 demonstrate that there was a poor model fit initially but following modification an excellent model fit was achieved in a revised measurement model.

4.4. Test of hypotheses

Hypotheses were tested by employing structural equational modelling (SEM) and results are shown in Table 4. The results show a significant impact of functional quality on overall service quality ($\beta = 0.418$, $p < 0.001$). Technical quality is also a significant predictor of overall service quality ($\beta = 0.393$, $p < 0.001$). Moreover,

Table 4. Measurement model

Measurement model*	χ^2	*df*	χ^2/df	RMSEA	IFI	TLI	CFI
Measurement model (original)	1983.15	695	2.85	0.08	0.86	0.83	0.86
Measurement model (revised)	1234.67	623	1.898	0.05	0.95	0.94	0.95

Note: * Model fit measures cut off criteria = $\chi^2/df < 3.00$; IFI, TLI, & CFI > 0.90; and RMSEA < 0.08.
Source: author.

Table 5. Test of hypothesis direct effect

Relationships	Path coefficients	*p*-value
Functional quality → Overall service quality	0.418	***
Technical quality → Overall service quality	0.393	***
Hotel image → Overall service quality	0.489	***
Overall service quality → Customer satisfaction	0.295	***

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$,*** $p < 0.001$.
Source: author.

Table 6. Mediation effect

Customer satisfaction predicted from overall service quality and travel experience				
DV: Customer satisfaction	b	*p*	95% CI	
SQ**	0.320	< 0.001	0.167	0.373
EXP **	0.349	< 0.001	0.184	0.425
SQ x EXP***	0.236	< 0.001	0.105	0.367
Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction: (X*W), R^2 -chng = 0.0407***, F Statistics = 12.564.				

Conditional effects of the focal predictor (overall service quality) at values of the moderator (travel experience)				
	b	*p*	95% CI	
Low travel experience	0.198	< 0.001	0.135	0.301
Moderate travel experience	0.207	< 0.001	0.105	0.309
High travel experience	0.325	< 0.001	0.192	0.458

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.
Source: author.

hotel image significantly influences the overall service quality ($\beta = 0.489$, $p < 0.001$) and this significantly influence customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.295$, $p < 0.001$), as results reveal in Table 5.

4.5. Moderation effect

The results of the moderation effect of travel experience are presented in Table 6. The significant effect of mediation is also shown in Figure 2.

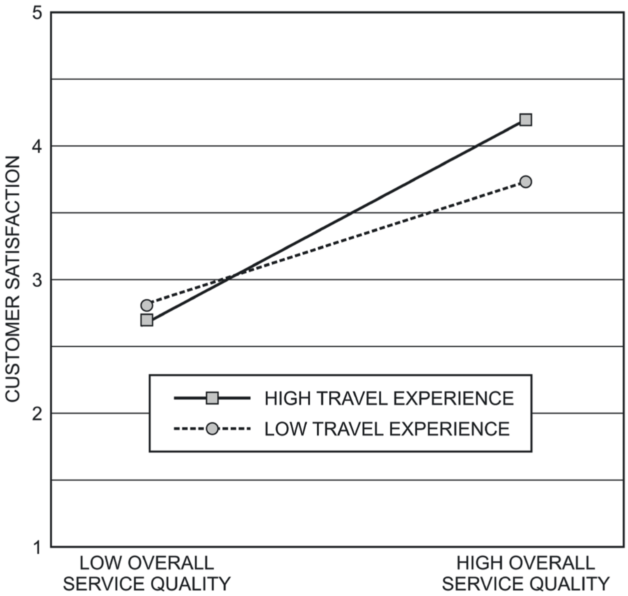

Figure 2. Slope test
Source: author

The results show a significant and positive relationship between overall service quality and customer satisfaction. This relationship gets stronger in the presence of travel experience as a mediator. The conditional effect of the moderator demonstrates the relationship between overall service quality and customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.198$, $p < 0.001$) when there is low or less travel experience. At the moderate level of experience this relationship becomes strong ($\beta = 0.207$, $p < 0.001$), whereas when there is high travel experience the relationship between overall service quality and customer satisfaction is stronger still ($\beta = 0.325$, $p < 0.001$). Significant R^2 change and F statistics also confirm the significant mediation of travel experience.

5. Discussion

In the current study, we have predicted in hypothesis H_1 that functional quality is significantly and positively related to overall service quality. The study findings confirm the predicted relationship between functional quality and overall service quality. These findings are well supported by many past works such as that of Ali et al. (2017) who found a significant and positive impact of functional quality on overall service quality in the Malaysian hotel industry. Moreover, the work of Babic-Hodovic, Arslanagic-Kalajdzic and Imsirpasic (2017), Kasiri et al. (2017) and Nasrul (2020) also found a positive correlation between functional quality and overall quality. The present study also examines the relationship between technical quality and overall service quality. To investigate this, we formulated and tested hypothesis H_2, which predicts the positive impact of technical quality on the overall service quality of the hotel industry in China. The study results established the predicted relationship, and the findings are well aligned with the past work of Li et al. (2016), and Ali et al. (2017). We have hypothesized that hotel image also influences its overall service quality. To examine this impact, we have tested hypothesis H_3 and found that hotel image has a significant effect on overall service quality. The work of Martín and Román (2017) and Hassan and Shamsudin (2019) also found a positive relationship between corporate image and overall service quality. The main objective of this research is to investigate the impact of overall service quality on customer satisfaction in the hotel industry in China. The overall service quality of hotels is measured by dividing it into two sub-dimensions "functional quality" and "technical quality." To examine the predicted impact, we have formulated and tested hypothesis H_4. The study results indicate that overall service quality has a significant impact on customer satisfaction and the findings reveal that the overall service quality of hotels is positively related to customer satisfaction. These findings are well aligned with numerous past studies i.e. Moghavvemi, Lee and Lee (2018), Gong and Yi (2018), Miranda, Tavares and Queiró (2018) and Tefera and Govender (2017), which also found a significant and positive relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction.

6. Implications

Service quality factors always remain important in satisfying customers. Therefore, this research has demonstrated the significance of studying these factors and their effect on customer satisfaction. It has contributed to the literature on technical quality, functional quality, image, overall service quality and customer satisfaction. Researchers and academics focusing on service quality or customer satisfaction in the context of tourism can use this work as a guideline for making effective policies. In terms of methodological implications, the questionnaire adapted by this research can be used by future studies to ensure customer satisfaction linked with overall service quality.

7. Limitations

The major issues regarding tourist satisfaction and perceived overall service quality are discussed but there is a need to focus on other gaps highlighted and these can be addressed in future works. There is a need for great care while interpreting the results in other economic sectors because in this study convenience sampling was used and we cannot apply its results generally to tourists. It is recommended that future work should focus on other types of tourism as here it only focused on eco-tourism. However, for the satisfaction of the customer, emotions are now an emerging subject and could be an interesting topic for future study. Hence, the addition of variables to the proposed model can be checked in future studies. Moreover, the study is limited to China and future work could focus on any country with a large sample size. Further, the model of study can be enhanced by introducing new moderators with the effect of perceived risk, reputation or trust as possibilities.

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Content analysis of hotel reviews as a quality management tool: Preliminary verification of the SERVQUAL scale

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to identify the main factors for the quality of hotel services and to verify the SERVQUAL measurement scale commonly used in the services sector. In order to achieve this goal, an innovative approach of quantitative and qualitative content analysis of reviews published by users of the reservation portals Hotels.com and Booking.com was used. The study was based on more than 167,000 opinions on 3,4,5-star hotels located in Warsaw. They were 'scraped' with an indexing robot. The research outlines a list of the most important topics raised in those comments which correspond to the factors of perceived service quality of hotels. Among these are location, room attributes, cleanliness, breakfast and staff. In addition, the most important criteria used by customers to describe each of the listed elements are also reported. The results made it possible to identify differences between the operationalization of the constructs indicated in the SERVQUAL scale and the descriptions of each factor in the spontaneous comments of internet users. Thus, the need for adjustment to the current operationalizations of the SERVQUAL model to better reflect the sentiments of consumers in the hotel industry, or even developing a completely new tool for measuring service quality, was demonstrated.

KEYWORDS

service quality, SERVQUAL method verification, OTA, analysis of opinions published online

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1. Introduction

Increasing globalization and liberalization are affecting the economies not only in developing countries, but also in developed ones. The focus of organizations is also changing from profit maximization alone to maximizing profits through increasing customer satisfaction. Competitive pressures, fueled by unprecedented access to information, are forcing organizations to pay attention not only to processes, but also to how they are executed. In the 21st century, also due to the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, the business scenario has changed dramatically. The competitive environment that companies face today, regardless of whether they offer physical products or services, makes it crucial for them to be aware of and recognize the benefits of high quality offerings. With its strong impact on perceived customer satisfaction, as well as its influence on customer loyalty, it is essential for a company to gain a competitive advantage (Cronin, Taylor, 1992; Fernandes, Solimun, 2018; Yang, 2003; Zeithaml, Parasuraman, Malhotra, 2000).

Quality should therefore be considered a strategic instrument in service companies' attempts to achieve their business objectives. However, the service product, due to its intangibility and high variability, is not easy to describe unambiguously. Thus, defining and studying its quality is challenging. In addition, it should be noted that a tourism service has hedonic, aesthetic and emotional components that are not often inherent to other services, such as finance or machine repair. Tourism services are also seen as a unique product because of the tangible and intangible elements that are part of it, and which affect the tourist's experience (Poon, Low, 2005). Because hotel services are categorized as high-contact services, hotel customers participate in a specific experience. As a result, hotel managers and employees must be able to transform all interactions with guests into a positive experience. A service provider's success depends on the understanding of the fundamental drivers of consumer requirements and meeting those requirements in such a way that guests are satisfied on their very first visit (Juwaheer, Ross, 2003). As a result, customer-oriented hotel companies should identify the needs of their target audience and design the service encounter process accordingly.

Conventionally, companies conduct surveys in order to see the actual level of satisfaction among customers. Based on the results of such studies, they make arrangements to improve quality by enhancing the performance of those aspects that seem to lower satisfaction. By contrast, thanks to the Web 2.0 technologies that involve Web users in co-creation of content available on the internet, it is possible to track their sentiment regarding consumed services. Despite the fact that User Generated Content (UGC) on the Web is widely available, and online published opinions on hospitality services are a valuable and reliable source of information, there is still a lack of research on the use of this source of information. Most authors continue to conduct research on small samples, often referring to small local populations.

This paper presents an innovative approach to assessing the quality of hospitality services. It relies on data from user comments on reservation portals (Booking.com and Hotels.com) rather than data collected with survey questionnaires, which was the most common method in past research. The findings allow the goal of the study which was the identification of factors that most affect the quality of service, as well discussion of the shortcomings of the SERVQUAL and SERVPERF measurement tools commonly used by researchers and practitioners, to be achieved.

The article begins with a comprehensive literature review. The following section presents a description of the research method and the results obtained. A summary and discussion are included at the end.

2. Literature review

For more than four decades, researchers have been interested in the topic of service quality. Many of them have attempted to define the concept of quality in the service sector, define its essence and identify the most important factors influencing the final quality of the service. Because of its intangible nature and the customer's involvement in the entire process of its creation, as well as its high variability, the service product is difficult to describe unambiguously. Thus, defining and studying its quality is also a challenge. According to Grönroos (1984), service quality consists of functional quality (the way the service is delivered) and technical quality (the result of service performance). Quality in a service organization is "a measure of the extent to which the delivered service meets the customer's expectations" (Ghobadian, Speller, Jones, 1994). For most services, the customer is present during the process of service delivery. This means that perceived quality is influenced not only by the service outcome, but also by the service process. Perceived quality lies on a continuum, with unacceptable quality at one end and ideal quality at the other. The points in between represent different degrees of quality. A particular point on the continuum is determined by comparing the customer's previous expectations with the actual service delivery process and the service outcome (Ghobadian, Speller, Jones, 1994). A conceptual model (known as the gap model) depicting the moments leading to discrepancies between the expected and perceived service was presented in 1985 by Parasuraman et al. (1985).

Understanding the essence of service quality is the starting point for determining why service provision is rated highly or poorly. In the literature, several basic approaches that refer to different concepts for defining the dimensions of service quality can be found. One of them, authored by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, includes five basic areas. These authors developed (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry, 1985) and later refined (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry, 1988, 1991) the SERVQUAL method for measuring service quality. According to the premise of this method, service quality should be measured by identifying the gaps between customers' service expectations and their perception of how service providers actually perform. If expectations are met or exceeded, service quality is perceived as satisfactory. SERVQUAL was initially based on ten original dimensions of service quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry, 1985). Following additional research, these dimensions were reduced to five: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry, 1988).

The SERVQUAL scale has been used to measure quality in various service sector industries (Bojanic, Rosen, 1994; Bouman, van der Wiele, 1992; Purcărea, Gheorghe, Petrescu, 2013), including the hotel industry (Kumar, Banga, Thapa, 2011; Wrukowska, 2019). Despite its value and popularity, it has received significant criticism since its inception. Much of the critique of SERVQUAL has focused on the use of expectations as the benchmark for measuring service quality. Many researchers (Babakus, Boller, 1992; Brady, Cronin, Brand, 2002; Cronin, Taylor, 1992, 1994) have emphasized that expectations do not add value to the measurement of service quality. As a result, they proposed that service quality be measured using an outcomes-only approach rather than the SERVQUAL scale, which employs the concept of gaps. So, the SERVPERF tool was offered as an alternative to the SERVQUAL scale (Cronin, Taylor, 1992, 1994). The modified method uses the same scale based on the same dimensions of service quality (i.e. tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, reliability and empathy), but omits expectations and evaluates only perceived service quality. In recent years, the SERVPERF scale, which is easier to use for practitioners, has been employed to measure service quality in a variety of service industries (Nguyen, Chaipoopirutana, Combs, 2011; Yao, Ding, 2011), including hotels (Nadiri, Hussain, 2005).

However, a review of the literature reveals that rather than implementing the recommended tool with the original operationalizations of its constructs (dimensions of service quality), many authors adapt and modify the scale to fit the specifics of the analyzed service industries. Researchers investigating service quality in specific industries, such as hospitality services, indicated a need to expand the list of quality dimensions to include more items or interpreted those already identified by the authors of the SERVQUAL and SERVPERF methods in different ways.

Wilkins et al., (2007), for example, identified three main areas of service quality: tangible product, service experience, and food and beverage quality. Mmutle and Shonhe (2017), on the other hand, discovered a positive relationship between front-line employees' personality traits and guests' perceptions of service quality. The following table shows selected approaches to the study of service quality over the last three decades in hotels, the research methods used, and an indication of the quality dimensions developed as a result of the analyses.

Table 1. Approaches to studying service quality measurement scales and quality dimensions

Author and year	Brief overview	Quality dimensions of hotel services
Knutson et al., 1990	The authors created a scale named LODGSERV. The 5 dimensions of quality taken from SERVQUAL were first operationalized with 36 statements (using a 7-degree Likert scale) to be reduced to 26 statements.	tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy
Oberoi, Hales, 1990	The authors operationalized the two dimensions describing service quality (the tangible element and the intangible element) with a total of 23 statements.	tangibles, intangibles
Saleh, Ryan, 1991	The authors used the service quality dimensions from the SERVQUAL method but operationalized them with 33 statements using a 5-degree Likert scale.	tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy
Webster, Hung, 1994	The authors took as their starting point the SERVQUAL model with the original 10-dimensional scale. However, they made considerable modifications by developing 10 items describing 8 dimensions of their own and abandoning two questionnaires in favor of a single one examining both perception of the service provided and customer expectations. They used a scale of –2 to 2.	tangibles, reliability, communication, responsiveness, security, courtesy, understanding, access
Frochot, Hughes, 2000	The authors developed a scale called HISTOQUAL to measure service quality in historic lodging facilities. It includes five dimensions of quality operationalized with 24 statements on a five-point Likert scale. The starting point for the development of the scale was the SERVQUAL model supplemented with additional dimensions and with statements adapted to the specifics of the service under consideration.	tangibles, responsiveness, communications, consumables, empathy
Choi, Chu, 2001	A factor analysis method was used to extract 7 factors that potentially influence hotel choice, and then using multiple regression, the impact of each factor on customer satisfaction and the likelihood of returning to the hotel was assessed.	staff service quality, room quality, general amenities, business services, value, security, international direct dial facilities

Table 1 (cont.)

Mangan, Collins, 2002	The goal was to measure factors that influence customers' perceptions of bed-and-breakfast operators' service quality. The scale consists of six factors developed on the basis of the SERVQUAL model enhanced with additional elements relevant to the specific nature of the analyzed services. The authors obtained a 42-item scale to measure the constructs. Each question was measured with 7 Likert-style response options.	security, empathy, bedroom/bathroom, service reliability, breakfast, trust
Getty, Getty, 2003	The authors used the 10 dimensions of service quality of the original SERVQUAL method but with new operationalizations. The adopted final model comprised 5 dimensions, some of which were new concepts, while others combined SERVQUAL dimensions. The final scale called the lodging quality index (LQI) covered 26 statements measuring both the expectations and perceptions of the service provided.	tangibility, reliability – includes original reliability and credibility dimensions, responsiveness, confidence – includes original competence, courtesy, security, and access dimensions, communication – includes original communication and understanding dimensions
Ekinci, Prokopaki, Cobanoglu, 2003	The scale includes two dimensions of perceived quality described by 13 statements measured by a 7-point Likert scale.	tangibles, intangibles
Juwaheer, 2004	The starting point for developing the research tool was the SERVQUAL model. However, the author supplemented the quality dimensions with additional elements. A scale consisting of 39 statements measured by a 7-point Likert scale.	reliability, assurance, extra room benefits sought, staff communication, additional amenities sought, room attractiveness and décor, empathy, staff outlook and accuracy, food and service, hotel surroundings and environment
Nadiri, Hussain, 2005	The authors used the SERVPERF approach based on 22 statements from the original SERVQUAL scale. Factor analysis extracted only two dimensions of hotel service quality.	tangibles, intangibles
Poon, Low, 2005	Based on a literature review, the authors created a questionnaire with 48 statements describing 12 factors that can affect hotel customer satisfaction.	hospitality, accommodation, food and beverages, recreation and entertainment, supplementary services, security and safety, innovation and value-added services, transportation, location, appearance, pricing and payment
Akbaba, 2006	The author chose the SERVQUAL method as a starting point. However, modifications were made regarding the operationalization of individual constructs. Originally 29 statements on a 5-point Likert scale were used. As a result of the analysis, 25 statements were left and the original quality dimensions were modified by partially adding new constructs.	tangibles, adequacy in service supply, understanding and caring, assurance, convenience
Albacete-Sáez, Mar Fuentes-Fuentes, Javier Lloréns-Montes, 2007	The purpose of the study was to determine quality dimensions and evaluate service quality in rural lodging facilities. The authors developed their own instrument to measure service quality in lodging facilities, consisting of seven dimensions and 36 statements following a 7-point Likert scale format.	personnel response, complementary offer, tourist relations, basic demands, tangible elements, security, empathy
Wilkin, Merrilees, Herington, 2007	The study assessed service quality in luxury and first-class hotels with a new scale encompassing 7 dimensions described by 30 statements.	stylish comfort, quality staff, personalization, room quality, speedy service, added extras, quality food, beverages
Mohsin, Lockyer, 2010	The authors used a self-designed questionnaire developed from a literature review, which used 23 statements measured on a 7-point Likert scale.	hotel ambience and staff courtesy, food and beverage product and service quality, staff presentation and knowledge, reservation services, overall value for money
Ariffin, 2013	The author's goal was to identify factors for assessing hotel hospitality. The scale developed included 3 dimensions measured by 11 statements.	personalization, comfort, warm welcoming

Rauch et al., 2015	Based on a literature review, the authors proposed their own questionnaire to evaluate the reservation and check-in system, cleanliness and maintenance of the facility and the room, courtesy of staff, benefits and amenities offered, and location. In addition, they asked about the overall fulfillment of expectations and the price/quality ratio. The conducted factor analysis identified three dimensions of service quality.	service product, service delivery, service environment
Tefera, Govender, 2016	The authors created a scale named HOTSPERF. The scale was established by adding to the SERVQUAL/ SERVPERF scales three additional statements, modifying the others, and using a 5-point Likert format. The scale describes two dimensions of quality.	tangibles, intangibles
Anwar, 2017	The author used the concept of the SERVPERF method, but with his own operationalization of the constructs. The impact of each quality dimension on customer satisfaction was also evaluated.	tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy
Alzoubi, Vij, Vij, Hanaysha, 2021	The authors operationalized 4 dimensions of quality using 12 statements on a 5-degree Likert scale and assessed their impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty.	tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance
Ali et al., 2021	With the SERVQUAL method as a starting point, the authors offered their own operationalization of the constructs with 15 statements. The analysis ignored the gap between service expected and service received, and focused solely on assessing the impact of the quality dimensions on customer satisfaction.	tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy

Source: author.

As previously stated, the authors of the papers covered in the summary above overwhelmingly used the quality dimensions included in the SERVQUAL/ SERVPERF method as their starting point. The operationalization of the constructs, however, were predominantly original creations of the authors of the cited articles, frequently formed by literature studies, the authors' own experiences or – less commonly – qualitative research such as interviews with experts. In one study, a questionnaire was designed from observations of consumer behavior, while in another the most instrumental were depth interviews conducted with customers of hotel facilities. Despite many individual attempts to establish conclusively the dimensionality and operationalization of the service quality concept, the overwhelming sentiment was one of incomplete work, with the outcomes ill-fitting the specifics of hotel services, a selected target group, a certain investigated company or a particular context.

With this in mind, it is possible to conclude that the measurement tools used to date appear to be unreliable, with limited practical utility and questionable validity of the results obtained. It should also be noted that the measurement tools in the SERVQUAL and SERVPERF methods were developed in the 1980s and 1990s. Since then, the service product itself, how services are delivered, how they are organized, and how customers perceive them have all changed. Furthermore, the diversity of industries and service offerings is vast and many services did not even exist at the time the measurement tools were created. Also, using a single scale to assess quality across the entire service sector in the economy may limit the reliability of the results obtained. The experience of existing customers of hotel companies has also increased significantly, resulting in higher service expectations. Advances in information technology have led to an unprecedented ability to compare offers from different providers, which raises customer awareness even further.

It should be noted that the cited studies were mostly conducted on groups of customers of specific service companies, often limited to residents of a single country. Therefore, these results can have practical applications, for example, for managers of the analyzed companies, but may lack in external validity to accurately extrapolate the findings to other businesses and contexts. Such research contributes a valuable voice in the debate over the quality of hotel services and its dimensions, but is not conclusive or representative. To address this research gap, this study employs an innovative approach by sourcing data not from self-administered surveys of consumers but rather from spontaneous comments of hotel guests left by them on online booking portals.

In comparison with the traditional survey method, collecting data from content created by internet users is, in most cases, less cumbersome and is free from the difficulties associated with face-to-face interactions with people. In addition, user-generated content provides an opportunity to learn about the service experience, as it reflects customers' emotions and gives qualitative expression to their assessments of service quality. In addition, opinions published online are more relevant, reliable, detailed and timely (Lu, Stepchenkova, 2015).

Online intermediary platforms provide tourists with tools to express their degree of satisfaction with their hotel stay, as well as to criticize unsatisfactory operations (García-Pablos, Cuadros, Linaza, 2016). Researchers seem to be getting more appreciative of the value of the data contained in Internet user comments. Nevertheless, there are still relatively few publications showcasing results of research on hotel service quality based on customer reviews especially in comparison to the rapidly expanding dataset generated by Internet users every day. Authors of previous studies have used various datasets, sourcing them most often from platforms such as TripAdvisor, Yelp or Airbnb. There have also been studies using comments from online travel agency (OTA) platforms, such as Agoda, Booking.com or Hotels.com.

In the literature, the most widely represented is research from the computer science perspective with the main focus on evaluating data acquisition techniques or sentiment analysis tools, rather than investigating hotel service quality within the framework of management science and marketing (e.g. Ray, Garain, Sarkar, 2021; Sodanil, 2016; Zvarevashe, Olugbara, 2018). Also, some authors looked for the most frequently commented topics by hotel guests (Akhtar et al., 2017; Kiatkawsin, Sutherland, Kim, 2020), but there was no in-depth analysis of the components of hotel service quality and their consequences for the overall satisfaction of consumers.

A different approach was presented by researchers from management science. Zhang et al. (2021), for example, conducted an in-depth analysis of the various aspects that can have the greatest impact on customer satisfaction. Xu and Li (2016), on the other hand, examined published reviews in terms of the determinants that contribute to customer dissatisfaction. However, they focused mainly on the differences found between facilities in different categories.

A few previous studies based on on-line customer comments are also not without limitations: one major weakness is a general disconnect with previous theoretical considerations on key dimensions of service quality.

3. Research method

The main objective of the study was to identify the factors that most determine hotel customers' satisfaction and dissatisfaction, i.e. those that have the greatest impact on perceived service quality.

Using an indexing robot prepared in Phyton, more than 600,000 comments on 3, 4 and 5-star hotels located in Warsaw were downloaded from Hotels.com and Booking.com platforms. It was decided not to include data from lower category facilities in the analysis due to the different levels of customer expectations and therefore a different approach to the quality aspect. The survey was conducted on a sample of Warsaw hotels due to the wide variety of offerings in the top categories of facilities and the high number of tourists visiting the Polish capital also from abroad. The oldest review included in the analysis was from July 1, 2017, and the most recent from September 9, 2020. To standardize and allow for further analysis, all downloaded content was lemmatized and translated into English. After preliminary analysis and reduction of incomplete, erroneous, illegible or untranslatable data, 156,000 reviews from Booking.com and 11,700 from Hotels.com were accepted for further analysis. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative content analysis methods using Excel, SPSS 27 and MaxQDA 2020.

4. Findings

In order to determine the most important quality factors, opinions posted on both reservation services were quantitatively analyzed, identifying the topics most frequently commented on. As a first step, the frequencies of all words used in the comments were counted, and then a dictionary was developed that allowed for grouping related terms, near terms or close synonyms of the same terms (e.g. location, localized, placed, situated, near etc.). This made it possible to obtain a shortened list of terms with enhanced readability. The results achieved at this stage are presented by the word clouds below, where the font size corresponds to the frequency of the term in the comments.

Figure 1. The main themes of hotel reviews on Booking.com
Source: author

Figure 2. The main themes of hotel reviews on Hotels.com
Source: author

Similar issues – room, location, breakfast, cleanliness and staff – come to the fore in the opinions of customers on both analyzed platforms. Following that, comments were divided into positive (1–5) and negative (6–10) based on point scores (scale of 1–10). As in the first stage, major themes were identified, and the results are presented in the table below.

By comparing the reported results, some similarities can be observed between the two groups. In both cases, room, cleanliness, breakfast (and food services) or factors related to staff – their approach, competence and behavior – are of similar importance. This confirms the significance of the identified factors in shaping the perceived service quality. An analysis of the comments in the dissatisfied customer subgroup revealed the issue of not providing the value and benefits that were promised in promotional materials. Pertinent comments mentioned published photos and descriptions that did not correspond to reality, failure to provide requested provisions (e.g. an extra bed or a particular bed size) or hidden costs not included in the quoted price (e.g. extra charge for a parking space). The preceding evidence supports the importance of prior expectations in shaping the final level of satisfaction and the validity of treating the difference between expected and delivered service as a measure of service quality. The factor most frequently commented on in both subgroups was location of the facility. However, it was not the key reason for dissatisfaction among unhappy customers, while satisfied visitors indeed stressed the importance of the hotel's convenient location. This may reflect the fact that customers, having complete, verifiable information, are already aware when choosing accommodation with a subpar location and do not feel disappointed by it. On the other hand, a prime location seems to be a great convenience during a stay at a travel destination, which can actually enhance the initial positive attitude and the final impression of the stay.

The next step involved an in-depth analysis of the most important themes identified. Word trees were created for this purpose, allowing for a qualitative, deeper evaluation of the descriptions used in the consumers' opinions, as well as the identification of detailed issues determining the evaluation of the main

Table 2. The main themes identified in positive and negative reviews

Main themes among dissatisfied customers	Main themes among satisfied customers
	

Source: author.

Figure 3. The *room* word tree created from the content of reviews posted on Booking.com and Hotels.com
Source: author

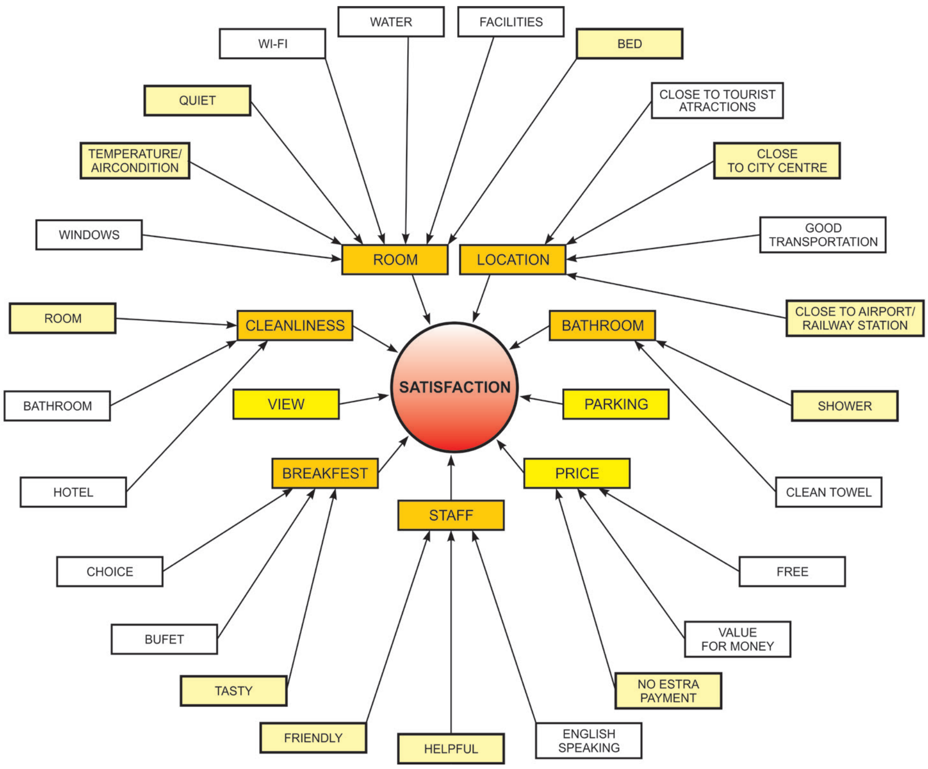

Figure 4. Determinants of customer satisfaction of hotel companies: a summary of qualitative content analysis of comments from Booking.com and Hotels.com
Note: the importance of a given factor indicated in the analyzed reviews was marked with a tone of color – the more a given factor was commented on the darker the color is
Source: author

identified factors. Due to a large volume of obtained results, only one example of a word tree in the subgroup of dissatisfied customers is presented below, relating to the room, which was one of the most frequently referenced aspects (Figure 3).

A summary of the qualitative content analysis of the comments is presented in the chart below (Figure 4). The darker color highlights topics that, due to their higher frequency of occurrence in the comments, can be considered more important in affecting perceived service quality.

Another major finding is the confirmation of strong relationships between quality determinants, which suggests that one weaker quality aspect can be offset by other quality drivers with more positive consumer evaluations. For example, a convenient location, cleanliness, or positive attitude and competence of the staff can compensate for room deficiencies or outdated decor. Consequently, service quality is best assessed with a comprehensive approach, simultaneously accounting for multiple determinants.

The obtained results can be related to quality dimension of the SERVQUAL/ SERVPERF methods. All the dimensions of quality included in these methods are also reflected in internet users' comments. However, the operationalizations of the constructs proposed by the authors of the SERVQUAL/SERVPERF methods differ from the themes and topics found in the hotel clients' statements. Internet users also pay attention to somewhat different aspects of quality dimensions. This suggests that the measurement scales used in the study of quality of hospitality services, or quality dimensions themselves, should be revised, and new measurement tools developed. A summary of the themes raised in the comments (extracted with the qualitative and quantitative text analysis), along with a suggested reference to the quality dimensions from the SERVQUAL/ SERVPERF method, is presented in Table 3.

5. Conclusions and discussion

The conducted study made it possible to identify the main factors influencing the evaluation of hotel service quality by customers (Figure 4). The most important and most frequently commented factors were room, cleanliness, location, staff and food services, and cost of the stay. Other authors of studies using web user-generated content also presented similar

Table 3. Key themes raised in comments published on Booking.com and Hotels.com

Quality dimentions – SERVQUAL	Operationalization of constructs – SERVQUAL	Key themes found in comments
Tangibles	Up-to-date equipment Physical facilities are visually appealing Employees well-dressed/neat Appearance of the physical facilities are consistent with the type of service industry	cleanliness, localization, room facilities, temperature/air conditioning, fresh air, quiet place, bathroom, breakfast
Assurance	Employees should be trustworthy Customers should feel safe when transacting with employees Employees should be polite Employees should get adequate support from the firm to do their job well	staff – language skills, professional staff, service-minded staff, staff attitude
Empathy	Firms should not be expected to give each customer individualized attention (negative) Employees should not be expected to give each customer individualized attention (negative) It is unrealistic to expect employees to fully understand the needs of the customer (negative) Firms should not necessarily have to operate at hours convenient to all customers (negative)	customized offers on request, extra bed, extra facilities, staff attitude
Responsiveness	You do not receive prompt service from firm X Employees of X are not always willing to help customers Employees are too busy to respond customer requests promptly	quick check-in, staff response to requests, helpful staff
Reliability	The firm meets their promised time-frames for response The firm is sympathetic and reassuring, when the customer has problems They are dependable They provide their services at the times promised They keep accurate records	no extra payment/hidden costs, descriptions/pictures correspond to reality

Source: author.

conclusions. Barreda and Bilgihan (2013) after analyzing reviews of hotels published on TripAdvisor, found that factors such as cleanliness, location and staff were significant determinants of quality, and were frequently mentioned in reviews. Pacheco (2017) presents similar conclusions, although indicating differences in the relevance of different elements of the service offering. He analyzed customer reviews of Portuguese hotels and indicated that factors such as room, service and cost-benefit ratio were important to all reviewers regardless of region and type of facility. In contrast, location and cleanliness appear to be necessary only for some regions and hotel segments. According to (Zhao Zhang, Hu, Xu, Liu, 2021), the most frequently exposed themes in the reviews were service (related to staff), room, location and sleep (referring to quietness, beds). The importance of cost and price in assessing service quality, indicated in the results, was also confirmed by Ye, Li, Wang, Law, (2014) in their study.

This study confirms postulated by many authors (e.g. Barreda, Bilgihan, 2013; Bertan, Bayran, Benzergil, 2015; Callarisa et al., 2012; Lee, Blum, 2015; Zhu, Yin, He, 2014) the validity of using available online published customer reviews as a credible source of information for management decision-making including in the formation of hotel quality policy.

It should be noted that the comments analyzed were limited to urban facilities located in the capital city of Poland. It is possible that commenters will focus on different aspects of experience in hotels located in smaller towns or tourist resorts, where travel goals, and thus customer expectations and preferences, may differ. Another limitation is the use of aggregate data combining opinions from visitors to markedly different hotels in terms of the quality of services offered and customers' profiles. Regardless of the hotel type, its managers should consider making more regular use of web user-generated content by incorporating this kind of data into their marketing information system. Benefits can be gained by looking not only into own guests' reviews but also by exploring comments left by visitors to competitor facilities. The recurring themes revealed in the comments indicate the most important factors for customers' (dis)satisfaction. Comments on reservation services, unlike traditional questionnaire methods, are generated spontaneously and are not limited to the themes indicated by the researcher. As such, they can be considered a more reliable and objective source of data than questionnaire-based surveys.

The analysis confirmed the postulate made by many researchers regarding the need to revise and adapt service quality survey tools (e.g. SERVQUAL) to better match the specifics of the industry under investigation. The satisfaction factors revealed in the study differ significantly from those proposed in the SERVQUAL method (Table 3). As a result, it is recommended that, following further in-depth analysis of Internet reviews and comments, as well as survey-based quantitative research, a new measurement scale be developed that could better serve practitioners in shaping service product quality.

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Identifying quality gaps in tourism for people with disabilities: Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA)

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to assess the significance (importance) and level of inconvenience of selected attributes of tourist services provided at particular stages of the supply chain in tourism (information, accommodation, transport, organization and intermediation) in relation to people with various types and degrees of disability. The survey conducted among the disabled helped to identify quality gaps in the provision of tourism services, taking into account their complementarity and accessibility at every stage of delivery. The method of Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) and basic measures of descriptive statistics were used to analyze empirical data. The study will help to indicate to what extent the tourist experience of a disabled person and the type of disability affect the assessment of the significance (importance) and inconvenience of selected attributes of tourist services. The results of the research can be used by entrepreneurs to analyze the quality and reliability of services provided by their partners and the behavior and needs of the disabled in tourism. They will also be useful for local and regional authorities responsible for ensuring the competitiveness and inclusiveness of tourism regions.

KEYWORDS

tourism of people with disabilities, Importance-Performance Analysis, quality gaps

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1. Introduction

The universal accessibility of tourism facilities, products and services is increasingly becoming a subject of interest to authors of research and academic publications, as well as organizations responsible for tourism policy and service providers. New normative instruments and recommendations are formulated regarding accessible tourism ("tourism for all", "universal design"), which is an important part of any responsible and sustainable tourism policy, and which should cover the entire tourism value chain (UNWTO, 2022). It is strongly emphasized that although the problem of accessibility is understood primarily in the context of human rights, nevertheless, the inclusion of those with disabilities in tourism is also a business opportunity for tourist regions and companies, allowing the attractiveness of the offer to be increased, the scale of the demand and, consequently, revenues (Dwyer, Darcy, 2011). Accessibility is seen as one of the four pillars in the development of smart cities and smart destinations, alongside innovation, technology and sustainable development (Porto, Rucci, Ciaschi, 2018). It is worth noting, however, that among those with disabilities, discussion on the conditions for full participation in social life, the inclusiveness of tourism areas and services in particular, often goes beyond the architectural and urban barriers that have so far dominated public discourse. On the other hand, there is a growing problem of IT exclusion, experienced not only by people with registered disability, but also by the elderly, less educated and poor (Vila, González, Darcy, 2018). Therefore, the question arises whether technological progress and the use of modern digital communication tools facilitates mainstreaming into social and economic life, or if it is becoming another barrier that is difficult to overcome?

Taking into account the fact that new quality gaps have appeared in the chain of tourist services (for example due to the expansion of modern technologies), the aim of the article is to assess the significance (importance) and level of inconvenience of selected attributes of tourist services provided at the most important stages of the tourist product supply chain (tourist information, accommodation services, transport, organization and intermediation) in relation to people with various types and degrees of disability. Opinion surveys conducted among this group of consumers has made it possible to identify quality gaps in the provision of tourist services, taking into account the problem of their complementarity and availability at every stage of the provision. For the analysis of empirical data, the Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) method was adopted and the basic measures of descriptive statistics were used.

Different types of disabilities impede the use of travel services to varying degrees and extents; they can also involve different areas of life. Independent functioning, as referred to in the applicable provisions of national law, UN guidelines and European Union regulations (e.g. UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006), refers not only to access to the physical environment, means of transport, but also information and communication, including information and communication technologies and systems. Naturally, a person with disabilities becomes more and more involved in such market phenomena as online promotion and distribution, the impact of social media, mobile marketing, online contracts and payments, or artificial intelligence. New technologies in travel services, from the consumer's point of view operating primarily in the realm of the smartphone, are both mobile internet, but also interactive communication, or the ability to provide comments and feedback to guests in real time. They enable not only easier trip planning, but also a variety of services before, during and after the trip (Van Wee, 2016). Accessibility in terms of technology should therefore be compatible with the main elements of accessibility to accommodation, transportation, or recreational services. Such access to tourism services is also expected by those with disabilities, otherwise they will be increasingly marginalized as consumers. In this situation, the question of whether individual countries, institutions or companies apply appropriate standards, both within the framework of their own laws and United Nations regulations, on the accessibility of online tourism information and supporting more sustainable tourism, is becoming the subject of numerous analyses (Akgül, Vatansever, 2016; Benckendorff, Sheldon, Fesenmaier, 2014; Enamorado, 2017; Mayordomo-Martinez et. al., 2019; UNWTO, 2022; Vila, González, Darcy, 2020).

Difficulties for people with disabilities, but also seniors, in using modern communication technologies relates to both the equipment (computers, tablets, smartphones, message boards) and the services provided through such media. This is a new dimension to the limitations and barriers observed in social participation, including tourism. Most of the websites that make available the numerous services related to tourism and provided online are designed with the aesthetic needs of sighted people in mind and with a focus on marketing purposes that require an attractive application design. More often than not, this does not go hand in hand with their accessibility for the visually and hearing impaired using specialized software, as well as for the elderly; this definitely limits, or in extreme cases prevents, access to information. In turn, it seems that among people and institutions responsible for the proper application of new technologies there is a lack of full awareness and knowledge of the specific needs of those at risk of IT exclusion, and often the inappropriate form of applications used online is the result of haste or underestimation of the seriousness of the problem.

The concept of disability can refer to various spheres of human functioning: activities of daily living, orientation in the environment (including the acquisition of information and knowledge) and physical environment (spatial orientation), professional work and economic independence, and the ability to participate in various manifestations of social life, i.e. social integration. Activities that are increasingly encroaching on the world of modern technology include the range of activities necessary to use an air transportation service using modern technology, with the result that a journey should be smoother, faster and more stress-free (online check-in, Common Use Self-Service kiosk (CUSS), self-back drop (baggage drop), self-tagging (baggage self-tagging), and smartphone apps, such as those used for check-in or baggage location. This raises the question of how to use the all-encompassing capabilities of the smartphone as a source of tourist information, service reservation or audio guide in cooperation with those with disabilities.

2. Methodology

The article uses an analysis of existing data and the results of a diagnostic survey carried out using the CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interview) method among

610 randomly selected people with disabilities from all over Poland; as a tool, questionnaire interviews were used, containing three groups of issues allowing for the assessment of the indicated attributes of tourist services and seven personal questions, allowing the correlation between the respondents' opinions and their selected socio-demographic characteristics to be determined. The interviews were conducted with people with disabilities aged 15 and over, declaring mobility disabilities (49.7%), visual impairment (17.7%), hearing and/or speech impairments (18.4%) and other disabilities (14.3%). Among the respondents, nearly 52% were women, and about 45% of the respondents were disabled, aged 26–54. The aim of the survey was to obtain the opinions of those with disabilities regarding the significance (importance) and individual inconvenience of a number of services related to tourist travel. The research questionnaire contained four substantive parts relating to tourist information, travel agency services, services provided by accommodation facilities, as well as other aspects of tourist travel (including catering and transport). The respondents assessed 50 attributes of a tourist trip in two ways (in terms of the importance of services and the level of perceived difficulties in using them). Both expectations and limitations have been described in detail, taking into account the needs of people with four basic types of disability: mobility impairment, visual impairment, hearing impairment and other disabilities (including intellectual).

The results obtained were used to conduct an analysis of the discrepancy between the assessment of the importance of the indicated attributes of tourism services and their inconvenience for respondents. A modified Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) method, frequently applied in tourism service quality research (Djeri et al., 2018) and used to identify quality gaps, was used to perform this task. The first time this analysis was proposed was by Martilla and James (1977), and its main assumption was to measure two variables, i.e. the importance of individual criteria and their fulfillment in relation to a product or service. The analysis provides information on what is important for the respondents and to what extent it meets their expectations, and its graphical (matrix) form enables the identification of factors that for example require immediate improvement (Biesok, Wyród-Wróbel, 2015). The use of this method, sometimes referred to as importance-performance analysis (Lotko, 2018), allows the creation of a two-dimensional matrix, enabling the illustration of quality gaps and what the suggested directions of strategic action in the context of quality improvement are (Kusterska-Jefmańska, Jefmański, 2011). According to Tucki et al. (2018), the IPA method "used in satisfaction surveys aims to analyse customers' expectations and assessments of the actual state of affairs achieved in terms of the product offered" and, as such, is well suited to the study of discrepancies between perceptions and assessments of the quality of tourism services from the perspective of tourists with disabilities (Tucki et al., 2018). This method is used not only to assess the quality of services, but many authors also use it to measure the importance and relevance of various service attributes in relation to their quality (Martilla, James, 1977; Zhang, Chow, 2004). Modification of the method and its adaptation to the research goal consisted in introducing two important dimensions of tourism services for people with disabilities: significance (importance) and inconvenience. This shows whether all attributes considered burdensome are equally important for people with disabilities, and therefore shows which services should be treated as the most urgent. By adapting the IPA method to the research objective, the place of quality was replaced with importance (significance) for respondents with disabilities. The results of the empirical study were therefore used to create an IPA matrix, in which the 'importance-inconvenience' relationship was taken into account. The scatterplot of the level of importance and inconvenience made it possible to distinguish four quadrants, from which:

1. the bottom left refers to attributes that do not require urgent action, as there are services/products that, in the opinion of the respondents, are relatively less onerous, but also the least important;
2. the upper left shows slightly less favorable situations due to greater inconvenience but less seriousness;
3. the lower right quadrant, on the other hand, shows less favorable situations due to greater importance but minor inconvenience;
4. the upper right quadrant contains those attributes that require the most urgent action because they relate to situations that were assessed by respondents as both important and burdensome.

To assess the quality gaps the SERVQUAL method, developed by Parasuraman, Zeithamlai and Berry (Łopatecka, Żarski, 2020), was adapted. The SERVQUAL method highlights five quality gaps (Łopatecka, Żarski, 2020), of which – from the point of view of the tourist with a disability – three should be considered particularly relevant: (1) the gap created by a misunderstanding of the customer's expectations, (2) due to a lack of correspondence between the quality of the service provided and the information available to the consumer, (3) resulting from the difference between the level of expectation met and the customer's perception of the service.

In selecting for study the attributes related to tourist travel, it was assumed that the need to ensure access relating to all links of the tourist service is made with particular emphasis on tourist information, which plays a very important role at each stage of the tourist services chain and is often the key to success. The tourism chain was understood as a consecutive and interrelated service: organization of the trip (planning, preparation, booking, information), arrival/departure/transfer, accommodation, familiarization with the visited site and the immediate surroundings, moving around the visited area, catering services, shopping opportunities, sightseeing and cultural activities, sports and physical recreation, services in the visited area, medical assistance, opportunities to participate in optional excursions, other tourism activities. Some of the attributes adopted were of a tangible nature (e.g. hotel room facilities), some were intangible (e.g. staff willingness to help). With regard to tourist information services, 17 attributes were assessed, with regard to travel agencies 18, accommodation facilities 15. As mentioned above, the survey additionally covered other services that tourists use during their trip, including restaurants, transport, museums, tourist attractions. In constructing the questionnaire, a 10-point quantitative scale was used to assess the importance of a given attribute to the respondent (1 – attribute not important, 10 – attribute very important). The study proposed a scale by which respondents rated the importance (significance) of a given service attribute on the one hand, and its inconvenience, understood as the level of difficulty a tourist encounters when using a given service, on the other. It can be assumed that the higher the level of inconvenience, the higher the dissatisfaction with the quality of the service. To summarize: the respondents evaluated a number of sub-services, starting with the marketing activities undertaken prior to the sale of services (initial information about the tourist service, promotion, place and method of selling the service, method of payment), through the journey to the place visited by the tourist, the stay at the place visited and the return home.

3. Research findings

The research allowed the identification of the types of service with the greatest limitations and those which are perceived as the most important by people

Table 1. Average assessment of significance (importance) and inconvenience level (on a scale of 1–10): selected service attributes

Selected attributes of tourist services	Assessment of significance (I)	Assessment of the level of inconvenience (U)	Difference (I-U)
Tourist information			
Special materials for the blind	6.75	7.07	–0.32
Materials in enlarged print	6.74	6.99	–0.25
Website for the blind	6.83	7.19	–0.36
Applications for the deaf	6.95	7.15	–0.20
Parking space at IT points	6.90	6.96	–0.06
Average overall	6.71	6.92	–0.21
Travel agency services			
Promotion in special leaflets, flyers, etc.	7.28	7.20	0.08
Promotion on TV, radio	7.37	7.28	0.09
Promotion at tourism trade fairs	7.38	7.22	0.15
Promotion through non-governmental organizations	7.28	7.24	0.04
Promotion in magazines for persons with disabilities	7.14	7.04	0.10
Promotion within general promotional campaigns	7.39	7.30	0.09
Total average	7.09	7.03	0.06
Accommodation services			
The possibility of booking and purchasing on-line	8.42	7.94	0.48
Architectural barriers in hotels	7.38	7.21	0.17
Adapted bathrooms	7.36	7.28	0.08
Access to recreational services	7.20	7.31	–0.11
Personal help, reluctance of staff	7.31	7.25	0.06
Total average	7.13	7.10	0.03
Other aspects of the trip			
Accessible health care (while traveling)	7.61	7.77	–0.16
The opportunity to purchase tickets on-line	7.71	7.67	0.04
The hardships of travel	7.25	7.30	–0.05
Average overall	7.21	7.10	0.11
Total survey average	7.035	7.037	–0.002

Source: own research.

with disabilities. Service providers must pay special attention to these difficulties. It should be clearly emphasized that the most burdensome services are not always perceived by the respondents as the most important (most significant) – Table 1, Figure 1. For example, poor access to applications for the blind was rated 7.6 on a scale of 1–10, but considered to be much less important (6.5).

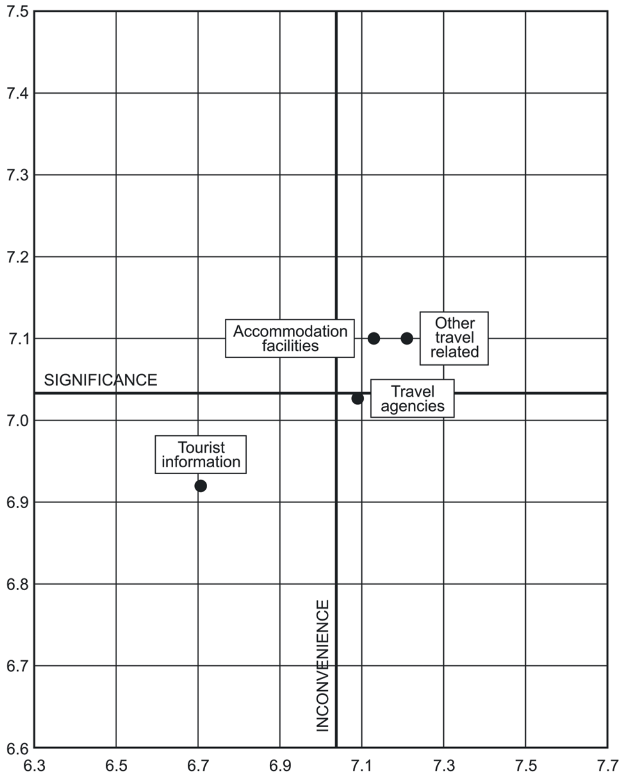

Figure 1. IPA (significance – inconvenience) analysis: main areas for the provision of tourism services
Source: own research

The research shows that the inconvenience of various attributes of tourist information clearly increases with the increase in tourist activity (Table 2) and the degree of disability (Table 3).

Table 2. Assessment of the inconvenience of selected tourist information services according to the frequency of trips (on a scale of 1–10)

Tourist information attributes	No trips	3 and more trips
Information about trips	6.4	7.0
Information on tourist events	6.1	7.1
Information on the availability of tourist services	6.6	7.2
Entry to the IT point	6.6	7.2
Online information for the blind	6.4	7.2
Online information for the deaf	6.7	6.8
Parking space at the IT point	6.5	7.0
Lowered counter at IT point	6.8	7.2
Special materials for the blind	6.4	7.7
Information in braille	6.7	7.0
Convex maps, diagrams, mock-ups, etc.	6.4	7.2
Large print materials	6.9	7.2
Website for the blind	6.9	7.5
Guidebooks for people with disabilities	6.7	7.2
Knowledge of sign language	6.9	7.3
Applications for the blind	6.8	7.6
Applications for the deaf	7.1	7.2

Source: own research.

Table 3. Assessment of the inconvenience of selected tourist information service according to the degree of disability (on a scale of 1–10)

Tourist information attributes	Slight disability	Moderate disability	Severe disability
Information about trips	6.7	6.7	7.1
Information on tourist events	6.6	6.7	6.7
Information on the availability of tourist services	6.8	6.7	7.1
Entry to the IT point	6.8	6.8	7.6
Online information for the blind	6.7	6.7	7.2
Online information for the deaf	6.7	6.6	7.5
Parking space at the IT point	6.8	6.9	7.6
Lowered counter at IT point	6.7	6.9	7.8
Special materials for the blind	7.1	6.9	7.5
Information in braille	6.8	6.8	7.1
Convex maps, diagrams, mock-ups, etc.	6.7	6.8	7.1
Large print materials	6.9	7.0	7.3
Website for the blind	7.3	7.0	7.4
Guidebooks for people with disabilities	6.9	6.9	7.2
Knowledge of sign language	6.9	7.0	7.6
Applications for the blind	7.0	7.1	7.6
Applications for the deaf	7.2	7.0	7.8

Source: own research.

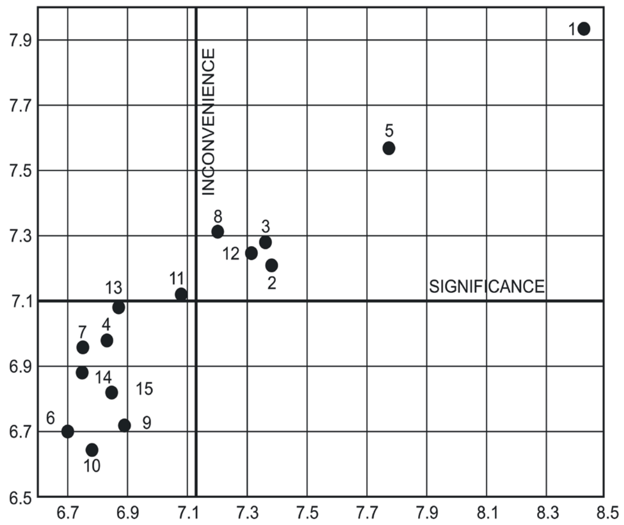

Figure 2. IPA analysis (significance – inconvenience): accommodation facilities
Note: 1 – Possibility for booking and purchasing online, 2 – Architectural barriers in hotels, 3 – Adapted bathrooms, 4 – Lack of necessary equipment, 5 – Availability and equipment of the rooms, 6 – Lack of a lowered counter at the reception, 7 – There is no parking for NP, 8 – No access to recreational services, 9 – There is no information in braille, 10 – There are no subtitles in enlarged print, 11 – There is no place for a guide dog, 12 – Reluctance of staff, 13 – Lack of preparation of personnel, 14 – Inability to communicate in sign language, 15 – No light signs in the rooms
Source: own research

Other studies also draw attention to limitations in access to tourist services related to tourist information. For example, the European Union report highlights such difficulties as the lack of accuracy, detail and credibility of information, misunderstanding of people's needs / requirements as to the form of access, lack of accessibility of websites of individual service providers, inadequate format, segregation of reservation systems for able-bodied and disabled people (European Commission, DG Enterprise and Industry, 2013).

As mentioned above, research results show that the inconvenience of using a tourism service does not always go hand in hand with its importance (relevance) for the consumer (Figures 2 and 3). The existence of differences between the tourism services considered most important by tourists with disabilities and those with the most limitations was confirmed, among others, in a study by Neumann and Reuber (2004). Respondents ranked accommodation (82%), moving around in the immediate area (76%), arrival/departure (74%), excursions (71%) and travel arrangements (71%) as the five most important, while cultural activities (67%), moving around in the immediate area (65%), excursions (63%), sports (55%) and arrival/departure (52%) were ranked as those with the greatest limitations. Using sports services as an example, there is a clear difference between the importance of the service (19% of respondents considered it important) and the degree of inconvenience that is associated with it (55% indicated the use of sports services as being associated with major constraints).

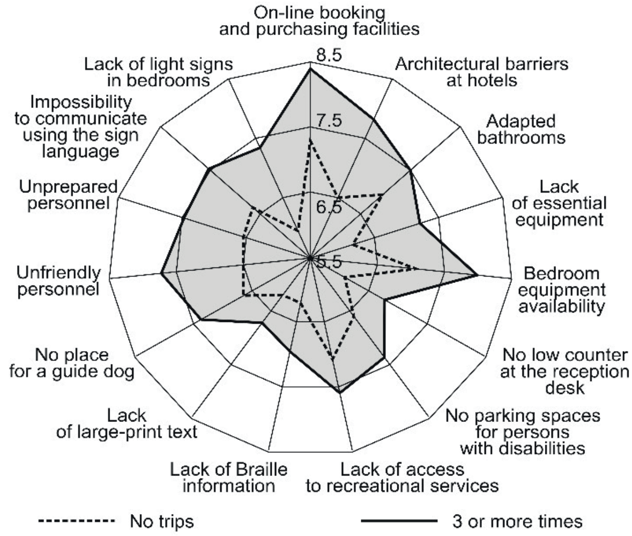

Figure 3. Assessment of the inconvenience of selected attributes of accommodation services by frequency of trips
Source: own research

4. Discussion

Authors dealing with the issue of barriers to access to leisure, including tourism services, agree that access can rarely – if ever – be unrestricted, mainly due to the high cost of fully adapting public spaces and personal services (e.g. Fundusze Europejskie, 2018). Hence the need to seek compromise solutions and to stagger the process of reaching fully satisfactory ones. When operating on the tourism market, it is worth considering how to adapt the services provided to the specific needs of those with disabilities and which ones to prioritise. As a rule, although usually out of necessity, people with disabilities accept that the level of accessibility of tourism services is very different from that expected. This is often due to financial constraints preventing service providers from removing barriers, but sometimes to, and sometimes more difficult to remove, organisational and social barriers, rooted in a lack of knowledge about how to help those with disabilities and inappropriate attitudes in the social environment.

According to many experts in the field of tourism for those with disabilities, but also according to the people concerned themselves, there is a lack of appropriate marketing on the tourism market, including information on the accessibility of tourism services already prepared. Those with disabilities and older people are still not perceived as an important market segment, hence the lack of activities targeting this group of tourists. Tourist region managers often do not analyse the degree of accessibility of services, and even if they do, these analyses usually concern accommodation facilities and are limited to architectural and urban accessibility. Until the tourism industry recognizes that barrier-free services are an indicator of quality, brand strength and an opportunity for competitive advantage, it will not attract a significant number of customers with disabilities (and their families) and become attractive to them. In addition, it should be remembered that the accessibility of tourism services should be considered not only in the context of people with permanent disabilities, but also in the context of the elderly, the temporarily ill and the temporarily disabled, and those accompanying them.

With regard to the most recent area of exclusion – new technologies – there is a need to include accessibility to tools using these technologies in the strategic planning of tourism-related businesses, including, for example, in the planning of new airport infrastructure, terminals and new handling systems. On the other hand, it is necessary to work towards the compatibility of various applications used by people with disabilities, including the creation of mobile applications aimed at providing up-to-date, accurate and reliable information on the accessibility of tourist attractions, as well as cultural institutions, closely related to tourism (interactive maps, electronic guides to places attractive to tourists), and then to create a system of gradually filling in databases on such accessibility. This is also the role of institutions operating at central, regional and local level, including local government units, which should consider it necessary to introduce issues related to access to information into relevant public policies as well.

It is worth noting that in the tourism market there is still a lack of competence of staff in terms of serving people with disabilities, and the need for such measures is great. Hence, actions to train, inform and instruct staff – both employees of public and private institutions – on the needs and ways to support people with disabilities should be considered as one of the key ones. With regard to the arrangement of spaces (both small and open), it would be worth paying more attention to the collision of expectations and needs of people with disabilities with different dysfunctions (e.g. people with disabilities who are very tall or very short, the blind and those in wheelchairs and similar examples).

5. Summary

The presented survey has allowed for an indication of the extent to which the tourism experience of a person with a disability, on the one hand, and the type of disability, on the other, influences the assessment of the relevance and inconvenience of selected attributes of tourism services. According to the survey, the necessary changes should not only go in the direction of adapting the physical tourism space for people with disabilities and seniors by eliminating architectural and urban planning barriers and by popularising accessible space design, but also the need to adapt the way services are provided, to skillfully support and mitigate technological limitations for seniors and those with disabilities. Consumers with disabilities should be able to influence the design of tourism services, yet it seems that tourists with disabilities are still too rarely in the role of a prosumer, co-creating the design of a tourism event; this applies to various tourism services, not only to "tailor-made" ones. There is a lack of adequate consultation mechanisms to allow those with disabilities and their organisations to assess the quality and usefulness of rational accommodation and universal design solutions introduced in the field of tourism. However, it is absolutely important to remember that people with disabilities are not a homogeneous group and that the type of limitation, their socio-demographic characteristics, and consequently their associated needs, influence attitudes and behaviors.

Summing up, it is worth emphasizing that not always does the difficulty of participating in tourism go hand in hand with its importance (significance) for the consumer. To explain the essence of the problem, an extreme example can be used: climbing K2 will certainly be extremely burdensome, almost impossible for people with mobility dysfunction, but it will not be a priority and important for the vast majority of them. When operating on the tourism market, it is worth considering how to adapt the services provided to the specific needs of people with disabilities and which should be considered as a priority, also taking into account the latest areas of exclusion – new technologies.

The results of the research can be used by entrepreneurs to analyze the tourism behaviors and needs of the disability segment, taking into account the main sub-segments, distinguished by type and degree of disability. They will also be useful for local and regional authorities responsible for ensuring the competitiveness and inclusiveness of tourism areas, especially considering that accessibility is increasingly taken into account as a variable in measuring the competitiveness of destinations. Knowledge of the real, changing expectations of tourists with disabilities will address the challenge of how to understand and measure accessibility as a determinant of the competitiveness of a tourism destination.

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The musicscape in hotel businesses: Evidence from online reviews

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ABSTRACT

Musicscape is an important topic in tourism and hospitality contexts. However, there are few studies on this subject in the accommodation sector. The study aims to determine the effect of 'musicscape dimensions' on customer behavior. To achieve this aim, 2357 online reviews of 28 hotels in Antalya, Turkey were analyzed by content analysis. The framework proposed by Oakes was used in the study. The research findings provide hotel managers with practical advice on the effective use of musicscape in tourism and hospitality settings. In addition, it was concluded that customers evaluated the loudness and fast tempo of music negatively, and that the harmony of music broadcasts and their environment offered by a hotel is positively perceived by customers.

KEYWORDS

hotels, online reviews, musicscape, content analysis, customer behavior

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1. Introduction

A hotel experience is an emotional one that incorporates components from both indoor and outdoor environments as well as the service provided. Hotel management must comprehend the multi-emotional character of the hotel experience and sound or music is one of the most essential factors that contribute to the hotel environment. Music is widely acknowledged as an essential element that influences consumer behavior and reactions (Bruner, 1990; Garlin, Owen, 2006; Jain, Bagdare, 2011; Kämpfe, Sedlmeier, Renkewitz, 2011; North, Hargreaves, Krause, 2016; Turley, Milliman, 2000).

Significant research has been conducted on music as an atmospheric element (Oakes, 2000; Turley, Milliman, 2000), however, there have been few studies on the musical atmosphere in lodging environments (Harrington, Ottenbacher, Trueter, 2015; Jacob, 2006; Magnini, Parker, 2009). The following is the main research question, particularly for the hospitality industry: What are the interactions between musicscape and consumer behavior found in user-generated online reviews? A framework based on Oakes's (2000) musicscape model was developed to help guide research addressing this question. The purpose of this study is to expand on the findings of Harrington, Ottenbacher, Trueter (2015) in terms of hotel businesses.

The conceptual framework is explained in the first section. The procedures used in data extraction and analysis are then explained in the method section. Following that, we present the results of the analysis and conclude by discussing the study's limitations and potential research avenues, as well as the academic and managerial implications of the findings.

2. Conceptual framework

All environments where customers and staff interact are defined as 'servicescapes'. Servicescapes can be an effective marketing tool for service managers in terms of creating positive attitudes, strengthening or reinforcing the image of the service provider, repositioning a service, influencing customer behavior, differentiating a service, delighting customers, improving customer experience and maximizing operational efficiency (Trompeta et al., 2022).

In this study, we used the 'Meharbian-Russell (M-R) model' and the 'Musicscape model'. The Mehrabian-Russell (M-R) model (1974) employs the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) paradigm, which provides a concise description of the environmental variable's (stimulus) effect on the moderating variables, the customer's emotional/mood state (organism), and how that mood state influences their behavioral response to the environmental stimulus under consideration (Trompeta et al., 2022).

The M-R model is appropriate to describe the response variables that consumers give to the stimulus. According to this model, consumers' reactions depend on their positive emotions toward the stimulus (Meharbian, Russell, 1974; Novak, La Lopa, Novak, 2010).

Oakes (2000) suggests that the musicscape model was a synthesis of previous work. This approach proposed value (preference) moderators that may interact with the arguments (music composition properties) and musical familiarity and demography were among such moderators. Lastly, the 'musicscape model' investigated cognitive (expectations, perceived time), affective and behavioral impacts.

Online reviews in the hospitality sector

Mudambi and Schuff (2010) stated that online reviews can be used as a tool to gather information and identify risks when consumers make purchasing decisions and product selections. Zhou et al. (2014) and Sridhar and Srinivasan (2012) discovered that evaluations have an impact on hotel development and purchasing decision processes. Online reviews and customer ratings for hotels reduce negative thoughts about the hotel experience (Sridhar, Srinivasan, 2012), and it has been concluded that it increases the intention to re-book (Sparks, Browning, 2011).

In previous studies, customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction were examined through online reviews about hotels (Levy, Duan, Boo, 2013; Li, Ye, Law, 2013; Magnini, Crotts, Zehrer, 2011; Zhou et al., 2014). On the positive side, the headings of personnel, service, cleanliness, facilities, location and value were analyzed (Magnini, Crotts, Zehrer, 2011; Zhou et al., 2014). The negative factors analyzed related to the hotel were bed comfort, room decoration, front office attitude, value for money, food, parking, restaurant, bathroom, cleanliness and noise (Levy, Duan, Boo, 2013; Li, Ye, Law, 2013).

Recent research has examined online reviews using machine learning approaches (i.e. computer-aided) to extract sentiment from words (Barreda, Bilgihan, 2013). Analyzing the quality factors in hotels, Crotts, Mason and Davis (2009) explained hotel quality through 15 factors in the study he carried out using online reviews and interview techniques. The negative comments were under room, price/value, entrance, service and décor, while in the positive comments room, staff, location, restaurant/bar and 'general' were identified. Some research has employed content analysis (codes and themes) using traditional approaches (Levy, Duan, Boo, 2013), whereas others used machine learning analysis (Li, Ye, Law, 2013).

Examining the online reviews with both content and computer-assisted analysis is necessary for a clear understanding of visitors' thoughts about hotel services. As a result, the dynamic paths used in the research will help to obtain reliable results (Crotts, Mason, Davis, 2009) and the use of various methodologies will enhance the outcomes of the content analysis of online hotel reviews.

3. Methodology

Content analysis technique was used to search for and learn about online music reviews. The ideal strategy to handle data while boosting the rigor and flexibility of the study is to use manual content analysis (Sotiriadou, Brouwers, Le, 2014) as this properly classifies the study subjects and online reviews that arose in the first stage. This technique enables the identification of hidden message content consisting of ideas that cannot be measured (Neuendorf, 2019). Data were created using the classification of subjects and frequency evaluation (Hayes, Krippendorff, 2007). To identify statements, two researchers independently examined online comments and produced precoding classifications. The researchers discussed the data together to avoid similarities in the themes and primary notions uncovered.

The researchers first coded and analyzed 2537 comments. The two steps in the content analysis are as follows:

Step 1: Based on the definition of music dimensions, the researchers selected keywords or phrases associated with these dimensions in the descriptions and then calculated the frequencies.

Step 2: Next, the researchers generalized the statements in Step 1 and classified them into several specific attributes.

The authors gathered qualitative data from the target platform in the form of reviews and comments on music-related issues. To gather an adequately accurate dataset on music, TripAdvisor, a review platform that ranks higher than other review sites and online tourism firms, was picked. As a result, our text data contains user-generated music reviews. The author collected 2537 reviews from 28 hotels between 2010 and 2022, accounting for 100% of online reviews with the keyword 'music' in our sample. Each review is critical to understanding customers' music-related hotel experiences and, as such, is required for the creation of the entire dataset. The research design was developed within an interpretive paradigm that used a general inductive qualitative approach, as the goal of the research was to gain a detailed understanding of the customers' music-related hotel experience. The research process is shown in Figure 1.

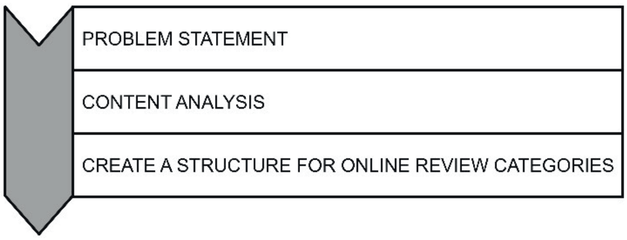

Figure 1. Research process
Source: author

Each researcher independently assessed the sample's content. The preliminary results were compared. When differences developed, they were evaluated, and the researchers studied the context together until they came to conclusions. Reliability was examined to demonstrate the reliability and validity of the content analysis. The coding consistency rate was 91%.

4. Results

4.1. Hotel features

The 5-star hotels in Antalya, which is an important tourism destination in Turkey, were chosen as the sample. The reason for choosing this destination is that it is a region that hosts around 10–15 million tourists annually. Five-star hotels are preferred because these hotels have more corporate businesses and offer high-level services. After the sample was determined, the Antalya destination was selected on the TripAdvisor website and using filters it was found that there were 41 five-star hotels. Those with few comments were excluded from the study, and reviews of 28 hotels were obtained. Music-related comments were separated using the 'music' keyword and 2537 comments were analyzed.

4.2. Results on music dimensions

According to the literature review, there are five dimensions related to music in tourism studies (Trompeta et al., 2022). These dimensions are musical presence, music tempo, music volume, music congruence and music liking. These five dimensions were used as the coding and analytical framework. The analysis unit was the sentences collected from the statements made about music in hotel businesses. The researchers then clustered the sentences using qualitative analysis. The results of the content analysis are summarized in Table 1. A detailed discussion of some of the key findings follows.

Table 1. Dimensions and keywords of music

Music dimensions	Keywords
1. Presence	music, hear, live music
2. Tempo	beat, rhythm, tempo
3. Volume	loud, blasting, noisy, disturbing, lower, quiet, sounds, booming
4. Congruence	good, beautiful, perfect, fantastic, amazing, wonderful
5. Liking	dislike, loved, like, enjoy

Source: based on Trompeta et al. (2022).

4.3. Music presence

After reviewing the comments, it was found that the presence of music in hotels is very important for the guests. It can be said that it provides a positive atmosphere in all hotel environments (bar, disco, lobby, beach, etc.). Some comments in original spelling:

> The lobby has a very relaxing atmosphere but sadly this time the heavenly music played by Barbara was not heard. Hope next time that we are there, live music is there as well.
>
> Lounge bar is comfy with live music that really makes your experience unforgettable and pleasant.
>
> There is so much entertainment at this hotel, there is always something going on. As well as all the usual things you would expect throughout the day they also have shows or live music.

It can be stated that the presence of music has a positive emotional impact on the guests and increases their desire to return to the hotel. Some comments in original spelling:

> One evening we went hotel club where there was live music. The atmosphere and drinks were good. :) I can recommend this hotel.

> As I am writing this review I'm looking at one of the most beautiful sunsets ever with live music playing in the background.
>
> Watching movies nearby pools at night or enjoying live music in the lobby, playing tennis also available, I would like to thank all the staff and I WOULD come back again.

It was concluded that the music that accompanied the guests' activities increased their satisfaction. Some comments in original spelling:

> The hotel also had live music on in the bar in the evening dressed up for a few light beverages and classics. Turkish was the vibe for one of the evenings … great entertainment. We also spent a great Saturday night at the Jolly Joker, brilliant live music and atmosphere.
>
> The entertainment is good. We really enjoyed the live music.

The presence of music in all hotel environments contributes to a positive perception of service quality. Some comments in original spelling:

> We loved the Sea Lounge and the live music played in there every day. The entertainment staff Mr. T and Mario were also great fun, and Anna was excellent with her aerobics classes. Overall an amazing holiday and we will definitely be back!

4.4. Music tempo

The tempo of the music was investigated. As a result, the guests reacted negatively to the music tempo being too fast and noisy. Some comments in original spelling:

> And how shocked we were when on our first night we had to deal with blasting music coming from the Social Club right in front of our room till very midnight! After our complaints and requests to change the type of music or at least to lower down its volume the guest relation personnel simply answered that it's a new concept of the hotel and they can't (read "don't want") change anything so it will take place every day!

They complained that they could not sleep comfortably in their rooms and that it was not ideal for families with babies. Some comments in original spelling:

> Today we were ready to move to that room when noticed in that area the preparations for a big wedding that is happening at this precise moment with loud live music band, dances, and all that wedding celebration might entail … . As a result of its our 6th night with no sleep … not only sleep but actually, it's impossible to do whatever … whether it's reading a book or watching TV … its simply impossible to focus on any activity when hard techno beats crawl in your head! What's interesting is that most people that come to this club are from the outside and are not the guests of this hotel, which means that the hotel's management is more interested in additional income rather than its guests comfort! The guest relation staff keeps telling us that we are the only ones that are complaining about loud music, which turned out to be a complete lie since while our talk with them few other guests approached and supported our speech with the same complaints!!! All our hopes for a relaxing and peaceful vacation are vanished! Tomorrow we'll try again to directly address the main manager but for now we continue fighting the headache and are trapped to tolerate this unprecedented sound attack!!!

It has been stated that no loud or fast-paced music should be played in areas such as the pool, lobby or beach. Some comments in original spelling:

> The only thing that I can complain about is the music beside the pool. It's so loud. They turn the volume down for a few hours a day, and that's it. Be warned!
>
> The main problem is that I like to read and have a sleep by the pool but this was impossible as several times a day they blare out loud music and the animation team shout into microphones. We did go to the adult relax area but it was still booming out. They only seem to have about 5 songs that play in a loop and every afternoon they come round amongst the sunbeds beating drums for some strange reason. It's like they don't want you to relax! It's a shame as like I say it's a nice hotel but please can you let people get some peace. If I had wanted club 18 to 30 I would have asked for it!

The tempo of music has also been shown to have a negative impact on activities such as reading and sleeping. Furthermore, it has been stated that the upbeat music that plays until late is disturbing. Some comments in original spelling:

> Three nights we suffered from headache trying to fall asleep before midnight! And when we addressed the staff again we were offered a room in a supposedly 'quiet' aisle of the building…

4.5. Music volume

When the comments are analyzed, the guests negatively perceive the fact that the music broadcast in the hotels is extremely loud. Some comments in original spelling:

> Had a live jazz band who were very talented! They have no Beach, but a rocky swimming cliff face. Nice clean pools! Very clean property. Very friendly staff. Avoid the Southern wing overlooking the wedding party grounds. The loud music will keep you up until midnight. Rooms are very pricy for what you get especial the suites.
>
> The room overlooks the next hotel with limited sea views and views of the corrugated roofs of the kitchen areas. The next hotel is VERY noisy with very loud music.

The fact that the music begins very early and is very loud and noisy has a negative impact on the guests' satisfaction. Some comments in original spelling:

> Way too loud. Music starts at 10 am and is ridiculous. I understand wanting some background noise but it was horrendous. And by the swim up rooms the music echoes so it's even louder. Completely unable to concentrate and enjoy time by the pool reading by constant beat of music.
>
> There is an indoor pool but also freezing … our room was very nice and cleaned every day, large enough for 2 adults and 2 children, view was looking out the front of the hotel so a poor view, my grandparents room was smaller but still a nice size, there hotel was facing next doors hotel and they had loud music every night until 11:45 pm, no such thing as a quiet night for them, (the music was boom boom boom right up until 11:45).

It has been stated that due to loud music, it is impossible to read books or even watch television in hotel rooms. Some comments in original spelling:

> If you're staying on a weekend, though, make sure there's no weddings/events in the grounds. There was a wedding directly below our window near the pool (and we were in an ocean front room) that was LOUD one of the nights we were there, even with doors shut. The music was turned off by midnight but those with children would be impacted by this.
>
> We like the shade and to read (a bit boring for some) so we sat in the adult pool in the morning and moved to the White Bar area in the afternoon. If you do like a bit of quiet it is difficult to find a peaceful spot. The noise from the main pool is so loud and by the adult pool you get the loud music.

Due to the loud music, it has been reported that it was difficult to even have a conversation, particularly in areas such as the lobby, pool or beach. Some comments in original spelling:

> The only thing we really disliked was the House/Dance music that played constantly in Pablito's restaurant and bar. As well as being repetitive and irritating, it was played so loudly that conversation was difficult. A hotel bar should be somewhere you can go for a quiet drink after dinner, not a wannabe club.
>
> We didn't eat dinner at the hotel, mainly because the music in the ground floor restaurant was very loud, and it's not my idea of fun to shout as dinner conversation. There are some nice restaurants within walking distance, and the public buses are frequently and cheap to go to the harbor and old town if you want more choice.

4.6. Music congruence

When the comments are examined, it is possible to conclude that the music provided by the hotels in various settings is good, excellent, fantastic and harmonious. It has been determined that the harmony of music with the environment (pool, beach, lobby, restaurant, etc.) allows guests to enjoy their activities more. Some comments in original spelling:

> Right now im in the hotel and happy to choose that. Breakfast is good. U can find varity of food and good quality. Room is clean and comfort. The only prob i have and actually u cant say problem at all, u cant hear any good music anywhere. U shud only lissten to ursong and always carry a ipod and ect …
>
> Thanks baia lara hotel for everything. The advantages is: Very nice person at guest relation. Her name was "Parastoo". Good food especially pizza in snak bar Good pool area Good seaside Good music band for nights Disadvantages: Small aqua park Don't have very fun at hotel.
>
> This was our 4th time visiting Baia Lara and it's still the best place for a vacation. Great staff in and around the hotel. Especially the entertainment team and DJ are sweet, friendly and fantastic! You can't miss the party's for the good music and amazing dancers.

When the comments are examined, it is seen that the satisfaction of the customers increases when the music congruence is good. It was concluded that expectations were met and emotional satisfaction was achieved.

4.7. Music liking

It was found that the guests enjoyed the music provided by the hotel. Although there are some that dislike loud music, young and middle-aged guests enjoy music for entertainment purposes. The musical shows provided by the hotels, as well as musical events for children and entertaining music at the disco, allow guests to spend their vacations more positively. Some comments in original spelling:

> The entertainment team are incredible, fabulous bunch of people full of energy and hilarious! They are all so warm and friendly, special mention for Rambo and Mario – fab fab guys. The entertainment itself is wonderful, professional shows, live bands and singers of the highest standard, especially loved the live music.
>
> The entertainment team were amazing, they really wanted you to enjoy your holiday. They had games at pool at 11:30 every day, also music.
>
> Entertainment team brilliant and always there to help make a good time … staff all made us to feel welcome and all times

> and always helpful and never rude … loved it and would recommend … and go back.

> AMAZING shows here gob smacked, Billy Bones, Moscow Circus, Street Dance and many more. My mum & I sat in amazement & said 'we would have to pay to watch to watch these kind of shows at home, and we have them here for free: D' And from there we ALL go to the beach bar for live music.

5. Discussion

This research has enabled us to make generalizations about the effects of music according to the perceptions of the guests in the context of hotel businesses. The study has tried to explain how guests are affected by music by qualitatively synthesizing empirical evidence in the comments of hotel establishments. The research analyzed 2537 comments from 28 hotels and it was concluded that music is very important for hotel guests but its importance differs according to the music dimension. Volume and high tempo were evaluated negatively by guests. The presence of music in various environments of the hotel, the harmony of the music with the environment, and its appreciation produced positive effects on the guests. This study extends existing studies on the impact of music in service settings. The findings partly confirm and partly extend previous ones. Music has an effect on the feelings and thoughts of the guests, however, when the personnel, room characteristics, and environmental factors are considered together, it can be said that there is a low significant contribution.

While the results are consistent with some previous studies, they contradict others. Kämpfe, Sedlmeier and Renkewitz (2011) and Behne (1999) found that music did not have a significant effect. Since the effects differ according to the perceptions of the guests, it is thought that its level of importance is low.

The nature of value sought by guests may differ in the degree to which they see certain atmospheric stimuli as relevant, appropriate and expected in certain contexts (Garlin, Owen, 2006; Roschk, Loureiro, Breitsohl, 2017). These findings are supported by the results of our study.

The tempo and high volume of the music affect guests negatively. It has been determined that satisfaction with the services offered by the hotel has decreased due to noise and guests cannot enjoy the holiday.

It was found that guest perceptions are positive in terms of music congruence and music liking. These findings are consistent with studies that concluded that music congruence and music liking have positive effects on guests (Garlin, Owen, 2006; Herrington, Capella, 1994; Michel, Baumann, Gayer, 2017; Oakes, North, 2008).

6. Conclusion

Music can be used as a tool for hotel businesses in terms of market differentiation and customer satisfaction. It is used in hotel businesses to create and enhance an ambiance and is one of the methods used to influence the feelings and thoughts of the guests (Roschk, Loureiro, Breitsohl, 2017). This study helps hotel managers understand the effects of music and guests' reactions to it. Hotel managers can understand the positive, negative or neutral effects using the findings of this study and, by making use of them, environments can be created through the selection and design of music allowing guests to have a pleasant holiday and accommodation experience.

The tempo of the music and its sound should be adjusted carefully. Hours must be set at times when guests will not be disturbed. It would also be beneficial to make necessary sound insulation in hotel rooms. The places where events are held should be designed in a way that does not disturb the guests in the rooms. The fast tempo and loud presentation can negatively affect the guests. Guest complaints must be managed successfully.

The music must be compatible with the environments in which it is presented. The music to be played at the beach, pool and lobby should be well-chosen. Environments should be created where guests can have fun in a harmonious way. Since taste in music may differ according to the demographic characteristics of the guests, attention should be paid to market segmentation and the target market for the music to be selected. Music preferences according to the target market should be constantly researched and analyzed.

The method of this study is based on secondary data. For this reason, the results of our study are limited according to the data obtained by survey and interview techniques. The study is limited to comments about 5-star hotel businesses operating in Antalya. The data obtained includes comments from a travel site within a certain date range.

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Opportunities for evaluation of sustainable tourism – assessing the availability of ETIS indicators in Poland

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the article is to evaluate the possibilities of evaluating sustainable tourism in Polish tourist regions, in particular, through the use of ETIS indicators and to assess for the availability of data for their calculation in the nationwide statistical system. Qualitative research methodology was used to study the availability of ETIS indicators. A diagnostic type research procedure was adopted and the desk research method was used. In a situation where the data necessary for calculating a given indicator was not found in the available sources, primary research in the form of direct interviews with representatives of branches of Statistical Offices was used. In order to quantify the availability of ETIS indicators, a system for their evaluation was adopted and aggregate indicators were proposed for the evaluation of sections and individual criteria in the section, which is the author's attempt to develop a unified system for evaluating sustainable tourism indicators.

The results of the study showed that the availability of data for calculating ETIS indicators in Poland is not satisfactory. The lowest rating was given to the availability of indicators that facilitate the management of the resort, including the tourists' satisfaction survey (section A). Also rated very low was the availability of indicators of the environmental impact of tourism in a resort (section D). The results obtained confirm the results of studies by other authors dealing with the issue of the real use of ETIS in tourist regions of other countries.

KEYWORDS

sustainable tourism, ETIS indicators, destination management

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1. Introduction

The basic definition of the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development is that sustainable development is economic and social development that will ensure that the needs of contemporary society are met without compromising the needs of future generations (Światowa Komisja ds. Środowiska i Rozwoju, 1991). Such an approach requires consideration of both theoretical foundations and practical actions based on the pursuit of ecological, economic and socio-cultural goals in a specific area.

The concept of sustainable tourism arises from the translation of the principles of broadly understood sustainable development into various areas of the economy (Niezgoda, 2006) and can be regarded as the result of research into the links between tourism, the environment and development processes (Sharpley, 2002). Implementing sustainable tourism in specific areas requires detailing general recommendations so as not to create conflicts in the natural, social and economic environment (Breiby et al., 2022; Eagles, McCool, Haynes, 2002; Overvåg, Skjeggedal, Sandstrom, 2015; World Tourism Organization [WTO], 2004). The development of sustainable tourism is a process and not a state, so planning and evaluation of its implementation is essential. Entities responsible for tourism planning and development are constantly looking for new concepts and solutions that can be used in policy and management of tourist reception areas (Alejziak, 2016). As Marković Vukadin, Zovko, Krešić (2020) note the abundance of systems, initiatives and projects ultimately brings significant confusion to destination management bodies. It has become necessary to develop a unified system of sustainable tourism indicators.

In the last decade, one of the proposed solutions is "The European Tourism Indicator System toolkit for sustainable destination management" (ETIS). In 2013 the European Commission presented a pilot set of these indicators, which was then used by about 100 countries (European Commission, 2016). Based on the results from the pilot, an improved set of ETIS indicators was introduced (2016) which can be considered tested, comprehensive and applicable to different conditions of individual countries (Krajnović, Zdrilić, Miletić, 2020). It is noted that in the process of calculating indicators, data availability, sampling issues and measurement errors are a problem (Pavlinović Mršić, Čale, 2020; Scheyvens, Biddulph, 2018). The authors note that problems in calculating sustainable tourism indicators require careful analysis of the costs associated with the process (Marković Vukadin, Zovko, Krešić, 2020).

The aim of this article is to assess the possibilities of evaluating sustainable tourism in Polish tourist regions, in particular through the use of ETIS indicators, and to evaluate the indicators in terms of the availability of data for their calculation in the nationwide statistical system. Most sustainable tourism researchers focus on local-scale and short-term issues within administratively-defined units (Blancas et al., 2016; Dimoska, Petrevska, 2012; Krajnović, Zdrilić, Miletić, 2020; Lew et al., 2016; Torres-Delgado, López Palomeque, 2014), while this study attempts to comprehensively assess the availability of data to calculate indicators nationwide using a nationwide statistical data collection system.

2. ETIS indicator system – essence and fundamentals

Many authors believe that for solving environmental problems, the optimal level of decision-making and implementation is located below the national level, hence the importance of the regional and local levels (Awedyk, Niezgoda, 2018; Marković Vukadin, Zovko, Krešić, 2020). In accordance with such an assumption, a set of ETIS indicators was designed for the local level, in particular for places receiving tourists, referred to in the documents as destinations.

Initial proposals for sustainable tourism indicators focused on environmental issues, such as those proposed by the European Environment Agency (Pulido-Fernández, Sánchez-Rivero, 2009). The ETIS indicators reflect a broader, comprehensive view of sustainable development and reflect a diagnosis of the situation, not only with regard to the natural environment, but also the social and economic environment.

The system consists of 43 core indicators reflecting:
- Section A: Destination management,
- Section B: Economic value,
- Section C: Social and cultural impact,
- Section D: Environmental impact.

As many authors have pointed out (Blancas et al., 2016; Castellani, Sala, 2010; Font et al., 2021), sustainability indicators are essential:
- to monitor sectoral development so as to facilitate the assessment of tourism policies and practices;
- to measure sectoral progress and develop suitable strategies for a preferred future;
- to communicate knowledge via the generation of quantitative and objective data that provide a fuller understanding of tourist phenomena in their spatial context.

The ETIS highlights that the proposed indicators can be used on a voluntary basis, either by using them together or by integrating them with existing center monitoring systems. This flexibility is an advantage, as acquisition costs may be too high and not all indicators may be available. The selection of indicators should be made by the managers of the site being a tourist destination (Font et al., 2021), as well as organizers of events held at the resort (Maguire, McLoughlin, 2020). The set used in a specific location can be expanded or reduced to meet the needs of the place (municipality, locality). Thus, in order to develop sustainable tourism for managers in places receiving tourists, the question arises as which of the proposed indicators should be chosen and what are the possibilities of obtaining them. Therefore, it is necessary to assess the availability of each ETIS indicator.

3. Survey methods

In different countries, the systems for collecting and making available statistical data can widely differ. According to the Ministry of Development, Labor and Technology, the availability of a sustainable tourism indicator should be understood as its achievability (availability of data, calculation possibilities) for tourism development managers (Niezgoda, Janczak, Patelak, 2020). The starting point for initiating research should be to look for secondary sources, i.e. data already collected (including for other purposes). The easier and less costly it is to obtain these data, the greater the availability. In the absence of the possibility of obtaining secondary data, primary research can be undertaken, but it is expensive (Brătucu et al., 2017; Torres-Delgrado, Saarinen, 2019), time-consuming (Niezgoda, Janczak, Patelak, 2021) and requiring the cooperation of many stakeholders (Blažević et al., 2013; Fitzgerald et al., 2012).

In the study of the availability of ETIS indicators made for this article, qualitative research methodology was used. A research procedure of the diagnostic type was adopted and the method of desk research, i.e. analysis of the situation using found data from secondary sources (qualitative content analysis) was used. In a situation where the data necessary for calculating a given indicator was not found in the available sources, primary research was used in the form of direct interviews with representatives of the provincial branches of the statistical offices relevant to a given area of interest. The interview was conducted in the form of an online conversation with the person responsible in the office in question for collecting the data needed to calculate indicators from a specific section.

In order to quantify the accessibility of ETIS indicators, an appropriate rating system was adopted. For each indicator, a maximum point value (from 1 to 3) was assigned, which reflects the spread of possible evaluation (Majewska, 2018) of a given indicator in terms of accessibility in Polish conditions. An indicator was assessed at a value of 1 when it was examined that in the Polish reporting system it is not possible to obtain data to calculate the indicator using secondary sources and it is necessary to collect data in a primary survey. On the other hand, when data are available only at the national or provincial level, and not at the regional level, 2 points were awarded, when data are available in public statistics on a regional/municipal basis – the indicator was assessed at 3 points.

In order to assess the availability of indicators across sections, aggregate indicators (section ratings and ratings of indicators of individual criteria in the section) can be proposed. Due to the fact that there is a varying number of indicators in each section, aggregating indicators were used to score the overall availability in a specific section. The index for scoring the accessibility of a section is the sum of the ratings of indicators in the section divided by the number of indicators in the section.

$$D_S = \sum \frac{D_{ws}}{N_{ws}}$$

Similarly, accessibility assessment indicators were calculated for each of the criteria in the sections.

4. Evaluation of the availability of ETIS indicators – research results

The indicators in Section A relate to opportunities from the field of tourism destination area management (Table 1). Indicator A.1.1 assesses the extent to which companies actively integrate sustainability principles into their operations and whether they engage in green certification programs. The problem is the large number of tourism certifications and labels awarded based on various criteria (Niezgoda, 2011) .

The indicators in group A.2 illustrate the satisfaction of tourists, which translates into a positive image of the region and the possibility of repeat visits. However, under the conditions of the Polish reporting system, calculation of these indicators is not possible. It should also be noted that the collection of data would require coordination between places of accommodation, which

Table 1. Evaluation of the availability of ETIS indicators in Section A: Destination management

Criterion	Indicator	Rating availability
A.1 Sustainable tourism management in tourism enterprises	A.1.1 Percentage of tourism enterprises/establishments in the destination using a voluntary verified certification/labelling for environmental/quality/ sustainability and/or Corporate Social Responsibility measures	1
A.2 Customer satisfaction	A.2.1 Percentage of visitors that are satisfied with their overall experience in the destination	1
	A.2.2 Percentage of repeat/return visitors (within 5 years)	1

Source: author.

Table 2. Evaluation of the availability of ETIS indicators in Section B: Economic value

Criterion	Indicator	Rating availability
B.1 Tourism flow (volume & value) at destination	B.1.1 Number of tourist nights per month	3
	B.1.2 Number of 'same day' visitors per month	1
	B.1.3 Relative contribution of tourism to the destination's economy (% GDP)	2
	B.1.4 Daily spending per overnight tourist (accommodation, food and drinks, other services)	2
	B.1.5 Daily spending per same day visitor	2
B.2 Tourism enterprise(s) performance	B.2.1 Average length of stay of tourists (nights)	3
	B.2.2 Occupancy rate in commercial accommodation establishments per month and average for the year	3
B.3 Quantity and quality of employment	B.3.1 Direct tourism employment as percentage of total employment	2
	B.3.2 Percentage of jobs in tourism that are seasonal	2
B.4 Tourism supply chain	B.4.1 Percentage of locally produced food, drink, goods and services sourced by the destination enterprises	1

Source: author.

is an extremely difficult measure, since visitors may use different types of accommodation that are not connected by a common reporting system.

Another group of indicators relates to the economic objectives that sustainable tourism should provide. In the ETIS, these are the economic impact indicators in Section B (Table 2).

A popular indicator depicting the interest of tourists in staying at a particular facility is indicator B.1.1. This is characterized by high accessibility because the data can be obtained free of charge from the GUS, based on the reporting information provided by accommodation facilities in the KT-1 form. The reporting results are available at the level of provinces, counties and municipalities. It should be noted, however, that there are many facilities in highly attractive tourist destinations that are not reflected in the reporting (the so-called 'underground economy').

Indicator B.1.2 is difficult to calculate, since data can be obtained from the number of admission tickets sold to attractions (e.g. museums, attractions, national parks), or for income from catering and attractions, after deducting estimated income from tourists using accommodation. The data needed to calculate indicators B.1.3, B.1.4 and B.1.5 for localities (municipalities and counties) are very difficult to obtain. Within the framework of GUS reporting, expenditures on tourists are collected in the Travel survey of Poles. However, the manner of the survey (sample) determines that these surveys are representative only at the national and provincial level.

The performance of tourist enterprises in the area receiving tourists is illustrated by indicators B.2.1 and B.2.2, which are readily available, as the data for their calculation are obtainable free of charge in reporting from GUS (form KT-1).

A basic element of the tourist economy in a region is the quantity and quality of employment, which is illustrated by indicators B.3.1 and B.3.2. The data necessary for calculating indicators for tourist destinations are obtainable from the GUS on the basis of the data contained in the Z-05 form. Data can also be obtained in a primary survey directly from employers. Indicator B.4.1 is designed to reflect the percentage of locally produced food, beverages, goods and services from tourism enterprises in a resort and corresponds to one of the basic ideas of sustainable tourism (Sangchumnong, 2019), but in the Polish reporting system, data for its calculation are not available from secondary sources.

When examining the feasibility of implementing sustainable tourism, many authors emphasize the importance of social and cultural goals (Breiby et al., 2022; Kowalczyk, 2010; Sangchumnong, 2019) in the ETIS 2016 achievement of these goals is intended to reflect the indicators in Section C (Table 3).

A well-known and readable indicator is C.1.1, which is available free of charge in GUS reporting at the national, provincial and county levels, but only to overnight visitors, i.e. tourists, without including day visitors. An indicator reflecting the impact of tourism on residents' quality of life (C.1.2), is not available, as it would require detailed primary research of a qualitative nature. A popular and available indicator is C.1.3 showing the number of beds available in commercial accommodation facilities per 100 residents. Data can

Table 3. Evaluation of the availability of ETIS indicators in Section C: Social and cultural impact

Criterion	Indicator	Rating availability
C.1 Community / social impact	C.1.1 Number of tourists per 100 residents	3
	C.1.2 Percentage of residents who are satisfied with tourism in the destination (per month/season)	1
	C.1.3 Number of beds available in commercial accommodation establishments per 100 residents	3
	C.1.4 Number of second homes per 100 homes	1
C.2 Safety and health	C.2.1 Percentage of tourists who register a complaint with the police	2
C.3 Gender equality	C.3.1 Percentages of men and women employed in the tourism sector	3
	C.3.2 Percentage of tourism enterprises where the general manager position is held by a woman	3
C.4 Inclusion / accessibility	C.4.1 Percentage of rooms in commercial accommodation establishments accessible to people with disabilities	3
	C.4.2 Percentage of commercial accommodation establishments participating in recognized accessible information schemes	1
	C.4.3 Percentage of public transport that is accessible to people with disabilities and with specific access requirements	2
	C.4.4 Percentage of tourist attractions that are accessible to people with disabilities and/or participating in recognised accessibility information schemes	1
C.5 Protecting and enhancing cultural heritage, local identity and assets	C.5.1 Percentage of residents that are satisfied with the impact of tourism on destination identity	1
	C.5.2 Percentage of the destination's events that are focused on traditional/local culture and heritage	2

Source: author.

be obtained free of charge from GUS reporting by country, province and county. Indicator C.1.4 showing the number of second homes due to the current law (RODO) is not available. The safety and health category, in the ETIS system is represented by only one indicator, C.2.1, for the calculation of which data can be obtained directly from police headquarters. Gender equality in the ETIS system is reflected in section C.3 represented by two indicators: C.3.1 and C.3.2. The data necessary for their calculation can be obtained from the CSO (form Z-05 or Z-06).

The next group (C.4) includes indicators showing the equality and accessibility of tourism for different groups of people, which is one of the more important demands of sustainable tourism. The primary indicator from this group is C.4.1, for the calculation of which data is available at the level of provinces, counties and municipalities in GUS reporting (form KT-1). Subsequent indicators C.4.2, C.4.3 and C.4.4 reflect the issue of accessibility of regions for tourists with disabilities. The data necessary for calculating indicators C.4.2 and C.4.4 are obtainable using the desk research method of the websites of facilities or Local Tourist Organizations. Special websites are also being created (e.g. Pantou: https://pantou.org/) where facilities can report their offerings for people with disabilities. Data for calculating indicator C.4.3 is not available from secondary sources, but can be obtained directly from carriers.

Another group of indicators focuses on the protection and enhancement of cultural heritage, local identity and cultural assets. Indicator C.5.1 is not available from secondary sources of the nationwide data collection system. At the local level, however, data can be obtained from municipal (city) offices to calculate the second indicator in this group, showing the percentage of events in the center that focus on traditional/local culture and heritage (C.5.2).

Section D reflects the impact of tourism on the natural environment. Group D.1 contains indicators reflecting important issues related to the need to reduce the impact of transportation, but in the Polish statistical system the data needed to calculate all indicators of this group are not available from secondary sources. The

Table 4. Assessment of the availability of ETIS indicators in Section D: Environmental impact

Criterion	Indicator	Rating availability
D.1 Reducing transport impact	D.1.1 Percentage of tourists and same day visitors using different modes of transport to arrive at the destination	1
	D.1.2 Percentage of tourists and same day visitors using local/soft mobility/public transport services to get around the destination	1
	D.1.3 Average travel (km) by tourists and same day visitors from home to the destination	1
	D.1.4 Average carbon footprint of tourists and same day visitors traveling from home to the destination	1
D.2 Climate change	D.2.1 Percentage of tourism enterprises involved in climate change mitigation schemes—such as: CO_2 offset, low energy systems, etc. – and 'adaptation' responses and actions	1
	D.2.2 Percentage of tourism accommodation and attraction infrastructure located in 'vulnerable zones'	1
D.3 Solid waste management	D.3.1 Waste production per tourist night compared to general population waste production per person (kilos)	1
	D.3.2 Percentage of tourism enterprises separating different types of waste	3
	D.3.3 Percentage of waste recycled per tourist compared to total waste recycled per resident per year	1
D.4 Sewage treatment	D.4.1 Percentage of sewage from the destination treated to at least secondary level prior to discharge	1
D.5 Water management	D.5.1 Water consumption per tourist night compared to general population water consumption per resident night	1
	D.5.2 Percentage of tourist enterprises taking actions to reduce water consumption	1
	D.5.3 Percentage of tourism enterprises using recycled water	1
D.6 Energy usage	D.6.1 Energy consumption per tourist night compared to general population energy consumption per resident night	1
	D.6.2 Percentage of tourism enterprises that take actions to reduce energy consumption	1
	D.6.3 Annual amount of energy consumed from renewable sources (MWh) as a percentage of overall energy consumption at destination level per year	1
D.7 Landscape and biodiversity protection	D.7.1 Percentage of local enterprises in the tourism sector actively supporting protection, conservation, and management of local biodiversity and landscapes	2

Source: author.

next group (D.2) also notes the lack of availability from secondary sources. To calculate indicator D.2.1, data can be collected from surveys of construction permits or notifications of intent to carry out construction works, but they may be incomplete and not very specific. To calculate indicator D.2.2, data collected directly from the spatial development plans of a specific territorial unit can be used. Group D.3 includes indicators for solid waste management, and group D.4 includes an indicator showing wastewater treatment. These indicators in Poland cannot be calculated on the basis of secondary data from nationwide statistics, and direct research is highly difficult, due to the waste collection system in place (dispersion depending on the locality). Group D.5 indicators reflecting water management issues and Group D.6 indicators indicating energy consumption are also impossible to calculate from secondary sources available from Polish reporting. On the basis of municipal and EU programs, municipal offices or marshal offices may have this type of data, but the data may vary for different territorial divisions. Last in the list is the criterion: Landscape and Biodiversity Protection, which is assessed by indicator D.7.1. The data necessary for the calculation can be obtained directly from entrepreneurs at the municipal level, while it cannot be obtained from public reporting.

The concept of sustainable tourism provides a starting point for practical applications in a specific area, but it does not provide solutions for tourism development that are useful for every place and at every time. According to the idea of the authors of the ETIS, tourist reception areas can take measures to evaluate sustainable tourism by selecting indicators that are useful in a specific region (Font et al., 2021).

In order to assess the availability of indicators in each section, we used indicators that aggregate section evaluations and ratings of individual criteria in the section (Table 5).

Table 5. Indicators aggregating section ratings and individual criteria ratings in the section

Section	Criterion	Rating availability
A	**x**	**1**
	A1	1
	A2	1
B	**x**	**2**
	B1	2
	B2	3
	B3	2
	B4	1
C	**x**	**2**
	C1	2
	C2	2
	C3	3
	C4	1.75
	C5	1.5
D	**x**	**1.18**
	D1	1
	D2	1
	D3	1.67
	D4	1
	D5	1
	D6	1
	D7	2

Source: author.

The results of the study show that in Poland's conditions, the lowest ratings were given to accessibility in section A on resort management and section D reflecting the environmental impact of tourism at the resort.

5. Discussion

The presented research results show that in Poland the availability of indicators is unsatisfactory, which confirms the findings of other authors (Krajnović, Zdrilić, Miletić, 2020; Pavlinović Mršić, Čale, 2020; Tudorache et al., 2017; Zabetta, Sacerdotti, Mauro, 2014).

The lowest rating was given to accessibility in Section A, which implies the difficulty of collecting data for indicators that facilitate resort management, including the survey of tourist satisfaction. Also rated very low was the accessibility of Section D reflecting the environmental impact of tourism at the resort, an indication of the need to improve reporting in this area. Surprisingly, of the proposed indicators in Section D reflecting the environmental impact of tourism (with the exception of the indicator, D3.2, where the data is complete due to the obligation to segregate garbage), there are none for the calculation of which secondary data from Polish public statistics could be used. Collecting primary data specifically for the construction of an indicator is a costly and time-consuming task, and for some indicators it is also often unfeasible. This confirms the conclusions reached by other authors studying the possibility of using ETIS indicators in other regions (Gasparini, Mariotti, 2021; Maguire, McLoughlin, 2020; McLoughlin, Hanrahan, Duddy, 2020; Pavlinović Mršić, Čale, 2020; Tudorache et al., 2017) as well as the conclusions of Font et al. (2021) that using indicators to improve sustainability is not an entirely realistic task.

The broad proposal of C and D section indicators makes it possible to move away from authors' noted dominance of the economic point of view in looking at tourism (Kazimierczak, 2010). But it can be noted that there is a lack of indicators reflecting the impact of tourism on changes in the occurrence of flora and fauna in designated areas due to tourism. There is also no indicator that shows the problem of light litter and noise, which are factors that not only affect the animal world but also determine the attractiveness of the stay of tourists seeking rest in nature.

In Poland, the most opportunities to calculate ETIS indicators using public reporting are found in Section B reflecting economic objectives, and Section C showing social and cultural objectives. Studying the availability of ETIS indicators in Italy, Modica et al. (2018) showed the high availability of indicators of section B, while they assessed the availability of section C much less well. However, many authors agree that the biggest problem is the very low availability of section D (Modica et al., 2018; Pavlinović Mršić, Čale, 2020; Tudorache et al., 2017).

However, despite its shortcomings, the ETIS system has advantages. First, the use of indicators, especially from sections A, B and D, allows costs to be reduced which leads to an increase in the bottom line (Marković Vukadin, Zovko, Krešić, 2020). Secondly, the use of indicators from sections C and D allows expectations and impressions of visitors to be better met, since a clean environment (Breiby et al., 2022) and supporting local culture (Markiewicz, Niezgoda, 2022) are competitive advantages of a tourism product. At the same time, the use of ETIS indicators by different regions enables the collaboration and benchmarking recommended by the UNWTO (*UN standards for measuring tourism*, 2008).

6. Conclusions

The idea of sustainable tourism provides a starting point for practical applications in tourist regions, but the general nature of the concept means that the scope of research on the feasibility of implementation depends on the conditions of a specific area. According to the idea of the ETIS authors, tourist reception areas can take measures to evaluate sustainable tourism by selecting indicators that are useful in a specific region (Font et al., 2021). Research into the possibility of evaluating sustainable tourism in Poland has shown the need for further research into the inconveniences and shortcomings of the statistical data collection system. At the same time, at the national level, no guidelines were introduced for adapting (selecting) ETIS indicators to the conditions of Poland.

The lowest rating was given to the availability of indicators that facilitate the management of the resort, including the survey of tourist satisfaction (Section A). Also rated very low was the availability of indicators of the environmental impact of tourism in a resort (section D), which is surprising given the timeliness of environmental problems in the modern world. In the Polish reporting system, apart from garbage segregation, there is no availability of data providing information on the environmental impact of transportation, climate change, sewage and water management, and energy consumption. It therefore becomes important to introduce a system for collecting information in this area at the regional level. The acquisition of such data is essential to counteract the negative effects of tourism development, the basis of sustainable tourism. In particular, it would be appropriate to improve the collection of statistical data on indicators that received the lowest scores (1 point) in this study.

Another issue that guarantees success in implementing sustainable tourism is proper long-term planning for its development. The use of ETIS indicators to assess the achievement of sustainable tourism goals can also be the basis for planning activities in the region, since the creation of plans and strategies should be preceded by a diagnosis of the baseline situation (Niezgoda, 2011; Alejziak, 2016). All the more so as new concepts are emerging that assume greater flexibility in forecasting future activities. These include Resilience Planning (Awedyk, Niezgoda, 2018) and Multi-Level Governance (Alejziak, 2016). It should also be borne in mind that the use of ETIS indicators is only one of the concepts for evaluating sustainable tourism in the regions, the creators of which emphasize that the choice of indicators depends on the conditions of the specific tourist destination/center. Other options for evaluating sustainable tourism are based mainly on primary research, which, as indicated in this article, is associated with the long time and high cost of data collection.

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Examining urban tourists' attitudes: The case study of Belgrade (Serbia)

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ABSTRACT

Personal characteristics have an important role in shaping tourists' attitudes. The purpose of this study is to examine tourists' attitudes to elements of the tourist offer of the city of Belgrade, the main urban destination in the Republic of Serbia. The primary research aim is to examine the influence of these personal characteristics on such attitudes. A survey was conducted on a sample of 319 tourists, who visited the city. The collected data were processed in the statistical program SPSS25 while the formed hypotheses were tested using appropriate statistical tests. The research results indicated that tourists highly rated the diversity of the gastronomic offer and the quality of nightlife, while organized tours for visiting tourist attractions and the quality of traffic infrastructure were ranked as elements in which there are opportunities for improvement. Further, the research results showed that origin and education influenced differences in tourists' attitudes. The theoretical and practical implications as well as research limitations are defined, and recommendations made for the future research based on the theoretical background and research results.

KEYWORDS

Belgrade, Serbia, personal characteristics, tourist offer, tourists' attitudes

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1. Introduction

Understanding the travel decision-making process, destination choice and tourists' expectations based on a tourist destination offer is a very important topic in the social sciences (Blešić et al., 2021; Moscardo et al., 1996; Van Vuuren, Slabbert, 2011). In conditions of continuous and dynamic change in the needs and preferences of tourist demand, a significant number of empirical studies have examined the factors which influence tourists' attitudes to the offer of the tourist destination which they visit. Researchers pay significant attention to examining the influence of personal characteristics (gender, age, education, income, origin, marital status, etc.) on the behavior, attitudes, and preferences of tourists (Kodithuwakku, 2018; Kostić, Kovačević-Berleković, 2021; Kozak, 2002; Varasteh, Marzuki, Rasoolimanesh, 2015). Also, some empirical studies confirm the significant influence of personal characteristics on all aspects of tourist travel, starting from travel motivation, the decision-making process and tourist satisfaction (Biswas, Omar, Rashid-Radha, 2020; Carvache-Franco et al., 2020; Ma et al., 2018; Perović et al., 2012).

Regarding gender, researchers have pointed to differences in the behavior of men and women during travel; women travel more often primarily for rest and relaxation while men travel more for business reasons (Collins, Tisdell, 2002; Tilley, Houston, 2016). Meng and Uysal (2008) identified gender differences in the importance of destination offer elements pointing out that women attach more importance to destination attributes than men when it comes to natural landscapes and recreational facilities (festivals, visiting cultural sites, sightseeing, and shopping). Age can also influence tourists' attitudes to destination offer elements which has been confirmed in research (Aziz et al., 2018; Kim, Weiler, 2013; Tangeland et al., 2013). According to Esichaikul (2012), older tourists travel to destinations that offer them recreational facilities, while the location of accommodation, natural beauties and safety are also important elements of a destination offer. Unlike the elderly, young tourists prefer destinations which offer them novelty (Kim et al., 2008). Significant differences which exist in the tourist attitudes of different ages were pointed out in the work by Milićević, Lakičević and Petrović (2020) according to which young tourists prefer sports and recreational facilities, spa & wellness and quality in accommodation services, while older tourists pay attention to natural attractions and cultural and entertainment facilities.

In terms of education, tourists with a higher level have higher expectations from a vacation in a certain destination (Đeri, Plavša, Čerović, 2007; Kim et al., 2008). Also, highly educated tourists travel more often to foreign destinations while those with a lower-level travel domestically (Đeri et al., 2017). Origin can have a significant impact on travel motivation and destination image but also on tourists' attitudes to a destination offer (Podovac, 2021a; Prayag, Ryan, 2010; Sussmann, Rashcovsky, 1997). Research on tourists' attitudes to destination offer elements has made a significant academic contribution as tourists gain different experiences after using the services, and this is very often influenced by their socio-demographic characteristics (Jevtić, Tomić, Leković, 2020). Understanding the attitudes of tourists with different personal characteristics is crucial for identifying those market segments whose needs can be completely satisfied as well as for defining marketing activities for these segments. The success of the destination on the tourist market depends on the continuous adjustment of the offer to tourists with different characteristics and travel motives through new services and facilities.

This article examines tourists' attitudes to elements of the tourist offer of the city of Belgrade. The aim is an examination of the impact of tourists' personal characteristics on their attitudes to elements of this tourist offer. The main reason for the selection of Belgrade is that in relation to other types of tourist places, it is the most developed urban tourism destination with the highest percentage share in the total number of tourists visiting Serbia. Analyzing statistical data for 2019 (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2019), 1,258,348 tourists visited the capital, i.e., 34.1% of the total number of tourist arrivals at the national level. In this year, 2,696,832 overnight stays were recorded, which is 26.8% of the total number of tourist overnights in Serbia. After Belgrade come Vrnjačka Banja (7.7%), Zlatibor (6.4%), Novi Sad (6%), Kopaonik (3.7%), Sokobanja (3.4%) and Niš (2.5%) (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2020). Belgrade has a recognizable image as a destination of a multifunctional character which can satisfy different travel motives with its offer (Podovac, 2021a; Podovac, 2021b). The efficiency of the destination management process as well as continuity in raising the quality of the tourist offer contribute to the stable position of Belgrade on the international tourist market.

In the following section a literature review is presented in which the results of previously conducted empirical studies on this topic have been analyzed. Based on theoretical analysis, the research methodology is explained next. The research results obtained are then presented, while in the discussion, a comparison with the results of other studies is made. In the final section, the theoretical and practical implications as well as limitations and guidelines for future research are defined.

2. Literature review and hypothesis development

Numerous studies have indicated a significant impact of tourists' personal characteristics on travel decision making (Baloglu, 1997; Kattiyapornpong, Miller, 2009; Zahirović et al., 2021), travel motivation (Aziz et al., 2018; Kara, Mkwizu, 2020; Podovac, 2022; Tepavčević et al., 2019) and destination choice (Hedlund et al., 2012; Heung et al., 2001; Yoo et al., 2018). Personal characteristics, among which gender, education, age, and origin stand out as variables, shape consumer behavior (Jönsson, Devonish, 2008; Khatibzadeh et al., 2012; Kwok et al., 2016; Woyo et al., 2019). Gender implies a set of characteristics, attitudes and activities that distinguish men from women and also may influence behavior (Kwok et al., 2016). Despite these opinions that in recent times differences in travel behavior between men and women are far less pronounced, gender differences when it comes to travel are still a significant research issue (Che et al., 2021; Collins, Tisdell, 2002; Lyu, Noh, 2017; Omar et al., 2014; Ozdemir et al., 2012). Several studies have indicated that women rate elements of a destination offer more highly than men as well as finding more satisfaction overall (Clarke et al., 2021; Đeri et al., 2018; Vespestad, Mehmetoglu, 2015).

Examining the impact of gender differences on the perceived importance of destination attributes, Meng and Uysal (2008) have indicated that for women elements of a tourist offer such as natural landscapes, recreational activities, events, shopping, organized sightseeing, cultural and historical heritage are more important than others. On the other hand, it has been concluded that men prefer activities that are based on nature (skiing, horse riding, hunting) as well as recreational facilities. In a study by Ryan et al. (1998), it was found that there are pronounced gender differences in attitudes regarding the perception of destination offer elements and that women rated almost every element with a higher score than men. Using the example of Perth (Western Australia), the authors concluded that women rated elements such as cultural and historical heritage sites, tours, local population kindness, leisure facilities, shopping, and traffic accessibility more highly. Ragavan et al. (2014) found that the attitudes of foreign tourists of different genders differ significantly when it comes to accommodation, food and beverage services, facilities, and prices. Kodithuwakku (2018) analyzed the behavior of international male and female tourists in relation to their overall satisfaction arising from the destination attributes, using the example of the Galle Tourism Zone, and concluded that men are more satisfied with elements such as landscapes, accommodation, food, hospitality, security, relaxation, climate, and price than women. In this study, significant differences in the attitudes of women and men for elements such as landscape, goods and services, entertainment, shopping, accommodation, hospitality, accessibility, security, and relaxation were established. However, the results demonstrated that the attitudes of women and men do not differ when it comes to culture, religious values, food, climate, transport, and prices. Based on findings in similar studies, hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H_1: Gender influences on differences in tourists' attitudes to elements of the tourist offer of the city of Belgrade.

The age of tourists affects destination choice (Jönsson, Devonish, 2008; Milićević et al., 2020; Woyo et al., 2019) as well as tourists' attitudes to destination offer elements (Li et al., 2017; Weaver et al., 1994; Woyo et al., 2019). Tsiotsou and Vasioti (2006) have determined that satisfaction with a destination offer is higher among young tourists compared to older. Young tourists prefer leisure activities in a destination such as rafting or horseback riding, while older tourists prefer good facilities for a vacation. According to Zielińska-Szczepkowska (2021), older tourists are mostly interested in destination offer elements such as safety, natural beauty, historical places, service quality and traffic accessibility. Patuelli and Nijkamp (2016) pointed out that older tourists are an important market segment, primarily interested in destinations that offer them peace, culture, preserved environment, climate, quality of life and which are affordable. In a study about how destination attributes can be used for promotion purposes, based on the example of Udaipur (Rajasthan, India), Singh and Tiwari (2016) found significant differences in tourists' attitudes according to their age. Tourists aged 18 to 25 and those between 46 and 55 are more satisfied with elements such as services at tourist spots, natural attractions, and infrastructure. The study, which was conducted on a sample of Japanese tourists, found that there is a link between vacation factors among the personal and travel characteristics of tourists. They pointed out significant differences between tourists aged 18–24, 35–44 and 45–54 in relation to tourists aged 55–64 when it comes to conditions for destination exploration (Heung et al., 2001).

Milićević et al. (2020) determined that young tourists pay more attention to attributes such as sports and recreational activities, spa & wellness, prices of accommodation services, while the older prefer natural attractions, activities for children as well as culture and entertainment. Weaver et al. (1994) found that young tourists mostly prefer destinations that offer them entertainment at affordable prices, while the older focused on destinations that offer them comfort and safety. In a study examining whether the image of rural Pennsylvania differs among international students depending on travel behavior and socio-demographic characteristics, Chen and Kerstetter (1999) demonstrated a positive relationship between tourist age and the natural amenity dimension. The authors found that older international tourists have a more positive attitude toward the image of rural Pennsylvania than younger tourists. Therefore, the second hypothesis is defined as follows:

H_2: Age influences differences in tourists' attitudes to elements of the tourist offer of the city of Belgrade.

Education is a personal characteristic analyzed very often in tourism research due to its pronounced influence on destination choice (Đeri et al., 2017; Tan, Wu, 2016; Woyo et al., 2019). Educational level significantly affects tourists' attitudes to the offer of the destination visited (Kozak, 2002; Milićević et al., 2020; Vuksanović et al., 2019). Singh and Tiwari (2016) point out that education is one of the personal characteristics which affects their satisfaction and perception of destination offer elements. They concluded that perception and satisfaction of destination offer elements are at a higher level among tourists with higher education. However, Milićević et al. (2020) came to the conclusion that education does not significantly affect differences in tourists' attitudes to the tourist product based on the example of Vrnjačka Banja. The authors found differences in tourists' attitudes from dissimilar educational levels for a very small number of elements (accommodation services, cleanliness in the destination and prices). Woyo et al. (2019) found that education significantly influences tourist perception when it comes to destination amenities, ambiance, external access, and destination environment. These elements were rated more highly by tourists with a degree. According to Gaki et al. (2016), education influences tourist satisfaction with the destination offer, especially when it comes to tourists with higher education because it is considered that they know what they want to experience in the destination and that they have information about the offer before they travel. Based on that, a third hypothesis was formed:

H_3: Educational level influences differences in tourists' attitudes to elements of the tourist offer of the city of Belgrade.

Origin is an important criterion for tourism market segmentation while in addition an analysis of the origin of tourists can contribute to a more complete understanding of tourist behavior (Đeri et al., 2014; Mazilu, Mitroi, 2010). When it comes to origin, tourists from different countries or from different continents perceive the tourist attractions of a destination differently (Kozak, 2002; Mill, Morrison, 1985). According to a study on the impact of demographic variables on the perception of destination attractiveness, Woyo et al. (2019) came to the conclusion that Asian tourists perceive general amenities as a source of destination attractiveness, while tourists from Africa singled out external access due to the proximity of the destination. On the other hand, ambiance is an important factor of destination attractiveness for tourists from America and Asia. Goodrich (1978) determined that American tourists pay more attention to entertainment and shopping, to climate for comfort, and to prices. In the study about segmentation based on the personal characteristics of tourists who visited Istanbul (Turkey), Birdir (2015) found that tourists who prefer natural attractions come from Russia, while German tourists are very sensitive to service prices. Examining the impact of personal characteristics on tourists' attitudes to destination offer elements is very important for understanding tourist behavior during travel. In addition, this type of research provides important information to tourism development planners in order to define the directions of tourism development and adjust the offer to the needs of tourists. As pointed out (Carvache-Franco et al., 2020; Kassean, Gassita, 2013; Kozak, 2002), the analysis of differences in attitudes and behavior of tourists is a very important aspect of research for destination management, as it examines the characteristics of different groups of tourists, performs segmentation of the tourism market and defines appropriate marketing strategies for each segment. Based on this, the fourth hypothesis was defined:

H_4: Origin influences differences in tourists' attitudes to elements of the tourist offer of the city of Belgrade.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research area, sampling and surveying

An examination of the existence of significant differences in respondents' attitudes to elements of the Belgrade tourist offer according to their personal characteristics represents the main aim of this research. Belgrade was selected for the research location as it has the most developed offer of urban tourism in Serbia. This consists of different tourist attractions, a rich cultural heritage and tourist events, as well as various facilities that allow tourists to spend quality time (nightlife, rich gastronomic offer, shopping centers, etc.) (Paunović, 2013; Podovac et al., 2022). The period in which the survey was conducted was from June to September 2019. A questionnaire was distributed to tourists in categorized accommodation facilities and during organized city tours who stayed in Belgrade. The total number of validly completed questionnaires was 319.

3.2. Survey questionnaire development

Respondents filled out a questionnaire which consisted of two parts. The first consisted of five questions, which referred to their demographic data while three were about the tourists' vacation in Belgrade (length of stay, total number of visits and manner of travel organization). In the second part, 11 elements of the tourist offer of Belgrade were defined and respondents rated these elements with grades from 1 (*lowest*) to 5 (*highest*). These 11 elements were based on the classifications defined by Jansen-Verbeke (1986) and by Hall and Page (2002).

3.3. Data analysis

The collected data were systematized and processed through the statistical program SPSS 25 using appropriate statistical analyzes. The article presents the results of the descriptive statistical analysis of the collected responses. The defined hypotheses were also tested by applying selected statistical methods. The existence of the influence of gender and origin on respondents' attitudes about elements of the tourist offer was examined using a *t*-test of independent samples. The influence of age and education (independent variables) on respondents' attitudes (dependent variable) was examined by application of a one-factor analysis of variance. The verification of the measuring scale was performed by calculating Cronbach's coefficient (0.887 – greater than 0.079) which indicates good reliability as well as internal agreement in the analyzed sample.

4. Research results

4.1. Sample profile

As visible in Table 1, in the survey 319 respondents participated with the proportion of male respondents (52%) being slightly higher than female (48%). Of the total number, the most represented are those in the age groups 36–45 (29.5%) and 26–35 (27%). According to educational level, 66.1% respondents stated that they had completed master's or PhD studies.

When it comes to monthly income, 43.9% of respondents earn more than 800 euros but 17.6% did not want to answer this question. According to the number of visits, the sample included respondents who had visited Belgrade six or more times (36.4%), and 49.8% stayed in Belgrade for 2–3 days. In terms of travel organization, 83.4% organized their travel independently, while for 3.4% the trip was organized by a travel agency. Other options were related to travel organized by the company in which respondents worked or by a specific organization of which they are members.

4.2. Tourists' attitudes to the elements of the tourist offer of the city of Belgrade

The results of descriptive statistical analysis of the tourist offer of the Belgrade are shown in Table 2.

The average scores for tourist offer elements in Belgrade range from 3.48 to 4.22. Analyzing the values of the arithmetic mean, it can be concluded that some elements stand out from others. The highest averages were for diversity of gastronomic offer ($M = 4.22$) and quality of nightlife offer ($M = 4.18$), while the lowest were for organized tours for visiting tourist attractions ($M = 3.49$) and quality of traffic infrastructure ($M = 3.48$).

According to the obtained results, female respondents gave slightly higher average scores for 7 of 11 elements

Table 1. Basic data on respondents and their stay in Belgrade ($n = 319$)

Demographic characteristics		*n*	%
Gender	male	166	52.0
	female	153	48.0
Age	18–25	54	16.9
	26–35	86	27.0
	36–45	94	29.5
	46–55	48	15.0
	56–65	28	8.8
	> 66	9	2.8
Monthly income	up to 200 euros	14	4.4
	201–300	13	4.1
	301–400	30	9,3
	401–500	15	4.7
	501–600	7	2.2
	601–700	13	4.1
	701–800	17	5.3
	> 800	140	43.9
	I don't want to answer	56	17.6
	no income	14	4.4
Education	high school	9	2.8
	Diploma	11	3.4
	bachelor's degree	88	27.6
	master/PhD	211	66.1
Origin	domestic	68	21.3
	foreign	251	78.7
Length of visit	less than a day	12	3.8
	one day	31	9.7
	2–3 days	159	49.8
	4–5 days	59	18.5
	6–7 days	22	6.9
	longer than 7 days	36	11.3
Number of visits so far	once	80	25.1
	2–3	71	22.3
	4–5	52	16.3
	6 and more	116	36.4
Travel organization	independently	266	83.4
	travel agency	11	3.4
	other	42	13.2

Source: authors.

Table 2. Results of descriptive statistical analysis of tourist offer elements of Belgrade

Tourist offer elements of Belgrade	*M*	*SD*
Cultural and historical heritage	3.92	0.973
Organized tours for visiting tourist attractions	3.49	1.012
Attractiveness of the natural environment and landscapes	3.73	0.965
Traffic accessibility	3.76	1.033
Quality of traffic infrastructure	3.48	0.983
Relation between price and service quality	3.91	1.039
Quality of services in accommodation facilities	3.74	1.089
Shopping	3.97	0.938
Quality of nightlife offer	4.18	0.919
Diversity of gastronomic offer	4.22	0.956
Orderliness and cleanliness of the city	3.53	1.101

Source: authors.

of the tourist offer of Belgrade with the highest given for diversity of gastronomic offer ($M = 4.23$; $SD = 1.048$), quality of nightlife offer ($M = 4.18$; $SD = 1.029$) and shopping ($M = 4.08$; $SD = 0.927$), while the lowest were for quality of traffic infrastructure ($M = 3.55$; $SD = 0.917$) and organized tours for visiting tourist attractions ($M = 3.56$; $SD = 0.993$). The highest average scores by male respondents were given for diversity of gastronomic offer ($M = 4.21$; $SD = 0.866$); quality of nightlife offer ($M = 4.17$; $SD = 0.809$) and relation between price and service quality ($M = 3.95$; $SD = 1.020$). On the other hand, lower average scores were given for organized tours for visiting tourist attractions ($M = 3.43$; $SD = 1.029$) and quality of traffic infrastructure ($M = 3.41$; $SD = 1.039$) (Table 3). Statistically significant differences between attitudes exist only in the case of shopping ($p = 0.033$) which women rated more than men. Considering that there are significant differences for only one element out of 11 at the level of significance $p < 0.05$, the authors established the absence of statistically significant differences between the attitudes of male and female respondents on the tourist offer of Belgrade. Based on this result, hypothesis H_1 was rejected.

Table 3. Results of *t*-test by gender

Tourist offer elements of Belgrade	Gender	*M*	*SD*	*p*
Shopping	male	3.86	0.927	0.033*
	female	4.08	0.939	

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$.
Source: authors.

When it comes to origin, foreign respondents gave high average scores for cultural and historical heritage, attractiveness of the natural environment and landscapes, traffic accessibility, relation between price and service quality, shopping, quality of nightlife offer and orderliness and cleanliness of the city.

Foreign respondents gave the diversity of gastronomic offer the highest average score ($M = 4.23$; $SD = 0.939$) while the lowest were for organized tours for visiting tourist attractions ($M = 3.45$; $SD = 1.008$) and quality of traffic infrastructure. For all other elements, the highest average scores were given by domestic respondents, especially for quality of nightlife offer ($M = 4.43$; $SD = 0.886$). Domestic respondents gave orderliness and cleanliness of the city with the lowest score ($M = 3.00$; $SD = 1.093$). Origin affected the respondents' attitudes in 7 of the 11 analyzed tourist offer elements: cultural and historical heritage, organized tours for visiting tourist attractions, attractiveness of the natural environment and landscapes, traffic accessibility, relation between price and service quality, shopping, quality of nightlife offer and orderliness and cleanliness of the city (Table 4). These results indicate that significant differences exist in the attitudes of respondents with different origins about the tourist offer elements of Belgrade thus H_4 hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 4. Results of *t*-test by origin

Tourist offer elements of Belgrade	Origin	*M*	*SD*	*p*
Cultural and historical heritage	D	4.15	0.981	0.031*
	F	3.86	0.964	
Attractiveness of the natural environment and landscapes	D	3.47	0.938	0.011*
	F	3.80	0.962	
Traffic accessibility	D	4.18	1.021	0.000*
	F	3.65	1.010	
Relation between price and service quality	D	3.47	1.029	0.000*
	F	4.03	1.011	
Shopping	D	4.41	0.815	0.000*
	F	3.85	0.934	
Quality of nightlife offer	D	4.43	0.886	0.012*
	F	4.11	0.918	
Orderliness and cleanliness of the city	D	3.00	1.093	0.000*
	F	3.67	1.061	

Note: D – *domestic*, F – *foreign*; * $p \leq 0.05$.
Source: authors.

Average scores for the tourist offer elements of Belgrade, depending on age range from 3.32 to 4.50. Respondents belonging to the younger population

(18–25) gave quality of nightlife offer (M = 4.50; SD = 0.906) and shopping (M = 4.37; SD = 0.917) high scores, while lower average scores were for orderliness and cleanliness of the city (M = 3.30; SD = 0.964). High average scores for Relation between price and service quality (M = 4.02; SD = 1.084); quality of nightlife offer (M = 4.35; SD = 0.904) and diversity of gastronomic offer (M = 4.26; SD = 0.884) were given by respondents aged 26–35 with the lowest for quality of traffic infrastructure (M = 3.28; SD = 0.978). The attitudes of those aged 36–45 and 46–55 are relatively similar, given that they gave high average scores for quality of nightlife offer and diversity of gastronomic offer, while they gave low average scores for quality of traffic infrastructure. Respondents aged 56–65 highly rated diversity of gastronomic offer (M = 4.24; SD = 1.074), while the lowest average score was given for organized tours for visiting tourist attractions (M = 3.43; SD = 1.069). The oldest group of respondents gave high average scores for cultural and historical heritage (M = 4.11; SD = 0.782) and quality of nightlife offer (M = 4.11; SD = 0.928), while the lowest were given for organized tours for visiting tourist attractions (M = 3.22; SD = 1.641) and traffic accessibility (M = 3.22; SD = 0.441).

The results of the one-factor analysis of variance, which are presented on Table 5, indicate that significant differences exist in the attitudes of different age groups for shopping (F = 3.154; p = 0.009) and quality of nightlife offer (F = 3.454; p = 0.005) at a level of statistical significance of $p < 0.05$. The Tukey post-hoc test, which was used to determine those age groups whose attitudes differ, showed the existence of significant differences in the mean values between attitudes of those aged 18–25 and 36–45 in the case of shopping (p = 0.003) and the quality of nightlife offer (p = 0.016). Based on these results, it has been established that the attitudes of respondents belonging to dissimilar age groups, do not differ significantly when it comes to the analyzed elements of the tourist offer elements of Belgrade. According to these results, hypothesis H_2 was rejected.

Average scores for tourist offer elements of Belgrade, depending on education, range from 2.45 to 4.49. The group of respondents who have completed a master/PhD gave the highest average scores to diversity of gastronomic offer (M = 4.09; SD = 0.890); quality of nightlife offer (M = 4.26; SD = 0.895) and relation between price and service quality (M = 3.97; SD = 1.004), while the lowest was for organized tours for visiting tourist attractions (M = 3.41; SD = 0.983). Diplomas gave the highest average score to quality of nightlife offer (M = 4.49; SD = 0.773); cultural and historical heritage (M = 4.27; SD = 0.906); diversity of gastronomic offer (M = 4.31; SD = 0.902) and traffic accessibility (M = 4.16; SD = 0.869). They gave the lowest average scores to quality of traffic infrastructure (M = 3.68; SD = 0.953) and organized tours for visiting tourist attractions

Table 5. Results of ANOVA by age

Tourist offer elements for Belgrade	Age	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*
Shopping	18–25	4.37	0.917	3.154	0.009*
	26–35	3.99	0.819		
	36–45	3.79	0.993		
	46–55	3.85	0.967		
	56–65	4.04	0.922		
	66 and more	3.67	0.866		
Quality of nightlife offer	18–25	4.50	0.906	3.454	0.005*
	26–35	4.35	0.904		
	36–45	4.00	0.962		
	46–55	4.02	0.863		
	56–65	3.93	0.716		
	66 and more	4.11	0.928		

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$.
Source: authors.

(M = 3.77; SD = 1.058). Quality of nightlife offer (M = 3.45; SD = 1.368) and shopping (M = 3.45; SD = 1.036) had high average scores but low scores were given for traffic accessibility (M = 2.64; SD = 0.809) and quality of traffic infrastructure (M = 2.55; SD = 1.036). Respondents who had only completed high school gave the highest average scores for shopping (M = 4.33; SD = 1.188), quality of nightlife offer (M = 4.22; SD = 1.394) and traffic accessibility (M = 4.11; SD = 1.167). On the other hand, they gave the lowest average scores for organized tours of tourist attractions (M = 3.33; SD = 1.000) (Table 6). One-factor analysis of variance was used in order to examine the existence of significant differences in the attitudes of respondents with different levels of education. The values obtained indicated that education does not influence attitudes to tourist offer elements of Belgrade which is why H_3 hypothesis is confirmed.

According to the post-hoc test, significant differences were found in the attitudes of respondents who had completed diploma level education and respondents with a bachelor's degree for all elements except for the relation between price and service quality. The attitudes of the respondents with a bachelor's degree and those with a completed master/PhD differ when it comes to cultural and historical heritage, organized tours for visiting tourist attractions, traffic accessibility, shopping and quality of nightlife offer. In terms of elements related to traffic, significant differences are present in the attitudes of respondents with only high school education and those who finished a diploma.

Table 6. Results of ANOVA by education

Tourist offer elements of Belgrade	Education	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*
Cultural and historical heritage	high school	4.00	1.000	6.824	0.000*
	diploma	3.27	0.905		
	bachelor's degree	4.27	0.906		
	master/PhD	3.81	0.964		
Organized tours for visiting tourist attractions	high school	3.33	1.000	4.156	0.007*
	diploma	2.91	0.701		
	bachelor's degree	3.77	1.058		
	master/PhD	3.41	0.983		
Attractiveness of the natural environment and landscapes	high school	3.67	0.866	3.596	0.014*
	diploma	2.82	1.079		
	bachelor's degree	3.81	1.060		
	master/PhD	3.75	0.903		
Traffic accessibility	high school	3.67	1.118	5.008	0.002*
	diploma	2.55	1.036		
	bachelor's degree	3.68	0.953		
	master/PhD	3.43	0.961		
Quality of traffic infrastructure	high school	4.11	1.167	10.863	0.000*
	diploma	2.64	0.809		
	bachelor's degree	4.16	0.869		
	master/PhD	3.64	1.034		
Relation between price and service quality	high school	3.78	1.093	2.627	0.050*
	diploma	3.09	1.514		
	bachelor's degree	3.89	1.022		
	master/PhD	3.97	1.004		
Quality of services in accommodation facilities	high school	4.11	1.167	2.844	0.038*
	diploma	3.18	1.471		
	bachelor's degree	3.95	0.934		
	master/PhD	3.66	1.111		
Shopping	high school	4.33	1.118	4.989	0.002*
	diploma	3.45	1.036		
	bachelor's degree	4.24	0.897		
	master/PhD	3.87	0.916		
Quality of nightlife offer	high school	4.22	1.394	6.680	0.000*
	diploma	3.45	1.368		
	bachelor's degree	4.49	0.773		
	master/PhD	4.09	0.890		

Tourist offer elements of Belgrade	Education	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*
Diversity of gastronomic offer	high school	4.00	1.323	6.827	0.000*
	diploma	3.00	1.414		
	bachelor's degree	4.31	0.902		
	master/PhD	4.26	0.895		
Orderliness and cleanliness of the city	high school	3.00	1.414	4.693	0.003*
	diploma	2.45	0.934		
	bachelor's degree	3.64	1.166		
	master/PhD	3.56	1.037		

Note: * $p \leq 0.05$.
Source: authors.

The attitudes of respondents who have graduated with a diploma and those who have completed a master/PhD differ significantly in terms of attractiveness of the natural environment and landscapes, quality of traffic infrastructure, traffic accessibility, relation between price and service quality, diversity of gastronomic offer and orderliness and cleanliness of the city.

5. Discussion

Previous research on this topic in the case of Belgrade was concerned mainly with the tourist image of this city. Analyzing how foreign tourists perceive the image of Belgrade, Marković (2016) determined that the key associations for this destination are entertainment, quality of food and beverage services, local community hospitality and rich culture and history. The results of a study by Todorović and Jovičić (2018), with the results of which the conclusions of our study are consistent, indicated that Belgrade tourists gave high average scores to elements such as entertainment and nightlife, local cuisine and shopping. In addition, the compatibility of these two studies is based on the fact that the origin of tourists is an important demographic characteristic which affects the attitudes or perceptions of tourists about the elements of Belgrade's tourist offer, while gender and age do not have significant impact. The conclusions of this article are also compatible with one recent study which examines the influence of tourists' characteristics on the image of the city of Belgrade and the attitudes of foreign tourists about Belgrade as a tourist destination (Šaćirović, Bratić, 2021). Those authors concluded that tourists rated nightlife and gastronomy highly which also was one of our main conclusions. Further, Šaćirović and Bratić (2021) determined that gender, age, monthly income, and company during the trip have a significant impact on the tourist perception of Belgrade as a tourist destination whereby no such conclusions were drawn in our study.

Todorović and Jovićić (2016) indicated that education had a pronounced influence on differences between tourists' attitudes about elements of the tourist offer of Belgrade, especially when it comes to nightlife, and cultural and historical heritage, which was also determined in our article. Some authors have researched this topic in the context of certain market segments which may be a guideline for more advanced research. For example, Dunjić et al. (2012) by researching the satisfaction of conference participants in Belgrade, suggested that this group of tourists is mostly satisfied with elements of the tourist offer such as gastronomic offer, quality of hotel services and cultural heritage, but also entertainment and traffic accessibility. These conclusions are partly consistent with the research results presented in our article. On the other hand, Todorović and Jovičić (2016), examining the motivation of the young for visiting Belgrade, found that this group of tourists prefers cultural attractions and enjoying nightlife, which was proven in our study.

6. Conclusion

Due to the fact that modern tourists are very demanding in terms of service quality and experiences during their vacation, a very important aspect of research in tourism is examining attitudes to the destination tourist offer. Destination competitiveness on the tourist market depends on continuous improvement of the tourist offer in order to fully meet their needs and create destination loyalty. The aim of this article was to examine tourists' attitudes to elements of the offer of Belgrade depending on personal characteristics. Tourists rated the offer elements of Belgrade with very high average scores ranging from 3.48 to 4.22.

The research results also indicated the existence of real opportunities for further improvement of the offer with the aim of attracting more tourists and providing an even better position on the tourist market. According to research results, the key elements of the tourist offer are diversity of gastronomic offer, quality of nightlife offer and shopping. Organized tours for visiting tourist attractions, traffic infrastructure and orderliness and cleanliness of the city are elements which are ranked lowest. Bearing in mind that significant differences were found only for shopping, it was concluded that gender has no significant impact on tourists' attitudes to the offer of Belgrade.

In this article, it was proven that origin has a significant impact on the tourists' attitudes especially for cultural and historical heritage, attractiveness of the natural environment and landscapes, traffic accessibility, relation between price and service quality, shopping, quality of nightlife offer and orderliness and cleanliness of the city. Different from origin, age does not significantly influence differences in the tourists' attitudes to the offer of Belgrade. Research results showed the significant impact of age only in the case of shopping and quality of nightlife offer. For these two elements, significant differences are present between the attitudes of tourists aged 18–25 and 36–45. The presented research results indicate that tourists with different educational levels have different attitudes to all 11 elements included in the analysis. The most pronounced differences are present in the attitudes of tourists with a bachelor's degree and who have completed a master/PhD (cultural and historical heritage, organized tours for visiting tourist attractions, traffic accessibility, shopping and quality of nightlife offer) and tourists who have completed high school and those who have finished a diploma (attractiveness of the natural environment and landscapes, quality of traffic infrastructure, traffic accessibility, relation between price and service quality, diversity of gastronomic offer and orderliness and cleanliness of the city). Based on the research results above, it can be concluded that two hypotheses out of the four have been proven.

6.1. Theoretical implications

From a theoretical aspect, a systematic and concise analysis of previous research on the impact of personal characteristics on tourists' attitudes was made. The theoretical contribution of the article is reflected in pointing out the necessity of continuous research on cities as tourist destinations, considering the expressed dynamism in the development of tourism in urban areas. The analysis of previously published articles showed that researchers are oriented towards analysis of tourists' attitudes about the image of the city of Belgrade as a destination, while much less attention is paid to an analysis of their attitudes to its tourist offer. The findings of this article can contribute to the formulation of a methodological framework for future research.

6.2. Practical implications

The contribution from the practical aspect is reflected in giving guidelines to the destination management on the direction of future improvements to the tourist offer. Tourism destination planners can utilize the results of this research to significantly improve those elements of their offer not rated with high average scores. This research pointed out the elements that are most attractive to tourists and whose quality should continue to be maintained at the achieved level and enriched with new content. Analysis of differences in the attitudes of tourists in terms of their personal characteristics can greatly help destination planners to focus their activities on key groups of tourists in order to meet their needs and create loyalty to the city of Belgrade as a destination.

6.3. Limitations and recommendations for future research

The research was conducted using the example of the city of Belgrade which indicates the possibility of applying the obtained results to similar types of destination. Therefore, this kind of research should be made on destinations such as mountain centers, spas, cultural sites, etc. It was conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic which indicates potential changes in the attitudes of tourists when it comes to Belgrade as a tourist destination and its offer. Therefore, in future research, a comparative analysis of tourists' attitudes to the offer of Belgrade before and after the pandemic should be made. Bearing in mind that the level of satisfaction with the destination offer affects tourist loyalty (Chenini, Touaiti, 2018; Kusdibyo, 2022), this topic should also be examined in future studies when it comes to urban destinations. Examination of the attitudes and levels of satisfaction of foreign tourists, who have a significantly higher share in total tourism in Belgrade, can also be an important topic in future research.

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The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the pilgrimages of Konya Province inhabitants

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ABSTRACT

The article concerns the characteristics and assessment of the Mecca pilgrimage trends among the inhabitants of Konya Province (Türkiye) in 2017–2021, i.e. before and after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Particular attention is paid to the impact of the pandemic on: (a) the tourism of the provincial inhabitants to Mecca, (b) the activities of local religious tourism operators, and (c) the sense of psychological discomfort in those who could not participate in a pilgrimage. The study concerned the inhabitants of Konya Province due to the deeply rooted conservatism and high religiosity distinguishing this society.

The study was conducted through the methods of investigating sources, expert interview and diagnostic survey. The interviews were conducted at selected Konya travel agencies that organise pilgrimages and at the Konya Valiligi Mudurlugu il Muftulugu. In addition, using an online survey questionnaire, inhabitants of the province were asked if and how their level of psychological comfort was affected by not being able to make the pilgrimage to Mecca during the pandemic.

The results showed that the pandemic significantly weakened the previously growing trend of pilgrimages to Islamic holy sites in the analysed community. It also elicited changes in the offers of local tour operators who were forced to open other destinations. To a lesser extent, it affected the feeling of discomfort of provincial inhabitants resulting from the lack of opportunity to make such trips.

KEYWORDS

religious tourism, Islam, Umrah, Hajj, COVID-19, Türkiye

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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began on November 17 2019 in the Chinese city of Wuhan, has significantly affected the global political, economic, and social situation. Its effects have been faced by countries, communities and individuals. Virtually all spheres of previous professional, social and personal life were changed and this exerted varying effects on people's physical and mental condition and the functioning of all areas of the economy (Skrabacz, 2021).

In addition to health problems, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly reduced the sense of security socially by reducing the existential basis of people's lives and the realisation of their life's aspirations, and by preventing the fulfilment of individual material and spiritual needs. This was accompanied by the stress of being in quarantine and prolonged isolation (Dymecka, 2021; Skrabacz, 2021).

One dimension of social life that was severely affected by pandemic-related restrictions was the practice of religious worship. The restriction of such activity, enforced by the need to maintain social distancing, has resulted in a number of negative consequences in both individual and community dimensions (Świto, 2021). It should be emphasized that for adherents of various religions, participation in religious practices not only has a spiritual dimension but is also a way to maintain an internal balance. Thus, forced quarantine with deprivation of the opportunity to participate in services, rites and rituals resulted in a lack of access to methods of coping with stress for many believers (Świto, 2021).

Many Muslims, for whom the pilgrimage to Mecca is an obligation, one of the five pillars of Islam, found themselves in such a difficult situation unlike in other religions. Muslims should make a pilgrimage at least once in their lives if their finances and health allow them to do so. Such a journey is the strongest expression of their religious life and an act in which intimacy with Allah is an extremely important component (Luz, 2020; Wani, 2018).

Before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than two million believers each year from around the world travelled to Mecca for the Hajj to perform this sacred ritual and demonstrate the mutual brotherhood, unity and equality of all pilgrims (Luz, 2020).

According to published sources, Turks form a significant component of the world's pilgrims going on a Hajj (Dłużewska, 2012; Jackowski, 1998; Karabulut, Kaynak, 2016). Before the coronavirus pandemic, more than two million Turkish pilgrims of all types hoped to travel to Mecca each year, for instance 2,120,967 in 2018 (*Diyanet İşleri 2018 Hac kura çekiliş sonuçları sorgulama! – Hac kura sonuçları açıklandı*, 2018).

However, due to the annual restrictions on arrivals imposed by Saudi Arabia (Clingingsmith, Khwaja, Kremer, 2009), the number of pilgrims from Türkiye oscillated around 80,000 (Table 1). All those willing to go participated in a special lottery that selected the group of pilgrims for that year. Among them, the greater part chose the Umrah, i.e. the smaller pilgrimage.

This situation changed drastically in 2020. Due to the outbreak of the pandemic, Saudi Arabia temporarily closed its borders on February 27, 2020 (Ft/kg, 2020). As a result, international pilgrimage traffic to Mecca completely ceased. The Saudi Arabian government restricted it to Saudi pilgrims only.

The aim of this article is to characterise the Turkish pilgrimage movement by analysing the example of the inhabitants of Konya Province in the period before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in 2017–2021. Special attention was paid to the effect of the pandemic on: (a) the pilgrimage movement of the provincial inhabitants to Mecca, (b) the activities of local religious tourism organisers, and (c) the sense of psychological discomfort in those who could not participate in the pilgrimage.

Table 1. Number of pilgrims from Türkiye travelling to Mecca in 2017-2019

Year	Number of pilgrims
2017	79,000
2018	80,000
2019	80,000

Source: IlmFeed (2017), Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye. Presidency of Religious Affairs (2018), *Some 72,000 Turkish pilgrims arrive in S Arabia for Hajj* (2019).

This group was chosen for the analysis due to the fact that it is one of the more conservative, religious and pilgrimage-involved communities in Türkiye. The issue undertaken in the study is relatively new and concerns an area poorly documented by research results. Therefore, the topic is interesting and innovative.

2. Characteristics of pilgrimage types in Islam

Islam's most important pilgrimage centre is Mecca, located in the land of Hijaz in the western part of Saudi Arabia. It is the holiest city for Muslims and the birthplace of Muhammad. The Sacred Mosque (Masjid al-Haram) is located here surrounding the first house of God on Earth – the Ka'ba – a cubic granite structure covered with black cloth embroidered with gold. Muslims believe, it was built by Adam and rebuilt by Abraham and his son Ishmael (Basahel, Alsabban, Yamin, 2021). In the south-eastern corner of the Ka'ba is the Black Stone (al-Ḥajaru al-Aswad), the greatest and holiest destination of the Hajj – the pilgrimage of millions of followers of Islam (Maciak, 2017).

In Islam, there are three types of religious journey: the *Hajj* (major pilgrimage), the *Umrah* (minor pilgrimage), and the *Ziyarat* (visiting the tombs of prophets). The Hajj is the most important. It commemorates the story of Muhammad's flight from Mecca to Medina in 622, which he was forced to undertake as a result of the growing threat of persecution (Hosta, Limon, 2010). It represents a complex ritual involving physical, mental, spiritual and financial preparations (Sabiq, 1992) and brings spiritual balance to Muslims. It is seen as a rite of passage to a better life and purification from all sins (Al-Ajarma, 2021), and takes place only once a year, between the eighth and 12th (sometimes 13th) days of the month of *zu al-hijjah*. It should be noticed that the Muslim calendar is a lunar calendar, eleven days shorter than the Gregorian one. Although they have a fixed order, Muslim holidays fall at different times in successive years. Each year, the Hajj always begins earlier than in the previous year (Pawlic-Miśkiewicz, 2019).

The prerequisites for participation in the Hajj include *niyyah* (intention) and *ihram*, a state of spiritual and physical ritual purity. The pilgrimage involves several stages:

1. It begins on the morning of the eighth day of zu al-hijjah in Mecca, from where pilgrims travel to the Mina Valley after prayers, where they again participate in prayers (Figure 1).
2. On the second day, pilgrims participate in prayers around Mount Arafat after sunrise and, after sunset they go to Muzdalifah where they participate in more prayers, collect pebbles (necessary for throwing at the stelae), spend the night in Muzdalifah, and go to Mina at dawn.
3. The third day of the pilgrimage is called the Day of Sacrifice. In Mina, after throwing pebbles at the last of the stele with seven pebbles, pilgrims usually proceed to make an offering. This is followed by the ritual shaving of heads. The final element of the rituals of this day is a visit to the Sacred Mosque and a seven-fold circumambulation of the Ka'ba (*tawaf al-ifadah*), followed by *sai*, 'running' between the hills of As-Safa and Al-Marwa, (circumambulation of the Ka'ba can also be performed on the other days of the pilgrimage) (Hajj and Umrah Planner, n.d.; Pawlic-Miśkiewicz, 2019).
4. The Hajj is completed after the tawaf al-ifadah is celebrated. The faithful are then no longer bound by the prohibitions they were subject to while in the state of ihram. However, this does not mean that they return home immediately. They remain in Mecca at least until the 12th day of zu al-hijjah, celebrating the Feast of the Sacrifice together.

The last days of the Hajj are called the days of Tashreeq, which is a time of rest and joy during which individuals pray and throw stones at the three stelae. Before finally leaving Mecca, pilgrims make a farewell circumambulation around the Ka'ba (*tawaf al-wada'*). Those who have participated in the Hajj pilgrimage are given the name *haji* (Pawlic-Miśkiewicz, 2019; Perform Hajj, n.d.).

Within the Hajj, there are three types of great pilgrimage established as early as the beginning of Islam.

Hajj ul-Tamattu represents a combination of Umrah and Hajj, with a break between these two. The pilgrim enters the state of ihram, arrives in Mecca, where he performs the rituals of Umrah (circumambulation of the Ka'ba, walking between the hills of As-Safa and Al-Marwa, shaving or cutting his hair), and leaves the state of ihram. In this way, he completes his Umrah. On the eighth day of the month of zu al-hijjah, the pilgrim re-enters the state of ihram at the place where he is currently located and performs the rituals of the pilgrimage. At its end, he makes a sacrifice or, if he is unable to do so, fasts for 10 days (three days during the pilgrimage and seven after returning home). Upon completing this ritual, he is given the name *Mutamatti*.

Hajj ul-Qiran is a combination of Umrah and Hajj (without interruption). The *Qarin*, or the person performing this type of pilgrimage, must perform the Hajj and the Umrah in the same ihram. The pilgrim enters the state of ihram at the designated place and arrives in Mecca, where he performs a circumambulation called *tawaf al-kudum* (Pilgrim, n.d. b). Then, being in the state of ihram the whole time, he begins to perform the pilgrimage rituals on the eighth day of zu al-hijjah. He is not required to perform the circumambulation pertaining to the Umrah or walk between the hills. At the end of the pilgrimage, he makes an offering or, if he is unable to do so, fasts for 10 days.

Hajj Al-Ifrad implies making only a Hajj pilgrimage. The pilgrim enters the state of ihram. He arrives in

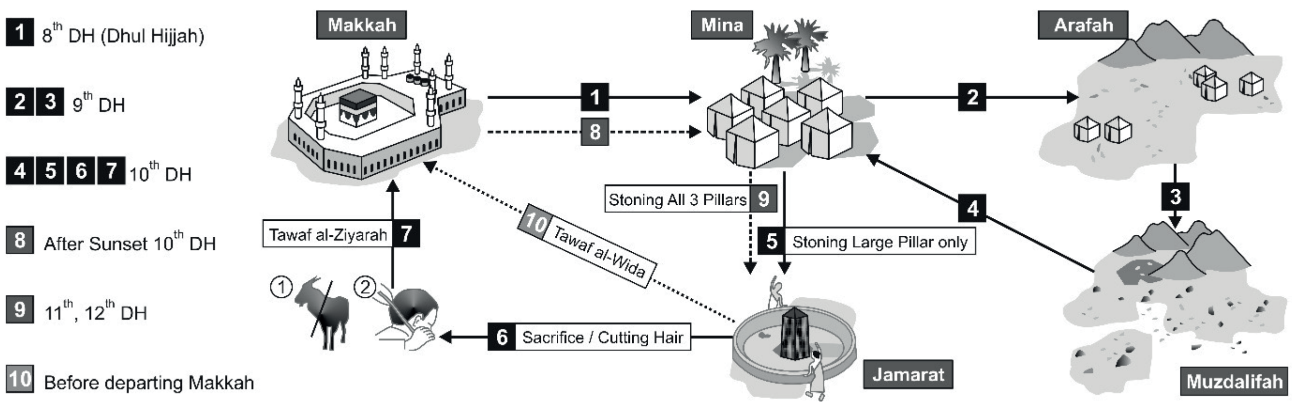

Figure 1. Diagram of the course of the Hajj pilgrimage
Source: SiblingsOfIlm [@SiblingsOfIlm] (2019)

Mecca, where he performs a circumambulation called tawaf al-kudum. Being in the ihram state all the time, he begins performing the pilgrimage rituals on the eighth day of zu al-hijjah. There is no obligation to sacrifice animals. A person who has participated in such a pilgrimage is called a *Mufrid* (Pawlic-Miśkiewicz, 2019; Pilgrim, n.d. a).

Another type of pilgrimage is the Umrah, i.e. the smaller pilgrimage to Mecca. It has an individual character and, unlike the Hajj, its duration is not fixed (Erbaş, 2002). During this religious journey, pilgrims make seven ritual circumambulations around the Ka'ba (*tawaf*) and kiss the Black Holy Stone (al-Ḥajaru al-Aswad). The next stage of the Umrah is the sai, the "run" between the hills of As-Safa and Al-Marwa. The faithful complete the pilgrimage with *halq*, which is a partial or complete haircut. Unlike the Hajj, which is more time-consuming and involves many rituals, the Umrah can be completed in a matter of hours. The smaller pilgrimage provides an opportunity to pray and ask for forgiveness and absolution of sins. It is worth noting that, unlike Hajj, Umrah is a recommended but not obligatory act of worship (Akbulut, Ekin, 2018).

After official completion of their pilgrimage to Mecca, many Muslims take the opportunity to visit Islam's second holy site, Medina, where the Prophet's Mosque (Al-Masjid An-Nabawi) with Muhammad's tomb is located (Maciak, 2017).

The last type of the religious journey is the *ziyarat* or *ziyara* whose purpose is to visit Islamic holy sites or graves (Maciak, 2017), mainly Muhammad's tomb in Medina, but also members of his family, friends, scholars and prophets. During this journey, Muslims visit mosques, battlefields, mountains and caves.

3. Characteristics of the research area

The analysed community lives in Konya Province, which is located on the Anatolian Highlands in the Central Anatolia region in the Asian part of Türkiye. It is the largest administrative unit of the country (Figure 2), covering an area of 38,873 square kilometres. It had a population of 2,296,347 with a population density of 59.07 per square kilometre in 2022 (*Turkey. Administrative division*, 2021).

The area is mainly inhabited by the indigenous Turks who make up more than 90% of the population. In addition, its community consists of Balkan, Nogai and Tatar Turks while the Kurdish population represents about 8% (Etnikce, n.d.).

The capital of the province is the city of Konya – the seventh most populous in Türkiye. It is an important educational, religious and industrial centre (Sakar, 2022). Both the city and the province are considered the most conservative in the country and the local community is characterised by high religiosity and deeply rooted traditions. The conservatism of the locals influences the high popularity of pilgrimage.

The Mevlana Mausoleum, which contains the tomb of Jalaladdin Rumi (1207–1273), has a great influence on the religiosity of the people of both the city and the Province of Konya. He was the Islamic theologian and Persian mystic who founded the Order of Dancing Dervishes. He is also regarded as one of the most famous and celebrated Sunni poets. For this reason, Konya is an important religious centre in Türkiye, to which many pilgrimages are made. The city also hosts an annual festival dedicated to Mevlana (Sakar, 2022) while in 2016 the city was proclaimed the capital of Islam.

Figure 2. Administrative division of Türkiye
Source: *Turkey. Administrative division* (2021)

4. Research methods and data sources

Secondary and primary sources were used in this study. The first group consisted of thematic publications in Polish, English and Turkish, from which the following data were obtained: statistical data on the pilgrimage movement in the country and the province, information on the characteristics of the issue in question, and a description of the situation related to the course of the pandemic in Türkiye.

Primary sources were obtained during research conducted in the provincial capital in 2020–2022 consisting of: (a) an interview with an employee of the Konya Valiligi Mudurlugu il Muftulugu, (b) expert interviews conducted with the owners of selected travel agencies specialising in organisation of Hajj and Umrah pilgrims to Mecca and operating in Konya city, and (c) a diagnostic survey among the inhabitants of the province, using an online survey questionnaire research tool. During the visit to Konya Valiligi Mudurlugu il Muftulugu, information was obtained on the nature and number of pilgrimages made by Konya inhabitants in 2017–2019.

In selecting experts for the interviews, offices specialising in pilgrimage trips which operate near the Mevlana Mausoleum in the city of Konya were taken into account. They only organise Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages and a few were found that had not suspended their activities during the pandemic. Ultimately, the owners of only four travel agencies (Gonyalı Turizm, Boyut Turizm, Hudaverdi Turizm and Sufi Turizm) agreed to take part in the survey. They provided information on the number of pilgrims before and after the outbreak of the pandemic, preferred type of trip, age of pilgrims, duration of trip, preferences regarding their organisation, and changes in their functioning after the pandemic outbreak.

The online survey allowed compilation of information which facilitated assessment of the extent to which the inability to make the pilgrimage to Mecca due to the pandemic outbreak affected the religious feelings and sense of psychological discomfort among Konya Province inhabitants.

5. Results

5.1. Pilgrimages from Konya Province in 2017–2019

Konya inhabitants, with deep-rooted religiosity, actively solicit applications for Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages. The number of applications from interested people each year exceeds 80,000, for example it was 85,000 in 2017 (data from an interview with the Konya Valiligi Mudurlugu il Muf-tulugu employee).

However, as shown by the tabulated data (Tables 2 and 3), due to the restrictions in place (each country receives a certain number of Hajj and Umrah visas from the Saudi authorities for a given year), a much smaller group of believers can participate.

Table 2. Number of pilgrims from Konya Province participating in the Hajj pilgrimage in 2017–2019

Year	Total number	Women	Men	Age range
2017	3,156	2,151	1,005	over 50 years of age – 75% under 50 years – 25%
2018	3,232	1,761	1,571	over 50 years of age – 60% under 50 years – 40%
2019	3,200	1,800	1,400	over 50 years of age – 65% under 50 years of age – 35%

Source: according to data from the interview with the Konya Valiligi Mudurlugu il Muftulugu employee.

In 2017–2019, the participation of inhabitants from Konya Province in the Hajj pilgrimage remained stable at around 3,200 per year, as this was the number of permissions was issued. Taking into account gender, women slightly predominated among the participants and in turn, the share of those aged over 50 was definitely higher (Table 2). This may be related to certain preferences for issuing visas to the elderly, who have less chance to still fulfil this religious obligation than younger people. Equally important is their greater inability to adapt to a specific date of the pilgrimage and its long duration as well as their financial status. It should be mentioned here that the cost of the annual Hajj pilgrimage is high (ranging from a few to several thousand USD). The faithful often spend their life savings, or whole families often borrow or sell property to pay for the Hajj of one of their members (Accor, n.d.; Baczała, 2022).

Table 3. Number of pilgrims from Konya Province participating in the Umrah pilgrimage in 2017–2019

Year	Total number	Women	Men	Age range
2017	2,894	1,748	1,146	over 50 years of age – 25% under 50 years of age – 75%
2018	1,286	484	802	over 50 years of age – 35% under 50 years of age – 65%
2019	1,383	376	1,007	over 50 years of age – 60% under 50 years of age – 40%

Source: according to data from the interview with the Konya Valiligi Mudurlugu il Muftulugu employee.

In the case of the Umrah pilgrimage data (Table 3) where its date is not specified, a decrease in the number of trips can be seen among the Konya community during the period under review. In addition, the gender balance has changed, i.e. the proportion of men has increased significantly in recent years while the number aged over 50 has also increased.

5.2. Determinants of the functioning of pilgrimage trips in Konya Province in 2020–2022

The coronavirus pandemic, which has wreaked havoc around the world, also affected Türkiye. The first case of infection in this country was recorded on March 11, 2020 (Yaman, 2021). All precautionary measures were then implemented and checks on travellers were carried out at airports.

Soon, the travel restrictions were extended to pilgrims as well. During Hajj and Umrah, the risk of infection was particularly high due to the size of the gatherings during the rituals which favoured the rapid transmission of the virus (Atique, Itumalla, 2020). The only way out of this situation was to close Mecca and other pilgrimage sites for visitors from countries that could not cope with the pandemic, including Türkiye, at the end of February 2020 (Hoang et al., 2020).

More than two million Muslims come to Mecca every year. In 2019, just before the outbreak of the pandemic, Mecca was visited by 2,489,406 pilgrims (General Authority for Statistics. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia [GASTAT], n.d.). In 2020, their number declined to only a thousand, as the Saudi Arabian government allowed access to Mecca only to its own citizens. The pilgrims had to strictly observe the rules of social distancing and were not allowed to touch the Ka'ba (Baczała, 2021). Islamic communities from other countries lost the opportunity to fulfil this religious duty and this also affected Turkish citizens who had to give up this important trip in 2020 and 2021 (*Bu yıl hacca gidilecek mi? 2021 Hac iptal mi, olacak mı? Diyanet'ten 2021 Hac açıklaması*, 2021). A partial but at the same time the only solution to this problem was the possibility of virtual participation in the pilgrimage to Mecca.

The suspension of the pilgrimage contributed to a significant religious crisis in Muslim communities, with long queues of citizens waiting to be part of the quota for the Hajj (e.g. waiting times in Indonesia, home to the largest Muslim population in the world, range from 7 to 37 years) (Baczała, 2022). Many people, especially the elderly, were concerned about whether they would be able to make the postponed pilgrimage in future years due to the limits (Muneeza, Mustapha, 2021).

Hope for improvement came in 2022, when Saudi Arabia agreed to accept pilgrims from Türkiye and the first group of Turkish pilgrims set out for Mecca again on May 2, 2022. An estimated number of 37,770 pilgrims went from Türkiye to Saudi Arabia in 2022 (*Hacı adayları Arafat'ta*, 2022). Many Turks had waited for this opportunity for more than two years.

A dual immunisation certificate was required for foreign pilgrims to be allowed to make the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimage. The Saudi Arabian government recognised only four types of vaccines: Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson. Before entering Mecca, pilgrims from Türkiye and other countries had to undergo 14-day quarantine in a third country (Zuardin, Akfan, 2022).

5.3. Functioning of religious tourism offices in Konya city before and during the pandemic

Before the outbreak of the pandemic, many travel agencies organised pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina for the inhabitants of Konya. They offered the flight, on-site transport, meals, health insurance, various types of accommodation and a guided tour program.

Hajj pilgrimage offers differ from those for Umrah. In addition to the strictly defined dates, Hajj is much more expensive and significantly longer. Although the pilgrimage and its rituals last only five or six days, many pilgrims arrive in Saudi Arabia earlier and stay longer. They are aware that this may be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to visit the holy places of Islam. For this reason, travel agencies offer packages ranging from five-six-day to even 40-day stays.

To study this phenomenon and present the functioning of the religious tourism market in Konya in the analysed period, experts, i.e. the owners of four local travel agencies (Table 4), were asked the following questions:

1. Which pilgrimage destinations do inhabitants of Konya Province most often choose?
2. What proportion of all tours sold by the travel agency are pilgrimages?
3. How many tourists wanted to visit Mecca and Medina in the last 3–5 years?
4. Which pilgrimage – Hajj or Umrah – was more popular among Konya inhabitants?
5. What length of trip to Mecca and Medina was chosen most often and how did this situation differ by age group?
6. Which age group had the highest number of pilgrims?
7. What was the pilgrimage trend before the pandemic?
8. What form of travel is the most popular among pilgrims from Konya?
9. Do pilgrims pay attention to the standard of hotels and restaurants during their pilgrimage?
10. What was the coronavirus impact on the functioning of the travel agency?

Table 4. List of Konya travel agencies included in the study

No	Name	Address	Website
1.	Gonyalı Turizm	Aziziye Mah. Kadilar 1 Sok., N° 8/202, Sözen İş Merkezi Kat, Karatay-Konya	https://haritane.com/d-detay/?utm_content=gonyali-turizm-detay5323941
2.	Boyut Turizm	Şerefşirin Mah., Şerefşirin Sok., Hacımahmut Çarşısı, N° 45/1, Karatay-Konya	http://enyakinsubesi.com/turizm-acentalari/106960-boyut-turizm
3.	Hudaverdi Turizm	Aziziye, Eşarizade 2. Sk., Kiliç Han İş Hani, N° 26/203, Karatay-Konya	https://www.hudaverturizm.com/
4.	Sufi Turizm	İhsaniye Mah. Vatan Cad. Adalhan İş Merkezi, N° 15/104, Selçuklu-Konya	http://www.sufitur.com/

Source: authors.

Table 5. Summary of tour operators' responses to selected questions

Name of the travel agency	Destinations most frequently chosen by pilgrims	Share of the number of sold pilgrimages in comparison to other offers of the tourist office	Number of pilgrims from Konya to Mecca in the last 3–5 years	Number of pilgrims from Konya to Medina in the last 3–5 years	Most common age range of pilgrims
Gonyalı Turizm	Mecca and Medina	3/4	250	200	26–40
Boyut Turizm	Mecca and Medina	1/2	200	200	41–60
Hudaverdi Turizm	Mecca and Medina	1/2	150	250	41–60
Sufi Turizm	Mecca and Medina	1/3	250	170	41–60

Source: authors based on survey results.

Some of the experts' responses are shown in Table 5. The obtained information shows that Mecca and Medina were the most popular pilgrimage destinations among Konya Province inhabitants.

Religious trips made up a significant part of all tour operators' offers. Their highest share, i.e. as many as three-quarters of all trips sold, was recorded in the Gonyalı Turizm office. Sales were similar in the Boyut Turizm and Hudaverdi Turizm offices, where pilgrimages accounted for half of all the tours sold. Only the manager from Sufi Turizm provided information that pilgrimages accounted for just one third of all offers sold by the office.

According to the experts, their offices have sold more trips to Mecca than to Medina in recent years. During this period, the number of tourists purchasing these trips fluctuated from around 200 to 250 (Table 5).

All experts agreed that the clients of the offices most often chose the Umrah pilgrimage offer. This may be related to the fact that it is easier to make a smaller pilgrimage due to the lack of time limits, and it can also be carried out outside Ramadan. Moreover, it is shorter and cheaper than the Hajj.

In terms of the length of the trip preferred by Konya inhabitants from each age group, it was found that the longest 30-day pilgrimage was chosen by pilgrims aged over 60, the 14-day option was preferred by travellers aged 41–60 and 26–40, while the shortest 8-day option was chosen by the youngest pilgrims aged 18–25, as reported by an expert from the Sufi Turizm office. In the case of the other tourist offices, the longest 30-day pilgrimage was most often purchased by clients aged 41–60.

The experts further claimed that, in general, clients with a stable financial and professional situation were able to afford to make a longer pilgrimage. On the contrary, those who are at the early stage of their career were unlikely to be able to go on a month-long trip. The responses from the owners of Sufi Turizm, Hudaverdi Turizm, and Boyut Turizm also show that the largest number of pilgrims were from the 41–60 age group. Only the Gonyali Turizm expert specified the 26–40 age range in this respect. The trip duration, material status and age of pilgrims suggested by the respondents are consistent with the results reported by for instance Akbulut and Ekin (2018).

According to the sellers, clients of the tourist offices making a pilgrimage mostly chose to travel individually or in small groups. Only the representative of the Gonyali Turizm office reported that most pilgrims chose to travel in a larger group. As shown by three experts, the standard of hotels and restaurants was not the most important factor in the pilgrims' choice of their offers and many people even prefer budget hotels to the most luxurious ones. Only the owner of the Sufi Turizm office gave a different answer. All representatives of the analysed enterprises agreed that there was a noticeable growing trend of pilgrimage trips from Konya Province before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As indicated by the responses of the experts to the question about the effect of coronavirus on the economic situation of their tourist offices, the departures of pilgrim groups stopped completely due to the epidemiological situation and the decision of the Saudi Arabian government. To continue functioning, the travel agencies were forced to create offers to other domestic destinations on an ongoing basis, as they could not earn an income from the organisation of pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina.

5.4. Impact of the inability to make pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina on the feelings of Konya inhabitants

Due to the serious pandemic situation in Türkiye and the border closure by Saudi Arabia, many religious inhabitants of Konya Province were unable to fulfil their pilgrimage obligation. They were forced to wait until the situation improved and trips resumed. It therefore seemed interesting to investigate whether and to what extent this impediment affected their religious feelings and level of psychological comfort. For this purpose, a short survey was conducted using an online questionnaire, carried out in the first half of 2022 covering the inhabitants of Konya city.

A total of 110 responses were received from respondents – 64 from women (58%) and 46 from men (42%). The surveyed group was dominated by those aged 26–40 with 51 respondents (46% of the total). There were similar numbers for inhabitants aged 41–60 (32; 29%) and 18–25 (25; 23%). The smallest group were province inhabitants aged over 60 (2% of the total). As many as 73 respondents (66% of the total) declared that the suspension of pilgrimages was not problematic and did not affect their psychological comfort (Table 6). This group of respondents did not include people over the age of 60, and the proportion of men and women was similar – 54% and 46%. The declarations obtained show that the suspension of pilgrimage trips during the pandemic was most calmly accepted by both women and men in the 26–40 age group (Table 6). This observation is in line with the findings reported by for instance Bilim and Ay (2022), who argue that the preferences of young Turkish tourists in Konya generally lean towards non-spiritual, secular motivations rather than religious travel. However, the opposite was declared by 37 members of the surveyed community (34%) who felt anxiety about the limitation (Table 7).

These were mainly respondents over the age of 40 (18, 49% of the total), who were aware of their age and the considerable length of time they had to wait for a visa to participate in the obligatory Hajj pilgrimage. Taking into account gender, higher levels of stress prevailed among women (24, 65% of the total) (Table 7).

Table 6. Characteristics of respondents who did not experience discomfort related to the inability to make the pilgrimage due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Gender	Number	Age range			
		18–25	26–40	41–60	above 60
Women	40	8	24	8	0
Men	33	10	17	6	0
Total	73	18	41	14	0

Source: authors based on surveys.

Table 7. Characteristics of respondents who felt discomfort related to the inability to make the pilgrimage due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Gender	Number	Age range			
		18–25	26–40	41–60	above 60
Women	24	4	10	8	2
Men	13	3	0	10	0
Total	37	7	10	18	2

Source: authors based on surveys.

As can be seen from the compilation of opinions of the entire group of respondents (Tables 6 and 7), young women (aged 26−40) had the most diverse attitudes towards the impossibility of making pilgrimages to Mecca. It should be noted, however, that the number of women who did not feel the related stress (24) was over twice as high as those who experienced such discomfort (10).

The respondents were also asked whether they planned to make Hajj or Umrah pilgrimages in the near future. The answers obtained showed that 37 respondents (34%) planned such a trip (Table 8), while as many as 73 (66% of the total) declared otherwise (Table 9). It is interesting to note that the number of the declarations of going on a pilgrimage was identical to the number of people who felt discomfort about the impossibility of fulfilling the obligation. On this basis, it can be seen that more than one third of the respondents in the analysed group exhibited a lifestyle reflecting the conservative traditions of the Konya Province community.

In addition, a detailed analysis of the responses shows slightly greater eagerness to go on the pilgrimage declared by men (21 individuals, 57% of the total), mainly those aged 41–60 (Table 8). In contrast, women (48, 66% of the total), especially those in the 26–40 age group, reported a definitely greater lack of desire to participate in the pilgrimage (Table 9).

Table 8. Summary of characteristics of those who want to make a pilgrimage to Mecca in the future

Gender	Number	Age range			
		18–25	26–40	41–60	above 60
Women	16	4	7	3	2
Men	21	3	7	11	0
Total	37	7	14	14	2

Source: authors based on surveys.

Table 9. Summary of characteristics of those who do not plan to make a pilgrimage to Mecca in the future

Gender	Number	Age range			
		18–25	26–40	41–60	above 60
Women	48	8	26	14	0
Men	25	10	11	4	0
Total	73	18	37	18	0

Source: authors based on surveys.

6. Summary and conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic, which has changed the global political, social, and economic situation, did not spare tourism which was one of the industries that suffered huge losses during this time. Border closures and imposed sanitary restrictions almost completely curtailed international tourism (Korinth, 2022), as it was regarded as one of the main factors responsible for the spread of the pandemic (Hoarau, 2022).

The COVID-19 outbreak also had a huge economic and social impact on Muslim pilgrimages, as gatherings of millions of worshippers could have led to the rapid spread of the pandemic to almost every corner of the world. This important argument determined the decision to close Saudi Arabia's borders to foreign pilgrims as early as the end of February 2020 (Razaq, Bozonelos, 2020). Then, for more than two years, pilgrims from countries with high infection rates were not allowed to enter Mecca. This included Türkiye, which had the fifth highest rate of coronavirus infection in the world (Genç, 2021).

As reported by Piwko (2021), almost all religious activity during this time was transferred to television and the internet. The faithful were forced to replace the pilgrimage to Mecca with virtual participation in prayers. However, this was not easy, as the pilgrimage is the goal in life for many religious Muslims (Dłużewska, 2012). Moreover, for many followers of Allah, a religious journey made virtually is not the same as being physically present in Mecca. Only visiting the holy site in person is the fulfilment of one of the five pillars of Islam.

As reported by Muneeza and Mustapha (2021), in this context, the psychological state of the religious part of Turkish society, i.e. the discomfort resulting from the inability to make the trip to Mecca – turned out to be an important problem. Unable to fulfil the most important duty, the faithful lost one of the methods of maintaining internal spiritual balance at the same time (Świto, 2021).

This problem has also affected the followers of Islam in Konya Province, which is distinguished from other regions in Türkiye by its conservative and religious society. Prior to the pandemic, numerous Konya inhabitants participated in Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages, but they were unable to go to Mecca in 2020 and 2021. This changed only in 2022 when the Saudi Arabian government eased the restrictions and opened its borders to foreign pilgrims. The first Turkish groups went to Mecca in early May.

Based on the data analysis and the results of our research, the following conclusions can be drawn about the inhabitants of Konya Province and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their pilgrimages:

1. Before the outbreak of the pandemic, there was great interest in Hajj and Umrah pilgrimage trips in the analysed community. Each year, more than 80,000 inhabitants of the province (about 4% of the total) intended to travel to Mecca. However, the number of pilgrimage participants depended on the visa limits set by Saudi Arabia.
2. In 2017–2019, about 3,200 Konya believers participated in the Hajj each year. These were generally elderly people over 50 years of age (both men and women).
3. While the number of Hajj participants remained stable between 2017 and 2019, a decline in the number of Konya pilgrims participating in the Umrah pilgrimage was recorded in 2018 and 2019. Among them, the number of men and individuals over the age of 50 increased.
4. The survey of local religious tourism organisers showed a growing trend in pilgrimage trips in Konya Province before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. Customers of travel agencies most often chose Mecca as their pilgrimage destination; among the offers sold, the Umrah was more popular than the Hajj.
6. As declared by the travel agents, inhabitants of the province aged 40 and over were the most likely group to participate in religious trips. Representatives of this age group were also more likely to purchase longer and more expensive Hajj pilgrimages.
7. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic wreaked great havoc on the religious tourism agency market in Konya. In 2020 and 2021, many entities suspended operations, while others were forced to modify their offers on an ongoing basis in order to survive.

8. The lack of pilgrimage opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic affected the well-being of the public in Konya Province. In the analysed group, the related discomfort was declared by 34% of the total respondents who are Muslims and cultivate religious practices.
9. Feelings of danger and anxiety appeared mainly among respondents over 40 years of age (54% of the total), who were already planning to go on the Hajj and were aware of the extended waiting time for such a trip. Taking gender into account, the inflicted stress was more often experienced by women (65% of the total) than by men (35%).
10. The other 66% of the total respondents calmly accepted the suspension of pilgrimage trips to Mecca. This group included mainly young people aged 26–40 (both men and women).
11. The survey also showed a change in attitudes among the inhabitants of Konya Province, who are gradually moving away from traditional religious practices and increasingly opting for secular lifestyles. This is evidenced by for instance the declarations of the desire to make a pilgrimage to Mecca. Participation on such a trip was declared by 37 respondents (only 34% of the total number).
12. The other 73 people (66% of the total) were not interested in participating in the pilgrimage. Of particular importance here is the attitude of young people aged up to 40, as many as 55 of the 110 people who participated in the survey (50% of the total). In addition, they accounted for as many as 75% of respondents who declared a lack of interest in a pilgrimage to Mecca.
13. In this group, special attention should also be paid to the attitude of young women. Among the 73 respondents who did not plan to participate on a pilgrimage, there were 34 women, which accounted for as many as 47% of the total number.
14. The declining number of women on pilgrimage trips was also indicated by data from the Konya Valiligi Mudurlugu il Muftulugu office, especially with regard to Umrah.

Obviously, this study has limitations due to the small number of respondents in the sample. However, the desire was to show that the situation at that particular time had an impact. Nevertheless, as a piece of exploratory work, this project might be recognised as a starting point for further research.

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Revisiting perceived determinants of tourism destination competitiveness among tourists: The case of national parks in Sarawak, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to widen the existing literature by discovering potential determining factors at selected ecotourism destinations, primarily involving Bako, Niah, Kubah, Gunung Gading and Gunung Mulu National Parks. A closed questionnaire was answered by 188 respondents. Preliminary analyses were performed and partial least square structural equation modeling was employed as the analytical measure, thus discovering the significant role of destination resource constructs in the enhancement of ecotourism competitiveness in Sarawak, Malaysia. The statistical findings of the current work revealed that endowed resources (natural resources and cultural heritage attractions), created resources (range of activities) as well as supporting resources (destination accessibility and quality of tourism services) lead to enhanced tourism destination competitiveness. The research adds to the growing body of knowledge examining the perspectives of tourists towards the determining factors of destination competitiveness, while providing meaningful insights for industry actors, thus enabling effective planning of management and development. The present work offers empirical evidence that gives information for industry stakeholders, including business operators, policy makers and tourism planners in order for natural tourism destinations to prosper.

KEYWORDS

endowed resources, created resources, supporting resources, destination competitiveness, structural equation modeling

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1. Introduction

Tourism, a multifarious phenomenon, is a broad term that encompasses a staggering array of entities, sectors or subjects, activities, behaviors, and the movement of people between locations or countries (Baggio, 2019). In other words, tourism functions as a mechanism that boosts a destination's domestic economy (Carmignani, Moyle, 2019). Tourism is one of the service sectors, and is often faced with a tremendous amount of competition within the industry (Jashi, 2013). According to data from the World Tourism Organization (2019), a total of 1.4 billion tourists arrived at foreign destinations in 2018, two years ahead of its long-term estimate from 2010.

The tourism industry has experienced remarkable expansion over the years, and travelers are increasingly looking for fresh trips for leisure, such as natural tourist locations (Lin, Yeh, 2013) and to 'disconnect to reconnect' with Mother Nature (Fromm, 2017).

Ecotourism has been effective in attracting the attention of important parties, including both governments and non-governmental organizations, as well as industry participants, due to the significant role it plays in boosting economic activity and enhancing local society (Bakar et al., 2016; Zoto, Qirici, Polena, 2013). The number of tour operators and agents that participate as providers for ecotourism travel has increased dramatically over time in the respective sectors (Tourism Malaysia, 2018). Indeed, tourists are increasingly visiting natural areas for vacations because of the interesting local natural, cultural and historical treasures (Huh, Uysal, 2004). Consequently, a new market niche for the tourism sector has been developed as a result of shifting visitor travel preferences. Additionally, travelers are sometimes drawn to these locations because of their distinctive natural surroundings, sometimes even magnificent landscapes (Wilson et al., 2001), as well as the mood created by their distinct ethnicities.

However, the growing rivalry within the industry increasingly leads to concerns, specifically in the assurance of effective tourism development (Hanafiah, Hemdi, Ahmad, 2014; Triyanto, Iwu, Musikavanhu, 2018). Natural locations are surrounded by lush vegetation and a wealth of resources. In fact, previous research has shown that tourists are drawn to natural places because of their unique cultures, stunning landscapes and natural surroundings, as well as the sense of community (Erokhin, Hejiman, Ivolga, 2014; Trukhachev, 2015). While having more to offer than metropolitan attractions like well-known cities, these places are less desirable to tourists (Amoah, Radder, Eyk, 2018; Lo et al., 2013). Thus, the current emerging trend of nature-based tourism leads to the necessity of effective management and development plans to eliminate risks of over-tourism (Centre for Responsible Travel [CREST], 2018), in conjunction with the effort to stay competitive within the industry.

Thus, the present study involved the investigation of endowed resource elements, natural resources and cultural heritage attractions; created resources comprising tourism infrastructure and the range of activities; along with supporting resources such as accessibility and the quality of tourism services, particularly in the five studied national parks of Sarawak. While scholars have found that significant drivers of tourism location competitiveness include travelers' attitudes (Barsky, Nash, 2002; Carneiro, Lima, Silva, 2015), the current study aims to explore how a destination's competitiveness development is influenced by these resources, according to domestic tourists' perceptions.

2. Literature review and development of hypotheses

2.1. Competitiveness theory

Comparative resource and competitive advantage notions are frequently employed in competitiveness theory to emphasize the theoretical underpinnings of destination competitiveness models (Mihalic, 2000; Ritchie, Crouch, 2003; Wilde, Cox, 2008). Additionally, according to Crouch and Ritchie (1999), comparative resources are the primary draws (such as the natural environment and cultural resources) for a particular tourist destination, whereas competitive advantage refers to the more sophisticated components that include created resources, which comprise tourism facilities and infrastructure for a destination's competitiveness. Subsequently, scholars such as Navickas and Malakauskaite (2009) and Poon (1993), have highlighted the importance of using comparative resource and competitive advantage notions when examining the competitiveness of a tourist location.

Recent studies have examined the theory of competitiveness to clarify how both endowment (comparative advantage) and created (competitive advantage) contribute to destination competitiveness development (Oye, Okafor, Kinjir, 2013; Yozcu, 2017; Zehrer, Smeral, Hallmann, 2017). In light of the effects of endowed resources, created resources and supporting resources, competitiveness theory serves as the foundation for this study's explanation of how to develop the competitiveness of a destination. These resources are anticipated because it is thought that they will have a significant impact on the competitiveness of tourism destinations.

2.2. Tourism destination competitiveness

Strong studies and emphasis on the destination competitiveness (DC) idea have been made in tourism literature (Angelkova et al., 2012; Natalia et al., 2019). Numerous studies have discussed the need for a tourist location to become more competitive in order to achieve sustainability in the tourism sector (Lee, King, 2006; Muresan et al., 2019). Given the current status of the tourist market, strong data demonstrate the necessity for the identification of a tourism destination's distinctive selling propositions, which help to sustain a destination's competitiveness (Rahmiati, Othman, Tahir, 2020). Following that, contemporary studies have postulated the capability for progressive tourism competitiveness development in a destination through continuous discovery of distinctive characteristics and new propositions (Guo, Jiang, Long, 2020; Rodriguez-Diaz, Pulido-Fernandez, 2020; Thong et al., 2019).

Over the decades, the terms "competitiveness" and "tourism destination competitiveness" have repeatedly been defined by several destination competitiveness models, and one of the earliest was Porter's diamond model (Porter, 1990). Subsequently, numbers of components were contained within other models, comprising conditions associated with factors and demand-related, supporting industries and firm strategies as well as structure and rivalry. Successively, another model of destination competitiveness has been propounded, distinctively categorizing numerous competitive factors into three classifications, specified by country, industry and firms (Crouch, Ritchie, 1999).

In essence, to determine a destination's competitiveness, subsequent derivations have considered both core resources and attractor features alongside other business-related aspects. On the other hand, past studies have postulated the potential of a tourism destination to gain increased competitiveness through time, while subsequent scholars (Enright, Newton, 2004; Yoon, 2002) have established tourism destination competitiveness models in conjunction with the model by Ritchie and Crouch in 2003.

Comparative advantage is defined as the extent for natural and cultural resources to be present in a tourist destination (Bobirca, Cristureanu, 2008); competitive advantage, on the other hand, refers to the capability of improving the competitiveness of a destination by means of these resources (Gupta, 2015). Conversely, the competitive advantage of a destination is significantly enhanced by created resources, comprising tourist facilities and tourism infrastructure (Erislan, 2016). Therefore, natural resources and attractions, ranging from flora and fauna to cultural heritage, ought to be encompassed in a model of a destination for the purpose of promotion and to be recognized as fully competitive.

Presently, in accordance with the Integrated model of destination competitiveness by Dwyer and Kim (2003), the research framework incorporated in this study concentrates on the first three determining categories of factors, namely endowed, created and supporting resources.

2.3. Endowed, created and supporting resources

Endowed, commonly known as inherited resources, include both cultural and natural elements (e.g. historic sites, traditional art and heritage) as well as unspoiled natural environment, while created resources are the types of resource that were 'built' to influence the competitiveness of a destination, and this includes special events, tourism infrastructure, shopping, the range of available activities and entertainment (Dwyer, Kim, 2003; Zainuddin, Radzi, Zahari, 2016). Supporting resources mainly comprise factors that possess a secondary effect on tourists' motivation to travel (Vengesayi, Mavondo, Reisinger, 2013), ranging from a destination's availability of infrastructure (Crouch, 2007), accessibility, local hospitality (Dwyer et al., 2004), tourism services as well as communication between tourists and residents.

It is crucial that endowed, created and supporting resources are preserved or reinforced to ensure successful tourism destination development. While scholars (Zakariya, Ibrahim, Wahab, 2019) have propounded that the natural resources component receives continual emphasis as fundamental for tourism destinations, the emergence of cultural heritage attractions as a development pillar for community's economy and identity cultivator has led to their recognition as one of the indispensable elements in developing tourism (Park, 2014; Poria, Ashworth, 2009; Potashova, Girijchuk, 2019).

Created resources, on the other hand, were also deemed as a significant contributor in developing a destination's competitiveness. Currently, the resources encompassed here concern tourism infrastructure and the range of activities as contributing elements in developing competitive tourism destinations. Past work has highlighted the importance of these ancillary features in a destination, which are inclusive of accommodation facilities, electrical supply, telecommunication systems and other facilities deemed relevant in influencing tourists' travel experiences. Concurrently, during tourists' 'time off', activities and events are propounded as enabling experiential learning (Law, Lo, 2016), while validations were provided by subsequent studies, indicating that a tourism destination's competitiveness can be further enhanced by the availability of activities (Ayikoru, 2015; Vengesayi, Mavondo, Reisinger, 2013).

Apart from created resources, the emphasis on strengthening supporting resources in a tourism destination is crucial in the effort to boost competitiveness. Supporting resources typically comprise quality of services, accessibility and accommodation. As it is common for natural tourism destinations to be located at remote areas, the significance of accessibility and quality of tourism services in boosting the competitiveness of these sites has been highlighted by previous studies (Goffi, 2013; Setokoe, Ramukumba, Ferreira, 2019). The present work viewed accessibility as ease-of-access where tourists are assisted to travel from urban to designated ecotourism destinations (Chi, Qu, 2008;

Dwyer, Kim, 2003), whereby the quality of tourism services is mainly predicted for an ecotourism destination's cleanliness and staff friendliness (Murphy, Pritchard, Smith, 2000).

2.4. Development of hypotheses

In sum, the importance of the necessary resources and their roles in enhancing tourism destination competitiveness has been highlighted in previous studies. Indeed, destination competitiveness is important to the tourism industry, thus, to suggest a more comprehensive model for the development of tourism destination competitiveness, it is critical to conduct an in-depth investigation into the causes and effects. Following the discussion here, the development of hypotheses is as follows:

H_1: Natural resources are positively related to destination competitiveness.

H_2: Cultural heritage attractions are positively related to destination competitiveness.

H_3: Tourism infrastructure is positively related to destination competitiveness.

H_4: The range of activities is positively related to destination competitiveness.

H_5: Destination accessibility is positively related to destination competitiveness.

H_6: Quality of tourism services is positively related to destination competitiveness.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research context

Sarawak, one of the 13 states located within Malaysia and stretching along the northwest coast of Borneo, is renowned for its abundant natural and cultural elements (Er, Simon, 2015). Undeniably, Malaysia's tourism sector significantly contributes to the country's economic expansion. As a result, to ensure a long-term and consistent economic contribution, competitiveness enhancement and the sustainability of tourism destinations are vital. Sarawak has consequently developed into a fascinating and distinctive tourist destination as a result of its unique cultural, ecological and ecotourism products (Zainuddin, Radzi, Zahari, 2016). In line with their strategy to create sustainable tourism, many authorities, notably the federal government of Malaysia and the state government of Sarawak, have given nature-based tourism, often known as ecotourism, significant attention and emphasis (Chua, 2022).

3.2. Survey design and measurement

A closed questionnaire consisting of 32 items was adapted from past studies (Canny, Hidayat, 2012; Dwyer, Kim, 2003; Hallmann, Muller, Feiler, 2014; Kozak, Rimmington, 1999; Lee, King, 2006; Murphy,

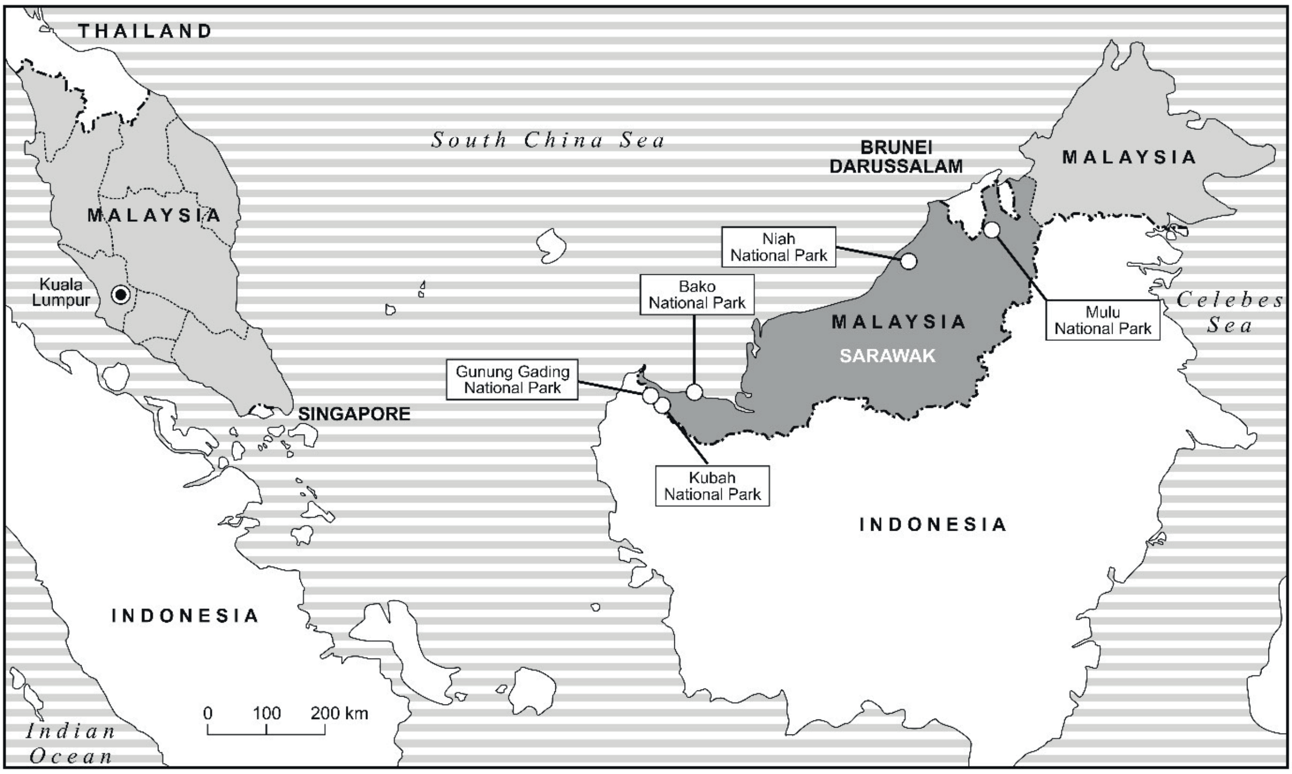

Figure 1. Study locations
Source: authors´ own work

Table 1. Profiles of respondents

Demographic variable	Category	*n*	%
Age	16–20	8	4.3
	21–30	85	45.2
	31–40	49	26.1
	41–50	23	12.2
	51–60	19	10.1
	60+	4	2.1
Gender	male	72	38.3
	female	116	61.7
Education level	high school or below	35	18.6
	diploma	13	6.9
	degree or professional qualifications	134	71.3
	postgraduate	6	3.2
Monthly income	less than RM 1,000	54	28.7
	between RM 1,001 and RM 3,000	32	17.0
	between RM 3,001 and RM 5,000	51	27.1
	between RM 5,001 and RM 7,000	9	4.8
	between RM 7,001 and RM 9,000	11	5.9
	RM 9,001 and above	31	16.5
Tourism destination	Mulu National Park	40	21.3
	Kubah National Park	36	19.1
	Niah National Park	38	20.2
	Bako National Park	40	21.3
	Gunung Gading National Park	34	18.1

Source: authors' own work.

Pritchard, Smith, 2000). A seven-point Likert scale was rated by the participating respondents, where *strong disagreement* and *strong agreement* are represented by 1 and 7 respectively. Subsequent progress involved the development of a questionnaire in digital form and distribution to domestic tourists online, based on the contact information obtained from the visitor registry at the study locations. Generally, the survey respondents consisted of domestic tourists who reside within Malaysia and have visited the designated national parks in Sarawak, including Bako, Niah, Kubah, Gunung Gading and Gunung Mulu National Parks, as indicated in Figure 1.

To ensure the accuracy of response, individuals who have visited these designated sites within one year were deemed eligible as respondents. Their demographic profiles are given in Table 1. The data collection took place from November 2020 to January 2021, over three months. By using G*Power software (Faul et al., 2007), along with criteria of medium effect size, it was determined that the minimum sample was 146, at a power of 0.95 and significance level of 0.05, as shown in Figure 2.

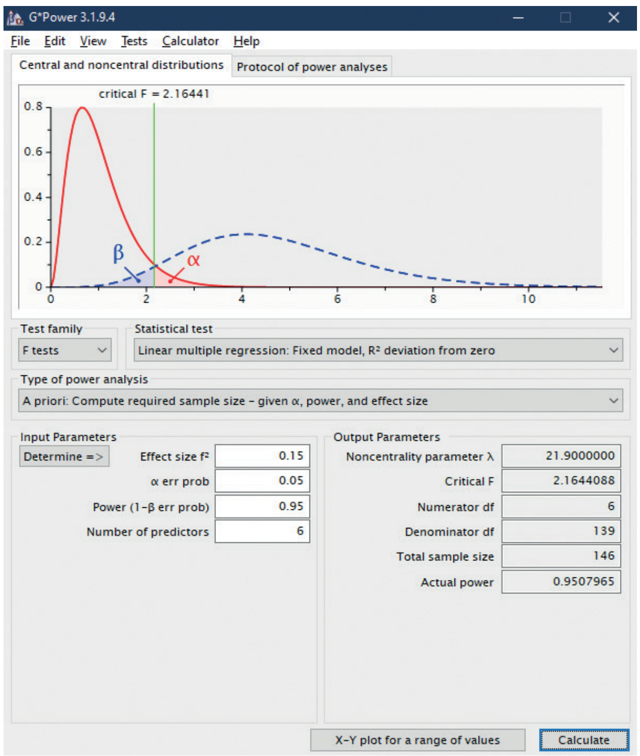

Figure 2. Results of G*Power analysis
Source: authors' own work

Following that, out of 200 questionnaires 192 were returned, implying a response rate of 96.0%. Thus, it eliminated the possible occurrence of response error as the present response rate exceeded 70% (Nulty, 2008). In line with that, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 28.0 was employed to conduct a series of preliminary analyses for the elimination of straight-line responses and the identification of missing values. Nevertheless, four out of the 192 returned questionnaires were discarded, providing a remainder of 188 for further measurement and structural analysis. As indicated by the outcome of normality, all items were normally distributed ($Z_{skewness} < 3$ and $Z_{kurtosis} < 3$), in accordance with the postulation by the authors (Yap, Sim, 2011). Subsequently, to investigate the research model, partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) estimation was conducted using WarpPLS 8.0.

4. Results

According to Table 1, most tourists who visited the studied locations were aged between 21 and 30 years old. Indeed, natural destinations, specifically national parks, tend to be more adventuresome as compared to typical urban locations. Consequently, they are likely to welcome enormous numbers of younger individuals who are habitually intrepid and energetic. Nevertheless, the demographic profile of respondents has demonstrated a rather surprising discovery that the visitors were mostly female. This is explainable as these national parks offer an abundance of natural elements for relaxation (Thong, Ching, Chin, 2020), providing females with an opportunity to escape from the hassles and hectic environments resulting from daily work and household duties.

As demonstrated in Table 2, the convergent and discriminant validity as well as the reliability of the scales were evaluated using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) which includes outer loadings, *t*-value, composite reliability (CR), Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951) and average variance extracted (AVE). To evaluate the individual reliability of each indicator, a minimum cut-off point of 0.5 must be achieved by the loading of each measurement item to ensure internal consistency (Gefen, Straub, Boudreau, 2000). Composite reliability (CR) measures the internal consistency of a measurement scale, the degree to which items are free from random errors by achieving minimum values of 0.7 (Chin, 1998; Riquelme, Rios, 2010). Discriminant validity is important in testing the indicators to prevent issues related to multicollinearity by comparing the square root of AVE among the constructs (Bagozzi, Yi, 1988; Fornell, Larcker, 1981).

Consecutively, as shown in Tables 2 and 3, each factor has obtained an AVE of more than 0.5, thus indicating no issues in the relevance of both convergent and discriminant validity. All variables have achieved values of CR exceeding 0.7 and loadings beyond 0.5. Furthermore, the evaluation of the predictive power of the model was based on the coefficient of determination (R^2), where destination competitiveness explained 46.0% of the construct ($R^2 = 0.46$), which exceeded the minimum indication of 0.19 (Cohen, 1988). Figure 3 demonstrates the findings resulting from the assessment of the structural model.

Table 2. Convergent validity of measurement model

Variable	Items	Loadings	*t*-value	α	CR	AVE
Destination resources						
Natural resources (NR)				0.824	0.884	0.656
	NR_1	0.819	12.516	–	–	–
	NR_2	0.841	12.909	–	–	–
	NR_3	0.854	13.142	–	–	–
	NR_4	0.719	10.748	–	–	–
Culture heritage attractions (CHA)				0.878	0.916	0.733
	CHA_1	0.858	13.215	–	–	–
	CHA_2	0.875	13.532	–	–	–
	CHA_3	0.855	13.168	–	–	–
	CHA_4	0.834	12.788	–	–	–
Tourism infrastructure (TI)				0.795	0.855	0.501
	TI_1	0.643	9.468	–	–	–
	TI_2	0.648	9.550	–	–	–
	TI_3	0.631	9.261	–	–	–
	TI_4	0.804	11.404	–	–	–
	TI_5	0.756	10.934	–	–	–
	TI_6	0.729	12.936	–	–	–

Variable	Items	Loadings	*t*-value	α	CR	AVE
Destination resources						
Range of activities (RA)				0.888	0.915	0.643
	RA_1	0.843	12.941	–	–	–
	RA_2	0.832	12.743	–	–	–
	RA_3	0.810	12.354	–	–	–
	RA_4	0.714	10.676	–	–	–
	RA_5	0.840	12.881	–	–	–
	RA_6	0.764	11.537	–	–	–
Destination accessibility (DA)				0.805	0.873	0.633
	DA_1	0.797	12.120	–	–	–
	DA_2	0.706	10.536	–	–	–
	DA_3	0.836	12.817	–	–	–
	DA_4	0.837	12.832	–	–	–
Quality of tourism services (QS)				0.884	0.920	0.743
	QS_1	0.862	13.295	–	–	–
	QS_2	0.891	13.816	–	–	–
	QS_3	0.869	13.413	–	–	–
	QS_4	0.825	12.615	–	–	–
Destination competitiveness (DC)				0.845	0.896	0.684
	DC_1	0.783	11.868	–	–	–
	DC_2	0.852	13.114	–	–	–
	DC_3	0.849	13.046	–	–	–
	DC_4	0.822	12.556	–	–	–

Source: authors' own work.

Table 3. Discriminant validity of constructs

	Natural resources	Cultural heritage attractions	Tourism infrastructure	Range of activities	Destination accessibility	Quality of tourism services	Destination competitiveness
Natural resources	0.810	–	–	–	–	–	–
Cultural heritage attractions	0.613	0.856	–	–	–	–	–
Tourism infrastructure	0.008	−0.072	0.705	–	–	–	–
Range of activities	0.100	−0.036	0.507	0.802	–	–	–
Destination accessibility	0.375	0.364	0.111	0.128	0.796	–	–
Quality of tourism services	0.618	0.631	0.047	−0.007	0.389	0.862	–
Destination competitiveness	0.557	0.586	0.131	0.143	0.423	0.553	0.827

Source: authors' own work.

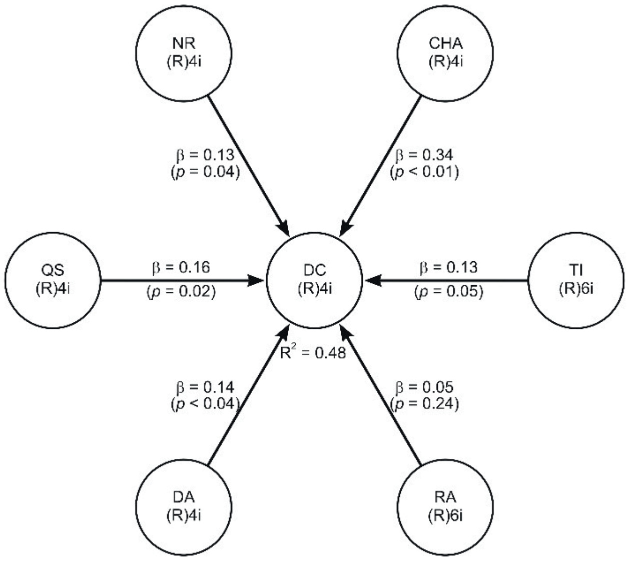

Figure 3. Results of path analysis using WarpPLS
Note: NR = natural resources, CHA = cultural heritage attractions, TI = tourism infrastructure, RA = range of activities, DA = destination accessibility, QS = quality of tourism services, DC = destination competitiveness
Source: authors' own work

Full collinearity or multicollinearity was also examined prior to assessment of the structural model (see Appendix 1). The values of the average block variance inflation factor (AVIF) and average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF) were lower than 3.3 (Kock, 2017), thus indicating the absence of full collinearity issues or common method bias in the current study. Following that, the effect size (f^2) of each indicator was determined (see Appendix 2) to evaluate the extent of explanation of the dependent variable. The results indicated each resource indicator possessed adequate amount of effect on destination competitiveness. Subsequently, the structural model was assessed through blindfolding to evaluate the predictive relevance Q^2 (see Appendix 3). The value of Q^2 obtained in this study was 0.486, which exceeded zero value (Hair et al., 2017), thus indicating that the model possessed high predictive relevance based on a rule of thumb.

The analyses were followed by an evaluation of the proposed hypotheses where path β coefficients (β) were examined (see Table 4). It is obligatory for the value of probability, the *p*-value, to be lower than the significance of 0.01 or 0.05, as a fundamental rule for one-tailed hypothesis testing. Accordingly, both endowed resources in the present study, natural resources ($\beta = 0.133$; $p < 0.05$) and cultural heritage attractions ($\beta = 0.341$; $p < 0.01$), had significant positive impacts on destination competitiveness, thus supporting hypotheses 1 and 2. Successively, both supporting resources, namely destination accessibility ($\beta = 0.138$; $p < 0.05$) and quality of tourism services ($\beta = 0.162$; $p < 0.05$), were found to enhance the competitiveness in a tourism destination, hence hypotheses 5 and 6 were supported. Interestingly, only one of the created, or human resources was discovered to be significantly and positively related to destination competitiveness, specifically tourism infrastructure ($\beta = 0.127$; $p < 0.05$). Nevertheless, as the statistical findings revealed, the range of activities, which was another created resource, had no positive significant relationship with destination competitiveness ($\beta = 0.054$; $p = 0.242$).

5. Discussion

The present study provides further insights into factors determining destination competitiveness as perceived by tourists, thus contributing to the expansion of

Table 4. Results of path coefficients and hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Standard beta	*t*-value	*p*-value	Decision
H_1	natural resources → destination competitiveness	0.133	1.759	0.04^{*}	supported
H_2	cultural heritage attractions → destination competitiveness	0.341	4.704	$< 0.01^{**}$	supported
H_3	tourism infrastructure → destination competitiveness	0.127	1.680	0.047^{*}	supported
H_4	range of activities → destination competitiveness	0.054	0.701	0.242	not supported
H_5	destination accessibility → destination competitiveness	0.138	1.821	0.035^{*}	supported
H_6	quality of tourism services → destination competitiveness	0.162	2.148	0.017^{*}	supported

Note: $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$.
Source: authors' own work.

the existing literature. Based on competitiveness theory (Crouch, Ritchie, 1999; Dwyer, Kim, 2003), tourists' perceived determinants of destination competitiveness were demonstrated. The audience consists of domestic tourists and physically visited selected natural tourism destinations in Sarawak, Malaysia. In fact, natural tourism destinations that offer an abundance of resources are more attractive and preferred among tourists as compared to locations that lack them. Based on outcomes resulting from the current study, theoretical and practical implications are advocated below.

5.1. Theoretical implications

The discoveries of this study contribute to the body of knowledge associated with destination resources and the competitiveness of a destination, which has remained underexplored in existing literature (Reisinger, Michael, Hayes, 2018). Primarily, by integrating competitiveness theory, this work attempts to investigate the relationship between the constructs of resources and competitiveness. Subsequently, destination resources and competitiveness were used in the development of a theoretical model through the assimilation of this complementary theory. In this study, the competitiveness theory was further supported by discoveries which indicated that destination resources are a key contributing factor to effective management of destination resources and competitiveness. Accordingly, these findings contribute insightful information to tourism industry players for competitiveness enhancement and outcome attainment while maintaining their competitiveness as desired in the current rapidly changing environment.

The findings resulting from statistical analyses discovered the significant positive impact of endowed resources on destination competitiveness (Potashova, Girijchuk, 2019; Zakariya, Ibrahim, Wahab, 2019). Surprisingly, the current study provides opposition to existing research (Chi et al., 2020; Law, Lo, 2016), indicating that the presence of tourism infrastructure, such as telecommunication systems, electric supply, accommodation and other relevant facilities, is not a significant driver towards competitiveness in a tourism destination. It does however provide further insights in that tourists visiting natural tourism destinations, specifically lovers of nature, are insensitive and unaware of the available infrastructure as these individuals tend to place high emphasis on the presentation of genuine natural resources in the destinations (Thong, Mohamad, Lo, 2020).

Apart from that, the remaining aspect of the created resources, the range of activities, is found to enhance tourism destination competitiveness, as perceived by tourists. Insights provided further confirm the significant role of events and activities in determining a tourism destination's competitiveness (Ayikoru, 2015; Chin, 2022). Moreover, it is also found that supporting resources in a tourism destination (i.e. destination accessibility and quality of tourism services) were significant contributors to enhanced competitiveness (Goffi, 2013; Setokoe, Ramukumba, Ferreira, 2019). Ultimately, by adapting studies from the past (Gold, Malhotra, Segars, 2001; Prieto, Revilla, 2006), the scores for reliability and validity were obtained through cross-validation measures and provide a contribution to the existing literature.

5.2. Practical implications

At the outset, the practitioners need to be informed of the importance of destination resources and their relationship with desired outcomes. The tourism industry has become more competitive, hence the right strategy through a proper management plan has become extremely important for destination managers (Armenski, Dwyer, Pavluković, 2018; Cosvi et al., 2019). Secondly, resource dimensions, namely natural resources, cultural heritage attractions, range of activities, destination accessibility and quality of tourism services should be given high emphasis by tourism practitioners. Based on current statistical findings resulting from path modeling, two of the constructs which obtained the highest path coefficient value, namely cultural heritage attractions and quality of tourism services, should be highly emphasized by industry practitioners through continuous maintenance. In conjunction with that, it is highly recommended that continuous training should be provided to the existing workforce in these destinations in order to maintain and further improve the quality of tourism services. At this moment, the Ministry of Tourism, Creative Industry and Performing Arts (MTCP) in Sarawak, in particular in its endeavour towards revolutionising the economy and industries, might benefit from these outcomes (Lau, Kong, 2019).

Along with effective strategy implementation in the ecotourism development process, these findings can also be helpful to those involved in the tourism industry, such as business owners, policy makers and planners. This is especially true during busy times like the pandemic caused by the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which is one unpredictable circumstance. Due to the tremendous loss of revenue this epidemic has caused across many industries, especially in the tourism sector where a Movement Control Order (MCO) was implemented as a lockdown measure, the restrictions on travel between areas drastically decreased visits, decreased visitor spending, and ultimately resulted in a loss of revenue for tourist destinations. These results help industry players to efficiently plan and manage business recovery strategies to reduce the loss of income during unstable conditions, which coincides with the Malaysian government's decision on the transition from the epidemic (Bedi, 2022).

6. Conclusion, limitations and future research directions

In summary, empirical evidence has been provided in the present study, especially on the impact of destination resource constructs on the competitiveness of a tourism destination based on domestic perspectives. In addition, the present study contributes to theoretical and practical perspectives in natural tourism destinations for both practitioners and scholars. Additionally, the significant influence of the destination resources (natural resources, cultural heritage attractions, tourism infrastructure, destination accessibility and quality of tourism services) on the development of destination competitiveness was discovered. The present study has provided empirical evidence that presents information for both industry players, including business operators, policy makers, and tourism planners regarding the resource constructs to be emphasized towards the success of tourism destination.

Despite the empirical findings as revealed in the preceding discussion, the present study is not without its limitations. The primary one was collecting data from a single source, which raises the possibility of technique bias issues. Therefore, it is advised to gather data from many sources to increase the validity of the results, even though the likelihood of technique bias could be reduced through procedural corrections. Additionally, the research locations themselves can add to the weaknesses. Different study locations may have different sociocultural, environmental and economic positions. Additionally, this study was conducted at only five selected ecotourism destinations in Sarawak, Malaysia. As a result, the findings might not be uniformly applicable to other ecotourism hotspots around Malaysia and other nations. Respondents from countries with varied cultural circumstances may have different perceptions towards the competitiveness development of a destination.

The competitiveness of a destination grows in significance in the context of ecotourism and the availability of endowed, created and supporting resources is crucial to the fundamental components of an ecotourism destination. Therefore, additional research into resource construct and destination competitiveness is recommended. Only perceptions from domestic tourists are included in the examination of resource constructs and destination competition. For more unbiased outcomes, it is advised to incorporate a broader concept and opinions, particularly from diverse respondents such as communities and tourist players. Future researchers should therefore study the effects of destination resource constructs on destination competitiveness based on many viewpoints.

At present, this study has not involved moderation, however in testing this conceptual framework, there are several possible moderating factors. Future studies might find it useful to examine these associations using community support as a moderator as it may alter tourists' initial perceptions when they feel welcomed in a destination. Future studies might also test the current model in other tourist hotspots, particularly in ecotourism-related environments. Only five ecotourism destinations in Sarawak, Malaysia, were highlighted, thus there is a chance for different outcomes or consistency with this study, hence scholars may further analyse the current model in other ecotourism settings with varied tourist ethnicities and cultures.

Disclosure statement
No potential competing interest was reported by the author(s).

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Appendix 1. Collinearity test

To evaluate the issue of multicollinearity among the constructs, the values of the variation inflation factor (VIF) were also gathered. The findings showed that none of the VIF values exceeded 3.3; hence, there is no evidence of multicollinearity among the constructs (see Table 1).

Table 1. Collinearity test based on VIF scores

	Natural resources	Cultural heritage attractions	Tourism infrastructure	Range of activities	Destination accessibility	Quality of tourism services	Destination competitiveness
Natural resources	2.025	–	–	–	–	–	–
Cultural heritage attractions	2.167	–	–	–	–	–	–
Tourism infrastructure	1.400	–	–	–	–	–	–
Range of activities	1.408	–	–	–	–	–	–
Destination accessibility	1.305	–	–	–	–	–	–
Quality of tourism services	2.086	–	–	–	–	–	–
Destination competitiveness	1.895	–	–	–	–	–	–

Source: authors' own work.

Appendix 2. Effect size (f^2)

To determine how well each independent (predictor or exogenous) variable explains the dependent variable (endogenous), the effect size (f^2) was calculated and reported (Chin, 1998) (see Table 2). It is crucial to provide the values of the effect size as it is a piece of relevant additional information that will improve the accuracy of the PLS path model estimations (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 2. Effect sizes of the constructs

	Natural resources	Cultural heritage attractions	Tourism infrastructure	Range of activities	Destination accessibility	Quality of tourism services	Destination competitiveness
Natural resources	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.077 (small)
Cultural heritage attractions	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.211 (medium)
Tourism infrastructure	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.026 (small)
Range of activities	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.008 (small)
Destination accessibility	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.063 (small)
Quality of tourism services	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.094 (small)

Source: authors' own work.

Appendix 3. Predictive relevance (Q^2)

To obtain predictive relevance (Q^2) value, a blindfolding process was used. According to Hair et al. (2016), when describing the predictive relevance, the Q^2 value should be stated alongside the R^2. The value of Q^2 ought to be greater than zero (see Table 3) In order to determine the Q^2 of the research model and explain the predictive usefulness of the research model, a blinding process was used in the current investigation.

Table 3. Predictive relevance of the model

Natural resources	Cultural heritage attractions	Tourism infrastructure	Range of activities	Destination accessibility	Quality of tourism services	Destination competitiveness
–	–	–	–	–	–	0.486

Source: authors' own work.

Appendix 4. Survey questionnaire

Table 4. List of measurement items

Variables	Items No.	Sources
Natural resources (NR)		
The destination has a beautiful natural landscape	NR1	Cracolici, Nijkamp, 2008; Dwyer, Kim, 2003
The availability of flora and fauna to attract tourists	NR2	
The destination has a peaceful and restful atmosphere	NR3	
The destination environment is well-preserved	NR4	
Cultural heritage attraction (CHA)		
There has variety of unique cultural attractions in the destination	CHA1	Chen et al., 2013; Dwyer, Kim, 2003; Getz, 2008; Gutierrez et al., 2005; Picard, Robinson, 2006
There are unique ethnic groups and cultures in this area	CHA2	
Abundance of tourism resources (natural scenery, historic/cultural/heritage site, local culture, etc.)	CHA3	
The destination offers interesting historical attractions	CHA4	

Variables	Items No.	Sources
Tourism infrastructure (TI)		
The infrastructure within the destination is adequate to meet visitor needs	TI1	Dwyer, Kim, 2003; Hankinson, 2004; Mo et al., 1993; Murphy et al., 2000; Smith, 1994
The signals and sign-postings within the destination are operating well	TI2	
The functionality of the facilities in the destination is adequate	TI3	
There are health/medical facilities to serve tourists in this area	TI4	
There is availability of telecommunication system for tourists	TI5	
There is consistency of electricity supply in the destination	TI6	
Range of activities (RA)		
The destination offers numerous outdoor activities (e.g., water activities, sport activities, natural-based activities)	RA1	Alcañiz, García, Blas, 2009; Go, Govers, 2000; Heath, 2003; Kozak, Rimmington, 1999
The various events and activities were well-planned	RA2	
The activities or events' process are attractive and enjoyable	RA3	
It is easy to get the information and make arrangements for the activities	RA4	
The destination has provided enough maps and signs at different points for directions	RA5	
A good variety of activities are offered for tourists	RA6	
Destination accessibility (DA)		
It was easy for me to get to the destination	DA1	Canny, Hidayat, 2012; Chi, Qu; 2008; Yusof, Rahman, 2011
The transportation options to destination are adequate	DA2	
Problem-free travel and vacation arrangement with the destination	DA3	
The ease to get abundant clear information about the destination before the travel	DA4	
Quality of tourism services (QS)		
High quality and variety of activities offered for tourists at the destination (special events/festivals, entertainment, nightlife, etc.)	QS1	Chi, Qu, 2008; Enright, Newton, 2004; Gomezelj, Mihalic, 2008
High quality tourism infrastructure (accommodation, restaurant, local transport, health/medical facilities, etc.)	QS2	
High quality of service/amenities at the destination	QS3	
Cleanliness and hygiene are held in respect in the destination	QS4	
Destination competitiveness (DC)		
Tourism helps to increase the development of a strong destination image	DC1	Crouch, Ritchie, 1999; Dwyer, Kim, 2003; Enright, Newton, 2005; Frauman, 1999; Hassan, 2000; Meng, 2006; Mihalic, 2000
The destination's commitment to providing a satisfactory vacation experience for tourists	DC2	
The destination's continuous commitment to the ongoing improvement and development of a high-quality destination	DC3	
The destination commitment to providing a safe and secure environment	DC4	

Source: authors' own work.

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Can a woman travel as a woman? Perceptions of travel barriers to women by personality trait

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine differences in women's perceptions of travel constraints by personality trait, according to age, educational level, personal income, travelled destination, the purpose of travelling, the time spent travelling, the region travelled to and the factors that affect the choice of destination. The survey data collected from a sample of 304 women travellers were analyzed by performing one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results showed that there are significant differences between women's perceptions of travel constraints and personal income, the region they travelled to and the purpose of travelling. Significant differences between women's personality traits and age, education level, duration of travel, destination and destination choice were also found.

KEYWORDS

women travellers, travel constraints, five-factor personality traits, Türkiye

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1. Introduction

People have equal rights regardless of their economic and social status (Wilson, 2004). Although rights are equal, gender as understood in society imposes various roles on men and women. These social roles are changing rapidly due to causes such as globalization and urbanization. When the lives of men and women living in different geographies are examined, it shows that changes seen in the social, economic and political fields also affect their lives (Lie, 2000). Along with the effect of these changes, roles have changed and role adaptations of women and men in both their domestic and working lives are inevitable (Attanapola, 2004; World Health Organization [WHO], 1998).

Today, changes are seen in socio-demographic, political and economic fields (Attanapola, 2004; Kay, 2000; Kinnaird, Hall, 2000). For example, the fact that women are more often employed full time (Pringle, Kay, Jenkins, 2011) and achieve economic independence (Valaja, 2018), with changes in lifestyle and family life (Kay, 2000), have enabled women to participate more in travel. However, the social roles and expectations imposed on women prevent them from participating in travel defined as leisure.

Endler and Magnusson (1976) and Iso-Ahola (1980) have assumed that social roles may have a restrictive effect on women's participation in leisure time activities (cited in Henderson, Stalnaker, Taylor, 1988; Cambronero-Saiz, 2013). For women who are considered to have a major responsibility for housework and parenting (Cambronero-Saiz, 2013; Gregory, 1982; Hochschild, Machung, 1989; Moya, Expósito, Ruiz, 2000), continuation of home and family care even on vacation are expected (Deem, 1996). In addition, Harris (2002) stated that women travelling for work felt that they had to continue with the care of their spouse, children and home even when they were away by e-mail, phone calls and other means. Therefore, the concept of women's leisure becomes more problematic in travel for work. For this reason, going outside the domestic boundaries for women does not mean a real escape, both for work and leisure.

In the literature review on the social status of women in human history and today, one of the most common problems is gender (Wilson, 2004) and that the historical development of tourism studies related to this dates back to the mid-1990s (Aitchison, 2005; Mottiar, Quinn, 2004). Conceptually, gender is the cultural meanings associated with the biological sex of individuals (Henderson et al., 1996). Studies on gender are associated with understanding social world power relations between women and men and how they are gendered in ways that shape their identities (Pringle, Kay, Jenkins, 2011). According to the roles and expectations attributed to individuals with the concept of gender, the most important duty for men is to provide livelihood for the family, while the most important duty for women is to raise their children and ensure the continuity of family life (Moya, Expósito, Ruiz, 2000). The roles and expectations imposed by the concept of gender (Henderson et al., 1996) can turn into constraints on women's lives. These restrictors can greatly affect individuals' behavior, travel choices and perceptions of tourist activities (Özkök, Cesur, 2015). For example, compared to men, women's freedom to travel is restricted especially by familial roles and responsibilities (Khan, 2011). Henderson, Stalnaker and Taylor (1988) suggested that gender-role characteristics and personality types could be an important obstacle for women to participate in leisure activities.

Researchers have provided meaningful contributions to the tourism literature. Surprisingly, to our best knowledge, few studies have hitherto focused on personality traits and their role in women's travel intentions. However, the relationship between personal income, destination travelled to, the purpose of travel and women's perception of travel constraints have not been given attention. Moreover, the relationship between demographic variables (age and educational level), the time spent travelling, the region travelled to, the factors that affect the choice of destination and women's personality traits have not been given attention either. Therefore, to fill this gap, this study examines differences in women's perception of travel constraints and their personality traits according to several variables.

2. Literature review and research hypotheses

2.1. Women and travel constraints

The issue of women and leisure had not been studied much until the 1980s. In fact, even until the 21st century, it does not seem to have been a focused topic. The history of research on women's participation in travel goes back approximately 25 years (Freysinger et al., 2013; Özkök, Cesur, 2015). Within the scope of this work, many results have been revealed about how women participate in travel, what their travel motivations are, and what kind of restrictions they encounter in their trips (before and during) (Arab-Moghaddam, Henderson, Sheikholeslami, 2007). Gregory (1982) argued that women's lives are shaped by the integration of work and vacation periods. He also argued that for women, factors such as access to work, housing, education, traditional leisure time, mobility and safety all constitute obstacles to leisure time. However, it is known that the first integrative research on women's travel activities was carried out by Henderson in 1990. Henderson developed various methods to understand women's place in leisure in his research. He analyzed the meaning that women attribute to travel activities with the methods he developed. As a result of his analysis, it was concluded that the most basic and common problem for women travelling is gender inequality in the social sense (Arab-Moghaddam, Henderson, Sheikholeslami, 2007). In this context, many researchers in the relevant literature argue that compared to men, women experience more restrictions as a result of gender and socio-cultural differences (Özkök, Cesur, 2015). When the historical process is examined, the higher number of men compared to women in travel is due to the fact that women are faced with more restrictions (Nyaupane, Andereck, 2008).

In the academic tourism field, most of the work on gender, women and tourism has focused on the experiences of women as 'producers' of tourism and those who represent them. In their study, Henderson and Gibson (2013) emphasize more research is needed on emerging issues regarding women in tourism and other marginalized groups. It is clear, therefore, that studies of women travellers are potentially a necessary field for academic research.

The difficulties faced by women in daily life and travel differ. At the individual level, women may be exposed to discrimination and harassment in the workplace, in society and in their spare time. Negative attitudes towards sexism can prevent or limit participation in leisure time. In addition, it can limit individuals' freedom to express themselves and develop a positive identity through leisure time (Freysinger et al., 2013).

Henderson, Stalnaker and Taylor (1988), in their study on the factors acting as an obstacle to leisure time for women mentioned ten factors: time, money, facilities, family concerns, unawareness, lack of interest, decision making, body image, skills and social inappropriateness. Wilson and Little (2005) also focused on the restrictions and difficulties faced by women while trying to participate in leisure and tourism activities. As a result of the study, several restrictors were identified: lack of self-confidence, anxiety, fear, psychological problems, an individual's desire to spend free time with a friend or being away from a friend, and social perception. Common constraints discussed are fear and security. While Reisinger and Mavondo (2005) pointed out in their study that travel intentions are determined by the level of travel anxiety and perceived safety level, Westwood, Pritchard and Morgan (2000) drew attention to women's concerns about security both before a journey and on arrival at a destination. In addition, Wilson and Little (2005) show that women's experiences limit their opportunities to go further because they often have to travel on safe routes.

In the international literature, there are a lot of studies on women travelling alone (Carvalho, Baptista, Costa, 2014; Chiang, Jogaratnam, 2006; Harris, Wilson, 2007; Jordan, Aitchison, 2008; Jordan, Gibson, 2005; McNamara, Prideaux, 2010; Myers, 2010; Obenour, 2005; Seow, Brown, 2018; Wilson, 2004; Wilson, Little, 2005, 2008; Valaja, 2018; Yang, Khoo-Lattimore, Arcodia, 2018). The increase in studies on women travellers, especially in recent years, can be attributed to an increase in women's tendency to travel alone. It is possible to mention a number of studies on travel restrictions for women travellers (Chen, Chen, Okumus, 2013; Crawford, Godbey, 1987; Fleischer, Pizam, 2002; Gilbert, Hudson, 2000; Lai, Li, Harrill, 2013; Lee, Agarwal, Kim, 2012; Li et al., 2011; Nyaupane, Andereck, 2008; Pennington-Gray, Kerstetter, 2002; Sparks, Pan, 2009; Wilson, Little, 2005).

2.2. Five-factor personality traits

Patterns of cognition, beliefs and conduct that are comparatively stable are referred to as personality traits (Mammadov, 2022) and are among the factors that determine the actions people take. Various types of behavior and personality traits are related to each other (Abdelrahman, 2022). Moreover, they distinguish one person from another and form the basis of our predictions about the future behavior of that person (Atkinson et al., 2019). Research leads to the conclusion that most of the consistency in our behavior can be represented by five basic personality dimensions: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness (Barnett, 2013; McCrae, Costa, 1987; McCrae et al., 1999). Donnellan and Lucas (2008) briefly explained these five-factor personality traits as follows: extraversion (traits like being energetic and sociable), agreeableness (traits like being considerate and kind), conscientiousness (traits like being hard-working and orderly), neuroticism (traits like being nervous and tense) and openness (traits like being artistic and creative) (Donnellan, Lucas, 2008).

The five-factor personality model emphasizes features of inheritance, temporal stability and the generalization of personality traits across genders and cultures (Grumm, von Collani, 2009; Tan, 2020). McCabe et al. (2013) argued that the trait theory of personality, developed by Allport (1937), forms the basis of the five-factor personality model. Tappin (2014, p. 75), on the other hand, stated that the five-factor personality development was discussed extensively from 1884 until 1992. It is also argued that most studies on the five factor model and the development of a scale related to McCrae and Costa (1985) were the greatest contribution (Çiçek, Aslan, 2020).

In addition to models related to personality traits, the five-factor personality model has been widely applied in various disciplines in social sciences due to its universality (Jani, Jang, Hwang, 2014), and its high reliability across cultures (Allık, McCrae, 2004; Benet-Martínez, John, 1998; Schmitt et al., 2007).

It is believed that personality traits vary according to geographic location. Although the five-factor personality model is thought to have a universal structure, the model has been analyzed by researchers due to the differences between cultures, for example, Allık and McCrae (2004) analyzed the model in 36 countries.

Benet-Martínez and John (1998) developed the five-factor personality scale adapted to Türkiye. Research conducted within 56 countries (Aydoğan et al., 2017; Basım, Çetin, Tabak, 2009; Schmitt et al., 2007). After this, different authors carried out studies on the adaptation of the five-factor personality scale created by different authors to Turkish culture. For example, Horzum, Ayas and Padır (2017) conducted a study to adapt the ten-item personality scale developed by Rammstedt and John (2007), which measures five basic personality traits, to Turkish culture. As a result, the five-factor model supporting the basic personality structure has gained more importance by being proven cross-culturally (Goldberg, 1990; McCrae, John, 1992).

It is seen that the five-factor model of personality is used in different disciplines from the social sciences. Tourism is one of these disciplines. Since personality is generally thought to be stable, this model helps to understand tourist behavior, which consists of emotional and thought components (Jani et al., 2014) while it is known that personality affects tourist behavior (Decrop, 2006; Hsu, Kang, Wolfe, 2002; Kotler, 2000). Recent studies on tourism and the five-factor analysis are as follows: Jani et al. (2014) associating personality with the internet behavior of tourists, Abbate and Di Nuovo (2013) discovering religious travel motivations, Kvasova (2015) determining the relationships between personality and tourists' environmentalism, while Passafaro et al. (2015) used the five-factor model to determine the profile of sustainable tourists to investigate the effects of personality traits on different types of recreation, and to determine the effect on the intention of visiting green hotels.

2.3. Hypotheses

Results from Wilson's (2004) study show the restrictions that prevent women from travelling alone are explained under four headings: socio-cultural, personal, objective and spatial constraints. It is concluded that these restrictions prevent women from travelling alone.

The factors that restrict those who travel are examined under two items, namely supply-side restrictors and socio-demographic restrictors. The visa procedures required for the region to be travelled to, weather conditions, distance, adverse conditions in accommodation, and security problems are specified as supply-side restrictors; variables such as gender, age, marital status, race, education and income status are included under socio-demographic constraints (Cesur, 2014; Henderson, Stalnaker, Taylor, 1988; Pennington-Gray, Kerstetter, 2002; Wilson, Little, 2005).

In the travel decision-making process, people generally take into account leisure travel restrictions that affect tourist destination choices, such as financial and time constraints, lack of interest or travel companions, and security concerns (Chen, 2019; Tan, 2020). It is possible to say that the income levels of individuals have an effect on their travel behavior. For example, in the study of Jang et al. (2004), it has been suggested that Japanese tourists travelling abroad with different income levels may exhibit different travel consumption behaviors. The research conducted by Nyaupane and Andereck (2008) on restrictions to participating in leisure activities in Arizona has shown that financial resources are the most important limiting factor for those aged 71 and over.

Travel restrictions may vary depending on socio-demographic and socio-economic factors, including gender, age, income, ethnicity and life cycle (Lai, Li, Harrill, 2013). For example, while structural constraints such as money and time are prominent among Western tourists, emotional constraints such as family roles, negative perception of old age, and fear of disapproval are observed in Eastern tourists (Hsu, Kang, 2009). The findings of Li (2007) showed that the restrictions vary according to age, gender, education, occupation and income, while motivations vary according to age, education, profession and income. In the light of this, the H_1 hypothesis was created.

H_1. There is a significant difference in women'perception of travel constraints due to personal income.

In Cesur's (2014) study, H_{2a} and H_{2b} hypotheses were created because women stated that there is a difference in the time they spend on their trips, the regions they travelled to and their travel purposes due to fear, suspicion and security factors.

H_2. There is a significant difference in the women' perception of travel constraints due to the travel destination (Hypothesis 2a) and purpose of travelling (Hypothesis 2b).

Lucas and Donnellan (2009) argue that there is important evidence that five-factor personality traits change over time. They stated that this evidence supports the conclusion that extraversion, neuroticism and openness decrease with age, while agreeableness and conscientiousness, increase with age. Also, Donnellan and Lucas (2008) found that extraversion and openness were negatively associated with age whereas agreeableness was positively associated with it. In Yazıcı-Çelebi's (2021) study, it was concluded that there was a significant difference in the personality traits of extraversion/introversion and balance/neuroticism sub-dimensions in terms of the education levels of women. Accordingly, H_{3a} and H_{3b} hypotheses have been created.

H_3. There is a significant difference in women' personality traits due to age (Hypothesis 3a) and educational level (Hypothesis 3b).

When studies on leisure behavior are examined, several studies point to the existence of important relationships between personality in general and leisure behavior (Barnett, 2006; Jani, 2014) which shed light on the relationship between personality and travel. Plog (1974), whose personality trait analysis is clearly found among researchers in tourism, explained the possible destination choice of the tourist. For example, Sönmez and Graefe (1998) stated that they would choose the destination that best suits the needs of a tourist and offers the most benefit with the least risk, while Plog (1974) also stated that psychocentric tourists (passive and risk-averse) are likely to seek peace and choose destinations that are perceived as safe. He stated that allocentric tourists (active and risk-taking) are most likely looking for excitement and pay less attention to destination choice based on safety factors.

In studies focusing on how psychological factors affect tourists' decisions about travel destinations within the scope of tourism (Qui, Masiero, Li, 2018), it is seen that different personality traits are linked to the final choice of the destination travelled to. Remarkable studies emphasize that people with different purposes tend to choose different travel destinations (Kozak, 2002; Moscardo et al., 1996).

Tan (2020) discusses how the personality traits of tourists affect perceived travel restrictions during the destination choice process. H_{4a}, H_{4b} and H_{4c} were formed in accordance with these.

H_4. There is a significant difference in women' personality traits due to the time spent travelling (Hypothesis 4a), the region travelled to (Hypothesis 4b), and the factors that affect the choice of destination (Hypothesis 4c).

3. Methodology

This research is concerned with women travellers living in Türkiye. These were selected because there are very few studies on Turkish women travelling alone in the literature. Judgmental sampling (also called purposive or expert sampling), one of the non-probability sampling methods, was used in the study. This kind of sampling strategy is suitable if the population to be examined is hard to find or if some participants are considered to be more suitable (knowledgeable, experienced, etc.) than others for the study. Women who are on Facebook and Instagram, which are among the social media tools used extensively in Türkiye, can be found through the www.gezginkadinlar.com web address. The founder of the website was contacted and stated that the number of active travelling women on the webpage was 1400; the sample size was calculated according to this information. The data was collected between January and June 2019 and 304 questionnaires were found suitable for analysis.

In this study, a quantitative descriptive research model was used, one that describes a given situation as thoroughly and carefully as possible (Büyüköztürk et al., 2008). In a descriptive model, the event, individual or object that is the subject of research is defined in its own terms. No effort is made to change or affect it in any way (Yıldırım, Şimşek, 2008). In the research, data were obtained by using the survey technique, a quantitative research method. The first two parts of the scale used for the survey technique was taken from Şahin, Sönmez and Kahveci (2014). Horzum, Ayas and Padır (2017) was used for the scale in the third part of the questionnaire. The first section includes demographic questions, the second part includes statements about travel obstacles, while the third consists of a five-factor personality scale in order to find the characteristics that distinguish the respondents from others in a way that is related to travel obstacles. A 5-point Likert-scale was adopted for the survey items ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

4. Analysis and findings

The research includes statistics obtained as a result of a CFA analysis of the travel disability scale. The items' factor loadings, R^2, error and, t values is presented in Table 1. When Table 1 was examined, it was determined that the factor structure obtained as a result of the explanatory factor analysis of the travel disability scale was confirmed by CFA findings in terms of item statistics. Accordingly, the factor loading values of the items vary between 0.33 and 0.72. These values can be considered as an acceptable factor load. The t values, which are the expressions of the statistical significance level of the relationships between the items and latent variables, were found to be significant at the $p < 0.01$ level and all values were found to be greater than 2.58. Below (Figure 1) is the DFA path diagram. When it was examined, no modification was required, as the fit indices of the model were at the desired level.

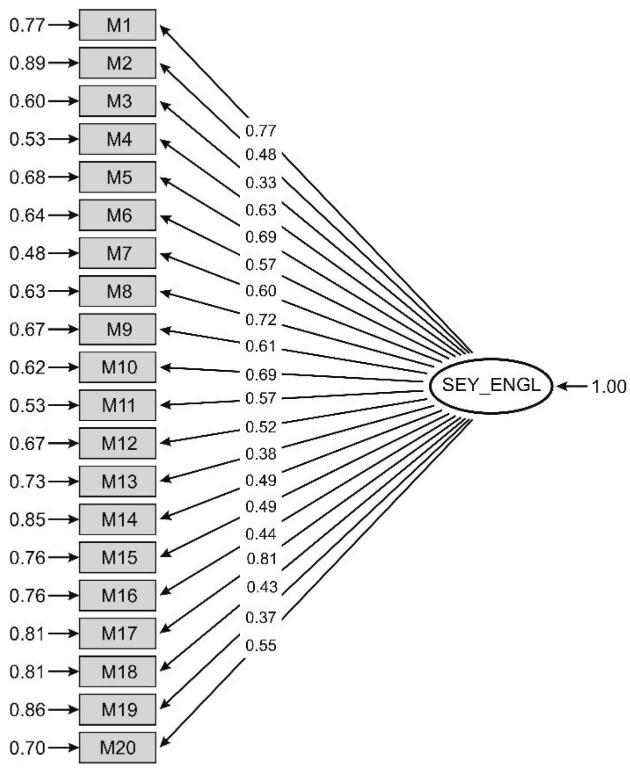

Figure 1. Path diagram of the travel disability scale
Note: chi-square = 527.04, df = 167, p value = 0.00000, RMSEA = 0.084
Source: authors

Table 1. Statistics on CFA findings for the travel disability scale

Items	Factor loadings	R^2	Error	*t*
1. My health condition when travelling affects my trips	0.48	0.23	0.77	8.49
2. I'm not interested in going on trips	0.33	0.11	0.89	5.61
3. A security concern for the country affects my travel	0.63	0.40	0.60	11.72
4. Bad experiences I have had travelling in the past affect my trip	0.69	0.48	0.53	13.18
5. The possibility of experiencing a lack of friends (loneliness) during travelling affects my trip	0.57	0.32	0.68	10.30
6. The disagreement I have with family members in my travel decisions affects my trip	0.60	0.36	0.64	11.05
7. Transportation problems affect my trip	0.72	0.52	0.48	14.05
8. Anxiety about travel itineraries affects my trip	0.61	0.37	0.63	11.27
9. Unsuitable weather conditions in the country I will travel to affects my trip	0.57	0.32	0.67	10.38
10. The lack of supply resources in the country I will travel to affects my trip	0.61	0.37	0.62	11.39
11. The fact that the accommodation facility in the country I will travel to is poorly equipped affects my trip	0.69	0.48	0.53	13.18
12. Not having enough time for travelling affects my trip	0.57	0.32	0.67	10.35
13. The high costs of travel affect my trip	0.52	0.27	0.73	9.34
14. The fact that I do not have enough information about the country I will travel to affects my trip	0.39	0.15	0.85	6.63
15. Having a negative worldview in terms of travel affects my trip	0.49	0.24	0.76	8.78
16. Political events (conflict, revolution, etc.) in the country I will travel to affects my trip	0.48	0.23	0.76	8.68
17. Ethnic and religious conflicts in the country I will travel to affects my trip	0.44	0.19	0.81	7.71
18. Visa problems encountered during travelling affects my trip	0.43	0.18	0.81	7.58
19. My lack of self-worth in terms of travelling affects my trip	0.37	0.14	0.86	6.32
20. The language difference problem that I will encounter in the country I will travel to affects my trip	0.55	0.30	0.70	9.87

Source: authors.

After the fit index of a model is found to be at the desired level in the path diagram, the other fit index results of the model should be checked. While *t*-test or χ^2 analyses are made by looking at the p value, which will indicate whether the model is acceptable and complies with perfect fit criteria by looking at the results of the various fit indexes for CFA. These fit indices take names such as χ^2, χ^2/SD, RMSEA, RMR, SRMR, NFI, NNFI, CFI, GFI, AGFI (Çapık, 2014, p. 199). The ratios of good fit and acceptable fit criteria for a model are given in Table 2 below (Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger, 2003).

The fit index criteria obtained as a result of the CFA meet the acceptable fit index criteria. In Table 3 the values obtained are within acceptable fit indices. It has been determined that the most important fit index value, χ^2/SD, falls within the acceptable fit range at 3.155, and the RMSEA value falls within the acceptable range at 0.084, while the other fit indices are acceptable. These results show that the explained factor structure is confirmed.

The results of the one-way ANOVA analysis are shown in Table 4. According to the results of the one-way ANOVA analysis conducted to determine the difference between travel restrictions and individual income levels, the difference between travel restrictions and income was found to be statistically significant at the 95% confidence level ($F = 9.509$, $p < 0.01$). Scheffe analysis was performed to determine the source of the differences. It was determined that the travel disability level of those with an income of less than 2000 TL ($\bar{X} = 3.58$) is higher than those with an income of 2001–4000 TL ($\bar{X} = 3.03$), 4001–6000 TL ($\bar{X} = 2.4$), 6001–8000 TL ($\bar{X} = 2.94$), more than 8001 ($\bar{X} = 2.87$). With increase in income, the perception of travel disability decreases and this shows that income is an important factor for travelling. Thus, H_1 was supported.

Table 2. Values of fit index criteria

Goodness of fit indices	Good fit value	Acceptable fit value
χ^2/SD	≤ 3	≤ 5
RMSEA	0 < RMSEA < 0.05	0.05 ≤ RMSEA ≤ 0.10
RMR	0 ≤ SRMR < 0.05	0.05 ≤ SRMR ≤ 0.10
SRMR	0 ≤ SRMR < 0.05	0.05 ≤ SRMR ≤ 0.10
NFI	0.95 ≤ NFI ≤ 1	0.90 ≤ NFI ≤ 0.95
NNFI	0.95 ≤ NNFI ≤ 1	0.90 ≤ NNFI ≤ 0.95
CFI	0.95 ≤ CFI ≤ 1	0.90 ≤ CFI ≤ 0.95
GFI	0.95 ≤ GFI ≤ 1	0.90 ≤ GFI ≤ 0.95
AGFI	0.90 ≤ AGFI ≤ 1	0.85 ≤ AGFI ≤ 0.90

Source: authors.

Table 3. Travel disability scale goodness of fit values

χ^2/SD	p	RMSEA	CFI	GFI	AGFI	NNFI	NFI	RMR	SRMR
3.155	0.000	0.084	0.93	0.90	0.85	0.92	0.90	0.066	0.051

Source: authors.

Table 4. ANOVA results for levels of travel restrictions by individual income status

Factor	Income	n	$\bar{X}$	SS	SD	F	p	Scheffe
Travel restrictions	less than 2000 TL	54	3.58	0.78	4	9.509	0.000**	1–2
	2001–4000 TL	113	3.03	0.69	–	–	–	1–3
	4001–6000 TL	63	2.84	0.68	–	–	–	1–4
	6001–8000 TL	31	2.94	0.67	–	–	–	1–5
	more than 8001 TL	43	2.87	0.72	–	–	–	–

Note: ** $p < 0.01$; 1 = less than 2000 TL; 2 = 2001–4000 TL; 3 = 4001–6000 TL; 4 = 4001–6000 TL; 5 = more than 8001 TL.
Source: authors.

The results of ANOVA analysis related to the travel restrictions level of individuals and the regions travelled are shown in Table 5. According to the results of the one-way ANOVA analysis conducted to determine the differences between the travel restrictions level of individuals and the regions travelled, the difference between travel restrictions and the regions travelled was statistically significant at the 95% confidence level ($F = 4.618$, $p < 0.01$). The travel restrictions level for those who prefer to travel in Türkiye ($\bar{X} = 3.19$) was higher than those who prefer to travel to Europe ($\bar{X} = 2.90$), Africa ($\bar{X} = 2.50$), America ($\bar{X} = 2.70$), Asia ($\bar{X} = 2.57$) or the Middle East ($\bar{X} = 2.65$). Scheffe analysis was performed to determine the source of the differences. In accordance with the data obtained, the participants prefer mostly to travel within Türkiye the while African countries are the least preferred. In this context, participants travel more in their own country due to reasons such as travel barriers, cost, security, difficulties in obtaining visas and terrorism. Thus, H_{2a} was supported.

The results of the one-way ANOVA analysis are shown in Table 6. According to the results of the one-way ANOVA analysis to determine the difference between travel purpose and travel restrictions level was statistically significant at the 95% confidence level ($F = 10.896$, $p < 0.01$). The travel restrictions level for women who travel to see new places ($\bar{X} = 2.85$) was at a lower level than those who travel for leisure ($\bar{X} = 3.26$), as routine ($\bar{X} = 3.22$) and work ($\bar{X} = 3.16$). Scheffe analysis was performed to determine the source of the differences. In line with the data obtained, the participants travelled to see new places and meet new people against travel restrictions. Participants who travel for leisure or habit pay more attention to travel obstacles. Thus, H_{2b} was supported.

Table 5. ANOVA results for the travel restrictions levels of individuals according to travel area

Factor	Region travelled	*n*	$\bar{X}$	*SS*	*SD*	*F*	*p*	Scheffe
Travel restrictions	Europe	116	2.90	0.73	5	4.618	0.000**	3–1
	Africa	21	2.50	0.73	–	–	–	3–2
	Türkiye	197	3.19	0.73	–	–	–	3–4
	America	26	2.70	0.69	–	–	–	3–5
	Asia	36	2.68	0.57	–	–	–	3–6
	Middle East	13	2.65	0.66	–	–	–	–

Note: ** $p < 0.01$; 1 = Europe; 2 = Africa; 3 = Türkiye; 4 = America; 5 = Asia; 6 = Middle East.
Source: authors.

Table 6. ANOVA results for travel restrictions of individuals according to travel purpose

Factor	Travel purpose	*n*	$\bar{X}$	*SS*	*SD*	*F*	*p*	Differences
Travel restrictions	relaxation	149	3.26	0.62	4	10.896	0.000**	1–4
	health	6	3.41	0.26	–	–	–	3–4
	routine	39	3.22	0.79	–	–	–	4–6
	seeing new places	180	2.85	0.74	–	–	–	–
	meeting new people	51	2.78	0.66	–	–	–	–
	work	35	3.16	0.72	–	–	–	–
	other	7	2.80	0.75	–	–	–	–

Note: ** $p < 0.01$; 1 = relaxation; 2 = health; 3 = routine; 4 = seeing new places; 5 = meeting new people; 6 = business; 7 = other.
Source: authors.

Table 7 contains statistics obtained as a result of a confirmatory factor analysis of the five-factor personality scale. When Table 7 is examined, the factor structure of the five-factor personality scale obtained as a result of EFA was confirmed by CFA findings in terms of item statistics. Accordingly, the factor loading values of the items vary between 0.51 and 0.96. These values can be considered as acceptable factor loadings.

The fit index criteria obtained as a result of CFA met the acceptable fit index criteria (Figure 2 and Table 8). It is seen that the values obtained as a result of the CFA are perfect fit indexes and are in accordance

Table 7. Item statistics on CFA findings on the five-factor personality scale

Items	Factor loadings	R^2	Error	*t*
1. I see myself as an introvert	0.89	0.79	0.21	16.56
2. I see myself as an extravert, social person	0.96	0.92	0.08	19.10
3. I generally see myself as a reliable person	0.86	0.74	0.26	16.80
4. I see myself as someone who tends to find fault in others	0.54	0.29	0.71	12.45
5. I see myself as someone who tends to move slowly	0.51	0.26	0.74	11.22
6. I see myself as someone who can do a job well	0.84	0.71	0.30	14.20
7. I see myself as someone who is relaxed and able to deal with stress	0.84	0.71	0.30	14.23
8. I consider myself an easily angered person	0.60	0.36	0.64	13.01
9. I consider myself as someone with little artistic interest	0.58	0.34	0.67	12.78
10. I see myself as a creative person	0.63	0.40	0.61	14.10

Source: authors.

with the data on perfect and acceptable scales in the work of Schermelleh-Engel and Moosbrugger (2003). It was determined that the χ^2/df value, which is the most important fit index, was in the perfect fit range at 1.733, the RMSEA at 0.049, while other fit indices are within the perfect fit. These results show that the explained factor structure is confirmed.

The results of the one-way ANOVA analysis are shown in Table 9. According to the results of the one-way ANOVA analysis conducted to determine differences between the personality trait levels of individuals and age, the difference between agreeableness and age was found to be statistically significant at the 95% confidence level (F = 4.353, SD = 3, p = 0.005, p < 0.05). Scheffe analysis was performed to determine the source of the differences. The significant difference was between the age group of 38–47 and older than 48, depending on the items "I generally see myself as a reliable person" and "I see myself as someone who tends to find the mistakes of others". It was observed that the level of agreeableness of the age group 38–47 ($\bar{X}$ = 3.92) was higher than that of those older than 48 ($\bar{X}$ = 3.34). Thus, H_{3a} was supported.

The results of the one-way ANOVA analysis are shown in Table 10. According to the results of the one-way ANOVA analysis made to determine

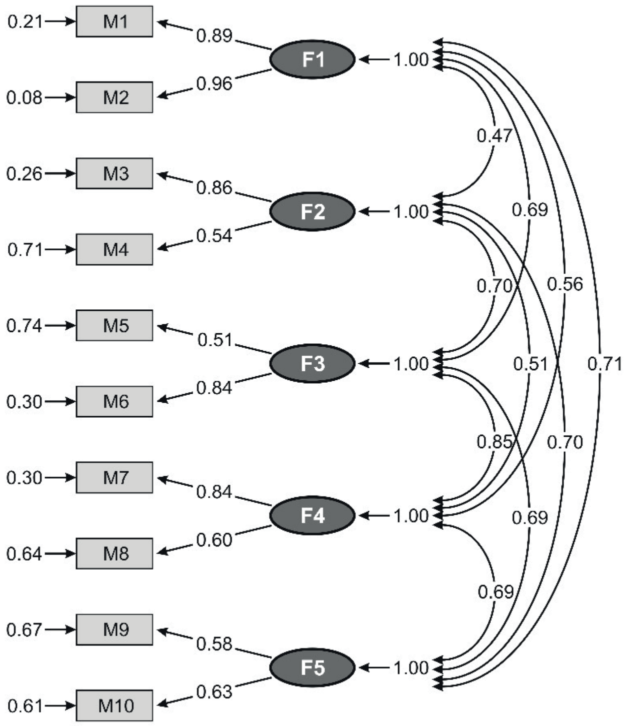

Figure 2. Path diagram of the five-factor personality scale
Note: chi-square = 39.87, df = 23, p value = 0.01588,
RMSEA = 0.049
Source: authors

Table 8. Five-factor personality scale's fit indices

χ^2/df	p	RMSEA	CFI	GFI	AGFI	NNFI	NFI	RMR	SRMR
1.733	0.0158	0.049	0.98	0.97	0.94	0.96	0.96	0.042	0.059

Source: authors.

Table 9. ANOVA results for the personality trait levels of individuals according to age

Personality traits	Age groups	n	$\bar{X}$	SS	SD	F	p	Differences
Extraversion	18–27	58	4.34	0.72	3	0.398	0.755	–
	28–37	106	4.28	0.84	–	–	–	–
	38–47	78	4.22	0.94	–	–	–	–
	older than 48	62	4.19	0.79	–	–	–	–
Agreeableness	18–27	58	3.96	0.73	3	4.353	0.005**	3–4
	28–37	106	4.16	0.70	–	–	–	–
	38–47	78	3.92	0.96	–	–	–	–
	older than 48	62	3.34	0.64	–	–	–	–
Conscientiousness	18–27	58	4.21	0.82	3	0.902	0.441	–
	28–37	106	4.09	0.87	–	–	–	–
	38–47	78	4.03	1.08	–	–	–	–
	older than 48	62	3.94	0.92	–	–	–	–
Neuroticism	18–27	58	3.44	0.91	3	1.289	0.278	–
	28–37	106	3.41	0.90	–	–	–	–
	38–47	78	3.58	1.03	–	–	–	–
	older than 48	62	3.27	0.88	–	–	–	–

Table 9 (cont.)

Personality traits	Age groups	n	$\bar{X}$	SS	SD	F	p	Differences
Openness	18–27	58	3.65	0.69	3	1.861	0.136	–
	28–37	106	3.73	0.90	–	–	–	–
	38–47	78	3.87	0.81	–	–	–	–
	older than 48	62	3.95	0.78	–	–	–	–
General personality	18–27	58	3.92	0.51	3	0.013	0.998	–
	28–37	106	3.93	0.53	–	–	–	–
	38–47	78	3.92	0.67	–	–	–	–
	older than 48	62	3.94	0.47	–	–	–	–

Note: ** $p < 0.05$; 1 = 18–27; 2 = 28–37; 3 = 38–47; 4 = older than 48.
Source: authors.

Table 10. ANOVA results for the personality trait levels of individuals according to education

Personality traits	Educational status	n	$\bar{X}$	SS	SD	F	p	Differences
Extraversion	high school	49	3.90	0.95	3	5.637	0.001**	1–3
	higher education	64	4.11	0.89	–	–	–	1–4
	undergraduate	117	4.37	0.76	–	–	–	–
	graduate	74	4.44	0.73	–	–	–	–
Agreeableness	high school	49	4.16	0.85	3	1.195	0.312	–
	higher education	64	4.21	0.76	–	–	–	–
	undergraduate	117	4.00	0.76	–	–	–	–
	graduate	74	4.12	0.77	–	–	–	–
Conscientiousness	high school	49	3.82	1.02	3	4.396	0.005**	1–4
	higher education	64	3.87	0.96	–	–	–	2–4
	undergraduate	117	4.11	0.91	–	–	–	–
	graduate	74	4.34	0.79	–	–	–	–
Neuroticism	high school	49	3.20	0.95	3	3.292	0.021**	1–4
	higher education	64	3.32	0.79	–	–	–	–
	undergraduate	117	3.42	0.96	–	–	–	–
	graduate	74	3.69	0.95	–	–	–	–
Openness	high school	49	3.74	0.84	3	0.732	0.534	–
	higher education	64	3.71	0.75	–	–	–	–
	undergraduate	117	3.79	0.79	–	–	–	–
	graduate	74	3.91	0.91	–	–	–	–
General Personality	high school	49	3.76	0.51	3	4.381	0.005**	1–4
	higher education	64	3.85	0.51	–	–	–	–
	undergraduate	117	3.94	0.56	–	–	–	–
	graduate	74	4.10	0.55	–	–	–	–

Note: ** $p < 0.05$; 1 = high school; 2 = higher education; 3 = undergraduate; 4 = graduate.
Source: authors.

the difference between the educational status of individuals' personality traits; the difference between levels of extraversion and education was statistically significant at the 95% confidence level ($F = 5.637$, $SD = 3$, $p = 0.001$, $p < 0.05$). Scheffe analysis was performed to determine the source of the differences. The significant difference was between high school and undergraduate or graduate based on the items "I see myself as an introvert" and "I see myself as an extravert, social person". It was determined that the extraversion levels from high school ($\bar{X} = 3.90$) were lower than those who were undergraduates ($\bar{X} = 4.37$) or graduates ($\bar{X} = 4.44$).

The difference between the levels of conscientiousness and education was statistically significant at the 95% confidence level ($F = 4.396$, $SD = 3$, $p = 0.005$, $p < 0.05$). Scheffe analysis was performed to determine the source of differences. The significant difference was between graduates and high school or higher education based on the items "I see myself as someone who tends to move slowly" and "I see myself as a person who will do a complete job". It was determined that the conscientiousness levels of individuals with a master's degree ($\bar{X} = 4.34$) were higher than those who graduated from high school ($\bar{X} = 3.82$) or had an higher education ($\bar{X} = 3.87$).

The difference between neuroticism and education levels was found to be statistically significant at the 95% confidence level ($F = 3.292$, $SD = 3$, $p = 0.021$, $p < 0.05$). Scheffe analysis was performed to determine the source of the differences. The significant difference was between graduate and high school based on the items "I see myself as a person who is comfortable and can cope with stress" and "I see myself as an easily angry person". The neuroticism levels of individuals with a master's degree ($\bar{X} = 3.69$) were higher than those who graduated from high school ($\bar{X} = 3.20$).

The difference between general personality traits and educational status was statistically significant at the 95% confidence level ($F = 4.381$, $SD = 3$, $p = 0.005$, $p < 0.05$). Scheffe analysis was performed to determine the source of the differences. A significant difference was found between graduate and high school. The general personality level of individuals with a master's degree ($\bar{X} = 4.10$) was higher than that of high school graduates ($\bar{X} = 3.76$) Accordingly, it is possible to say that there was a difference in personality traits with an increase in education. Thus, H_{3b} was supported.

According to the results of the one-way ANOVA analysis made to determine the difference between the personality traits of individuals and the time spent on travel. The result of the analysis is shown in Table 11.

The difference between neuroticism levels and time spent travelling was statistically significant at the 95% confidence level ($F = 3.210$, $SD = 4$, $p = 0.013$, $p < 0.05$). Scheffe analysis was performed to determine the source of the differences. The significant difference was between 1 night 2 days, 2 nights 3 days and more than 1 week, depending on the items "I see myself as a person who is comfortable and can cope with stress" and "I see myself as a person who gets angry easily". The neuroticism levels of individuals who stayed 1 night and 2 days ($\bar{X} = 3.17$) on their trips were

Table 11. ANOVA results for the personality traits levels of individuals by time spent travelling

Personality traits	Time spent travelling	*n*	$\bar{X}$	*SS*	*SD*	*F*	*p*	Differences
Extraversion	less than a full day	35	4.10	0.82	4	1.182	0.319	–
	1 night 2 days	44	4.11	0.90	–	–	–	–
	2 nights 3 days	56	4.35	0.69	–	–	–	–
	4–6 days	97	4.35	0.76	–	–	–	–
	more than 1 week	72	4.22	0.98	–	–	–	–
Agreeableness	less than a full day	35	3.81	0.76	4	1.669	0.157	–
	1 night 2 days	44	4.13	0.82	–	–	–	–
	2 nights 3 days	56	4.04	0.81	–	–	–	–
	4–6 days	97	4.15	0.67	–	–	–	–
	more than 1 week	72	4.19	0.86	–	–	–	–
Conscientiousness	less than a full day	35	4.02	1.02	4	1.799	0.129	–
	1 night 2 days	44	3.87	0.74	–	–	–	–
	2 nights 3 days	56	4.31	0.66	–	–	–	–
	4–6 days	97	4.12	0.98	–	–	–	–
	more than 1 week	72	3.95	1.06	–	–	–	–

Table 11 (cont.)

Personality traits	Time spent travelling	*n*	$\bar{X}$	*SS*	*SD*	*F*	*p*	Differences
Neuroticism	less than a full day	35	3.25	0.86	4	3.210	0.013**	2–3
	1 night 2 days	44	3.17	0.80	–	–	–	2–5
	2 nights 3 days	56	3.58	0.97	–	–	–	–
	4–6 days	97	3.34	0.91	–	–	–	–
	more than 1 week	72	3.68	0.98	–	–	–	–
Openness	less than a full day	35	3.32	0.69	4	4.035	0.003**	1–3
	1 night 2 days	44	3.82	0.93	–	–	–	1–4
	2 nights 3 days	56	3.97	0.76	–	–	–	–
	4–6 days	97	3.89	0.85	–	–	–	–
	more than 1 week	72	3.75	0.74	–	–	–	–
General personality	a full day or less	35	3.70	0.60	4	2.819	0.025**	1–3
	1 night 2 days	44	3.82	0.53	–	–	–	1–4
	2 nights 3 days	56	4.05	0.41	–	–	–	1–5
	4–6 days	97	3.97	0.53	–	–	–	–
	more than 1 week	72	3.96	0.61	–	–	–	–

Note: ** $p < 0.05$; 1 = a full day or less; 2 = 1 night 2 days; 3 = 2 nights 3 days; 4 = 4–6 days; 5 = more than 1 week.
Source: authors.

lower than those who stayed 2 nights and 3 days ($\bar{X} = 3.58$) and more than 1 week ($\bar{X} = 3.68$). Participants state that the neuroticism factor increases as the time they spend on their trips increases.

The difference between the levels of openness and the time spent on trips was found to be statistically significant at the 95% confidence level ($F = 4.035$, $SD = 4$, $p = 0.003$, $p < 0.05$). Scheffe analysis was performed to determine the source of the differences. A meaningful difference was determined to be between the full day or six to 2 nights 3 days and 4–6 days depending on the items "I see myself as someone with little artistic interest" and "I consider myself as a creative person". The level of openness of individuals who stayed full day or less ($\bar{X} = 3.32$) on their travels was lower than those who stayed 2 nights 3 days ($\bar{X} = 3.97$) and 4–6 days ($\bar{X} = 3.89$).

The difference between general personality traits and time spent travelling was found to be statistically significant at the 95% confidence level ($F = 2.819$, $SD = 4$, $p = 0.025$, $p < 0.05$). Scheffe analysis was performed to determine the source of the differences. A significant difference was between the time spent travelling less than a full day, 2 nights 3 days, 4–6 days and more than 1 week. General personality traits are lower than for those who visit less than a full day ($\bar{X} = 3.70$), stay 2 nights and 3 days ($\bar{X} = 4.05$), 4–6 nights ($\bar{X} = 3.97$) and more than 1 week ($\bar{X} = 3.96$). Thus, H_{4a} was supported.

According to the results of the one-way ANOVA analysis conducted to determine the difference of between the general personality traits of individuals and the countries they travelled to. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 12.

The difference in extraversion levels between the travelled country was found to be statistically significant at the 95% confidence level ($F = 2.692$, $SD = 5$, $p = 0.021$, $p < 0.05$). Scheffe analysis was performed to determine the source of the differences. A significant difference was determined to be between Türkiye and Africa depending on the items "I see myself as an introvert" and "I see myself as an extravert, social person". The extraversion levels of individuals who travel to Africa ($\bar{X} = 4.71$) were higher than those who travel within Türkiye ($\bar{X} = 4.16$).

The difference between the levels of openness and the countries visited was statistically significant at the 95% confidence level ($F = 3.24$, $SD = 5$, $p = 0.003$, $p < 0.05$). Scheffe analysis was performed to determine the source of the differences. A significant difference has been determined between Türkiye and America depending on the items "I see myself as someone with little artistic interest" and "I see myself as creative". The openness levels of individuals who travel to America ($\bar{X} = 4.54$) were higher than of those who travel to Türkiye ($\bar{X} = 3.74$).

The difference between the levels of general personality traits between the countries visited was

Table 12. ANOVA results for the personality trait levels of individuals according to travelled region

Personality traits	Travelled country	n	$\bar{X}$	SS	SD	F	p	Differences
Extraversion	Europe	116	4.44	0.65	5	2.692	0.021**	2–3
	Africa	21	4.71	0.44	–	–	–	–
	Türkiye	197	4.16	0.93	–	–	–	–
	America	26	4.69	0.47	–	–	–	–
	Asia	36	4.54	0.61	–	–	–	–
	Middle East	13	4.50	0.46	–	–	–	–
Agreeableness	Europe	116	4.04	0.83	5	0.233	0.948	–
	Africa	21	3.93	1.12	–	–	–	–
	Türkiye	197	4.08	0.77	–	–	–	–
	America	26	4.15	0.99	–	–	–	–
	Asia	36	4.03	0.86	–	–	–	–
	Middle East	13	4.27	0.39	–	–	–	–
Conscientiousness	Europe	116	4.25	0.92	5	2.037	0.073	–
	Africa	21	4.12	0.96	–	–	–	–
	Türkiye	197	4.02	0.92	–	–	–	–
	America	26	4.37	0.83	–	–	–	–
	Asia	36	4.46	0.74	–	–	–	–
	Middle East	13	4.35	0.80	–	–	–	–
Neuroticism	Europe	116	3.53	0.83	5	1.398	0.225	–
	Africa	21	4.00	0.82	–	–	–	–
	Türkiye	197	3.42	0.97	–	–	–	–
	America	26	4.15	0.89	–	–	–	–
	Asia	36	3.69	1.03	–	–	–	–
	Middle East	13	3.54	0.78	–	–	–	–
Openness	Europe	116	3.92	0.85	5	3.624	0.003**	3–4
	Africa	21	4.19	0.68	–	–	–	–
	Türkiye	197	3.74	0.79	–	–	–	–
	America	26	4.54	0.47	–	–	–	–
	Asia	36	4.21	0.69	–	–	–	–
	Middle East	13	3.96	0.75	–	–	–	–
General personality	Europe	116	4.04	0.55	5	3.001	0.012**	3–4
	Africa	21	4.19	0.35	–	–	–	–
	Türkiye	197	3.88	0.55	–	–	–	–
	America	26	4.38	0.47	–	–	–	–
	Asia	36	4.19	0.50	–	–	–	–
	Middle East	13	4.12	0.33	–	–	–	–

Note: ** $p < 0.05$; 1 = Europe; 2 = Africa; 3 = Türkiye; 4 = America; 5 = Asia; 6 = Middle East.
Source: authors.

statistically significant at the 95% confidence level ($F = 3.001$, $SD = 5$, $p = 0.012$, $p < 0.05$). Scheffe analysis was performed to determine the source of the differences and a significant difference was found between Türkiye and America. It was determined that the overall personality levels of individuals who travel to America ($\bar{X} = 4.38$) is higher than those who travel within Türkiye ($\bar{X} = 3.88$). According to the statistical results, it is concluded that there is a difference between people who travel to developed countries and those who travel to developing countries. Thus, H_{4b} was supported.

According to the results of one-way ANOVA analysis to determine the differences between the factors that affect the individual's personality traits in the choice of destination. The result of the analysis is shown in Table 13.

Table 13. ANOVA results for the personality trait levels of individuals according to the factors influencing destination choice

Personality traits	Factors influencing destination choice	*n*	$\bar{X}$	*SS*	*SD*	*F*	*p*	Differences
Extraversion	price	210	4.25	0.89	5	2.137	0.061	–
	security	114	4.25	0.83	–	–	–	–
	attractiveness	108	4.31	0.87	–	–	–	–
	advertising	16	4.53	0.83	–	–	–	–
	proximity	46	4.17	0.93	–	–	–	–
	other	6	4.50	0.55	–	–	–	–
Agreeableness	price	210	3.99	0.82	5	4.168	0.001**	1–6
	security	114	4.04	0.80	–	–	–	4–6
	attractiveness	108	4.12	0.78	–	–	–	–
	advertising	16	4.28	0.55	–	–	–	–
	proximity	46	4.16	0.72	–	–	–	–
	other	6	4.83	0.41	–	–	–	–
Conscientiousness	price	210	4.08	0.99	5	3.077	0.010**	4–5
	security	114	4.13	0.84	–	–	–	–
	attractiveness	108	4.07	0.93	–	–	–	–
	advertising	16	4.53	0.87	–	–	–	–
	proximity	46	3.87	0.95	–	–	–	–
	other	6	4.25	0.69	–	–	–	–
Neuroticism	price	210	3.44	0.93	5	2.489	0.031**	5–6
	security	114	3.57	0.89	–	–	–	–
	attractiveness	108	3.46	0.93	–	–	–	–
	advertising	16	3.34	0.98	–	–	–	–
	proximity	46	3.17	1.00	–	–	–	–
	other	6	4.17	0.26	–	–	–	–
Openness	price	210	3.77	0.82	5	0.701	0.623	–
	security	114	3.85	0.79	–	–	–	–
	attractiveness	108	3.89	0.83	–	–	–	–
	advertising	16	3.56	0.77	–	–	–	–
	proximity	46	3.85	0.93	–	–	–	–
	other	6	4.00	0.84	–	–	–	–
General personality	price	210	3.90	0.59	5	2.373	0.039**	5–6
	security	114	3.97	0.55	–	–	–	–
	attractiveness	108	3.97	0.53	–	–	–	–
	advertising	16	4.05	0.63	–	–	–	–
	proximity	46	3.85	0.55	–	–	–	–
	other	6	4.35	0.14	–	–	–	–

Note: ** $p < 0.05$; 1 = price; 2 = security; 3 = attractiveness; 4 = advertising; 5 = proximity; 6 = other.
Source: authors.

Table 14. The results of hypotheses

Hypotheses	Acceptance/rejection
H_1. There is a significant difference in the women's perception of travel constraints due to personal income	accepted
H_2. There is a significant difference in the women's perception of travel constraints due to the travelled destination (Hypothesis 2a) and the purpose of travelling (Hypothesis 2b)	accepted
H_3. There is a significant difference in the women's personality traits due to age (Hypothesis 3a) and educational level (Hypothesis 3b)	accepted
H_4. There is a significant difference in women's personality traits due to the time spent travelling (Hypothesis 4a), the region travelled (Hypothesis 4b) and the factors that affect the choice of destination (Hypothesis 4c)	accepted

Source: authors.

The difference between levels of agreeableness between the factors influencing destination choice was statistically significant at the 95% confidence level ($F = 4.168$, $SD = 5$, $p = 0.001$, $p < 0.05$). Scheffe analysis was performed to determine the source of the differences. There was significant difference between the price and advertising and other, depending on the items "I generally see myself as a reliable person" and "I see myself as someone who tends to find fault in others". Other ($\bar{X} = 4.83$) individuals had higher levels of agreeableness than those with price ($\bar{X} = 3.99$) and advertising ($\bar{X} = 4.28$).

The difference between the levels of conscientiousness among the factors influencing the choice of destination was statistically significant at the 95% confidence level ($F = 3.077$, $SD = 5$, $p = 0.010$, $p < 0.05$). Scheffe analysis was performed to determine the source of the differences. There was significant difference between advertising and proximity based on the items "I see myself as someone who tends to move slowly" and "I see myself as someone who will do a complete job". Individuals with advertising ($\bar{X} = 4.53$) had a higher level of conscientiousness than those with proximity ($\bar{X} = 3.87$).

The difference between neuroticism levels among the factors influencing the choice of destination was statistically significant at the 95% confidence level ($F = 2.489$, $SD = 5$, $p = 0.010$, $p < 0.05$). Scheffe analysis was performed to determine the source of the differences. There was significant difference between other and Proximity based on the items "I see myself as a person who is comfortable and can cope with stress" and "I see myself as someone who gets angry easily". The neuroticism levels of these ($\bar{X} = 4.17$) individuals were higher than those with proximity ($\bar{X} = 3.17$).

The difference between general personality traits and the factors influencing the choice of destination was statistically significant at the 95% confidence level ($F = 2.373$, $SD = 5$, $p = 0.010$, $p < 0.05$). Scheffe analysis was performed to determine the source of the differences. The H_{4c} hypothesis was accepted because there was a significant relationship between proximity ($\bar{X} = 3.85$) and other ($\bar{X} = 4.35$).

According to the results of the analyses, the results of the hypotheses developed are given in Table 14.

5. Discussion and conclusion

This article has arisen from the need for research to determine the relationship between some travel behaviors and the socio-demographic characteristics of travel restrictors to women's travel, and whether some travel behaviors differ according to five-factor personality traits. Our findings show that there is a significant relationship between travel barriers to women travellers and their income, destination and purpose of travel. In addition, the findings revealed that there is a positive relationship between the personality traits of women travellers and age, education level, time spent travelling, destination region and destination choice.

According to the findings obtained, with an increase in the income status of the participants, the perception of travel disability decreases, which indicates that income status is an important factor in travelling. This finding is reported by Jang et al. (2004), Li (2007), Nyaupane and Andereck (2008) and Lai, Li and Harrill (2013) in line with the results of their studies on tourists.

According to the findings, participants prefer Türkiye the most and African countries the least. In this context, it can be claimed that women travellers travel more in their own countries due to many reasons such as the cost of travel barriers, difficulties in obtaining visas, security and terrorism. For example, if the process is prolonged due to the difficulties experienced during visa procedures and the journey is delayed to another time or the plan is completely changed, the trip may be cancelled. Cesur (2014) stated in his work that travel obstacles such as fear, suspicion and security make a difference in the duration of travel, the choice of destination and the purpose of travel. In the work of Kozak, Crotts and Law (2007) and Ay and Özel (2019), women travellers are likely to change their travel plans when they encounter travel barriers. However, contrary to these results Yang, Khoo-Lattimore and Arcodia (2018) stated in their study that women travellers are aware of the travel risks and continue to travel by taking risks voluntarily.

This study has shown that participants travel to see new places and to meet new people, despite the travel obstacles they perceived. It is among the findings that participants who travel for leisure or routine paid more attention to travel obstacles. The results of the other studies cited are in parallel. As a result of the research conducted by Ay and Özel (2019) on female motorcyclists, it was revealed that women travellers were aware of the travel obstacles, but they travelled for purposes such as motorcycling, seeking freedom and escaping the routine of daily life. Kaba and Emekli (2018) stated in their study on lone women travellers that they travelled for reasons such as learning, experience and getting to know new people and cultures. In his work on women travelling alone, McArthur (1999) concluded that they travelled to explore other people and cultures. People who travelled for leisure, routine and getting to know new people emerged as a result of those who had a broad imagination, were open to learning, had a love of travel and an assertive nature. The nature and culture tourist type was at a higher level compared to the 3S type with gastronomy as a factor in the agreeableness of individuals for travel purposes.

Our study revealed that there was a significant relationship between the five-factor personality traits and age groups. We determined that agreeableness in female travellers aged 38–47 is less than those in the age group 48 and over. This result supports the result that the features of extraversion, neuroticism and openness, in the study of Lucas and Donnellan (2009) decrease with age, and agreeableness and conscientiousness increase with age.

The study findings showed that the level of extraversion for women travellers who were from high school was lower, that conscientiousness levels of graduates were higher than for high school and higher education, and the neuroticism levels of graduates were higher than those of high school. In this direction, it is possible to say that there is a difference in personality traits with an increase in education. In other words, when looking at the relationship between the educational status of the women travelling and their personality traits, it increases with the increase in education level. In this case, it is possible to say that an educated person is more conscientious about travelling. A high level of education also causes an increase in the income status of the individual. Good economic status is linked to personality traits. It enables an individual with a good income to act comfortably by avoiding travel obstacles and cost problems.

In some cases, individuals have a travel barrier due to their good education and income. Since public employees have a routine life, they cannot take time off from their jobs and have to postpone the journeys they want to realize. The factor in which public employees appear at a low level compared to other occupational groups is the factor of openness. In line with this factor, it is possible to conclude that public employees accept the standard, prefer to continue their life monotonously and are not open to experience. In line with the purpose of travelling, people discover new places, learn different cultures and get away from their environment. These goals are directly proportional to their education level. As the education level of an individual increases, there is something that can improve the person, teach them new things and open horizons.

According to the data obtained, it was revealed that the neuroticism levels of women who stayed 1 night and 2 days in their trips were lower than those who stayed 2 nights 3 days or more than 1 week. Participants state that the neuroticism factor increases as the time they spend on their trips increases. The level of openness of women travellers who stay a full day or less on their trips was lower than those who stayed 2 nights 3 days or 4–6 days. In addition, the general personality traits of women travellers were lower than those with 2 nights 3 days, 4–6 days or more than 1 week. As a result, the time spent by women travellers on their trips is related to their personality traits of neuroticism and openness. The determination of the neuroticism factor reveals that the individual has psychological problems and wants to get away from the environment she is in. The factor of openness shows that the individual prefers a new life and seeks difference.

The study results concerning extraversion revealed that participants who went to Africa were on a higher level than those who did not. In addition to the level of experience of the participants who travelled to America from Türkiye, openness was determined to be at a higher level. In line with these results, Qui, Masiero and Li (2018) stated in their study that there is a relationship between different personality traits and the final choice of the destination to be travelled to. The result is that individuals with a high extraversion rate are more fun loving, like to travel and are sociable. Concerning openness, the high rate of travel to the United States, where the individual is open to new information, results in the fact that they develop themselves in such countries and gain a different perspective on life.

According to the findings, there is a significant difference between personality traits and the factors that affect the choice of destination. For people with agreeable personality trait levels, price and proximity were higher than for other options. This situation allows us to reach the conclusion that such people are social and reliable. For people whose personality traits are conscientious, advertising is more important than proximity. This shows that people can make an appropriate and meticulous plan and reach their goals with more solid steps thanks to the advertising and videos about the region. Personality trait was found to be higher than intimacy for people with neuroticism. For this reason, proximity is not an important factor in choosing a destination region. Heung, Qu and Chu (2001) stated in their study that information sources affect the choice of destination and emphasized that word-of-mouth advertising is as important as the mass media in destination choice. Tan (2020), on the other hand, stated that tourists with agreeableness characteristics rely on TV or film information sources.

5.1. Theoretical contributions

As a result of the findings obtained from hypothesis testing and quantitative data analysis, the contribution of the study to theory is that it will constitute a basis for studies on the relationship between travel constraints, personality traits and female travellers. This study can be used in new product development projects for women travellers in the service sector. Tourism marketers can prepare tailored tour packages to attract women travellers to their destinations, such as all-inclusive package tours and special themed tours. However, to encourage these tours, effective advertising and communication strategies must be developed that emphasize the benefits and value of travelling to that destination.

5.2. Practical contributions

Neglected in tourism research; the contribution of the study to practice is to raise awareness on women-related issues, to know the problems women might encounter before they travel, to benefit from solutions and to contribute to tourism literature. The results obtained can be used by researchers in this field in different studies. For example, the relationship between the five-factor personality traits of women travellers and behavioral intentions can be examined.

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Anomalies in the 'dark side' of tourism: Resistance to popular sites in Samarinda, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The term 'destination security' is found in the customs and norms applied to prevent conflicts between tourism actors, local communities and the surrounding environment. The emergence of resistance to a destination because of its 'dark side', both those interested or actually visiting, cannot be separated from the fact that tourists are victims of violations of the law. The purpose of this study is to explore the effect of criminal acts on the numbers of tourists in Samarinda. Operationally, the core variables are divided into material effects, non-material effects and tourist volume. The data sample focuses on local, domestic and international tourists visiting popular sites in Samarinda during 2011–2021. The results of the investigation found that both material and non-material effects contributed to reducing the volume of tourists in the short term. In the long term, the presence of extortion, theft, sexual harassment and racism seems likely to reduce the volume of tourists.

KEYWORDS

tourism industry, tourist volume, material effect, non-material effect, Samarinda

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1. Introduction

According to Rittichainuwat and Chakraborty (2012) and Radović and Arabska (2016) tourism security is seen as an important attribute, essential when individuals, families or lovers are visiting certain destinations. Attention to the level of security also implies how alert the security forces at a tourist location are and if they can effectively promise to protect tourists (Feng, Hao, 2021; Ghaderi, Saboori, Khoshkam, 2016; Zou, Yu, 2022). The success of tourism is not only measured by financial revenues, but how external and internal impacts on the routine of tourists are dealt with. A large destination does not necessarily reflect a culture that always welcomes visitors, especially foreign tourists. There are different 'paradigms' in thought, religious beliefs, social hierarchies and certain traditions that often intersect. Although luxury destinations are interpreted as significant for regional and national development, there are risks that have the potential to threaten the safety of tourists (e.g. Anichiti et al., 2021; Korstanje, 2020; Terrah, Wildes, Mistry, 2020).

Indonesia has an abundant cultural heritage derived from its ancient cultures centuries ago that includes ancestral historical relics. Over the past century, it has been known as 'friendly' in the eyes of the world (Putri, 2017), but in line with the transformations of present times and because there is high demographic pressure, that friendliness has begun to fade, including in Samarinda. Recently, Ilmi et al. (2022) have concluded that a series of terrorist and anarchic acts have triggered a reaction shown in the disappointment of tourists. At the same time, this has created both material and non-material effects thereby encouraging 'image pollution' for Samarinda. Unfortunately, the government's spectacular promotion on the national and international tourism market has been tarnished by the extreme behavior of criminal groups.

Table 1 shows the level of development of tourist sites in Samarinda and a survey by Za et al. (2021) has identified the tourism industry there as experiencing a positive surge. In 2020–2021, there were six types of site that were often visited by tourists including artificial tourism (Jungle Water World, Ulin Arya House, Lerong Bay Park and Tjiu Tourism Pool); nature tourism (Green Valley Recreation Park, Tanah Merah Waterfall, Unmul Botanical Gardens and Berambai Waterfall); souvenir tours (Weaving Village); cultural tourism (Pampang Cultural Village); religious tourism (Islamic Center Samarinda); historical tourism (Samarinda Museum); and culinary tourism (Yellow Rice Village, Citra Niaga). Of the 14 sites above, the most favored by national and foreign tourists are the tourist clusters of Pampang Cultural Village, Unmul Botanical Gardens and Citra Niaga which received the highest ratings.

Variations in the level of tourist numbers in Samarinda over the last 11 years are inconsistent with the balance between local, domestic and international visitors as shown in Figure 1. Visitors from international markets have become the most prominent (the average from 2011 to 2021 was 1,118 visitors), in contrast to figures for Indonesia itself (927 domestic and 659 local). The overall average growth of domestic visitors is 26.31% compared to the average growth of local visitors at 1.43% and international visitors at 3.4%. In fact, in certain years there has been a decrease, for example in 2014, the average from local, domestic and international markets decreased dramatically by –22%, –22.27% and –11.09%. When viewed in terms of growth, the highest increase in domestic visitors was in 2017 at 190.8%, the largest for local visitors was 41.67% in 2016 and for international visitors the most striking increase was 49.17% in 2018. In 2019–2021 tourism access was blocked by the pandemic regulations which closed transportation routes, but this data collection format takes into account international tourist visits focused on those with temporary resident status in Samarinda such as workers, students and business employees, as well as from other professions.

Table 1. Ratings of 'popular sites' in Samarinda

Name	Tourism type	Rating
Jungle Water World	artificial	**
Ulin Arya House	artificial	****
Green Valley Recreation Park	natural	***
Weaving Village	souvenir	****
Pampang Cultural Village	culture	*****
Tanah Merah Waterfall	natural	**
Unmul Botanical Gardens	natural	*****
Islamic Center Samarinda	religious	***
Lerong Bay Park	artificial	*
Berambai Waterfall	natural	**
Tjiu Tourism Pool	artificial	*
Samarinda Museum	history	***
Yellow Rice Village	culinary	****
Citra Niaga	souvenir	*****

Note: site rating refers to safety level, comments and visitor interest from each level of lodging/hotel.
Source: Ratnasari et al. (2020).

A tourist is any visitor who stays < 24 hours and/or < 12 months in an area/country with intentions including religion, study, medical examination, conference/academic activity, attending meetings, sports and recreation, or simply visiting family and friends. There are criminal offences that result in material losses such as theft e.g. phones, money and various other items. Extortion is different from theft as the crime forces illegal payment under threat. Fraud can take place in the guise of offering tour guide services, falsifying lodging, visa arrangements through online/internet media scams, and manipulating financial transfers during a tour.

Non-material losses are reflected in sexual harassment, physical abuse and racism. From the example of sites in Samarinda, sexual harassment represents intimidation to tourists that makes them uncomfortable, embarrassed or threatened, while the characteristics of physical abuse result in pain, falling ill or even serious injury. Moreover, acts of racism against tourists are based on the belief that humans can be divided into separate groups based on biological characteristics called 'race'.

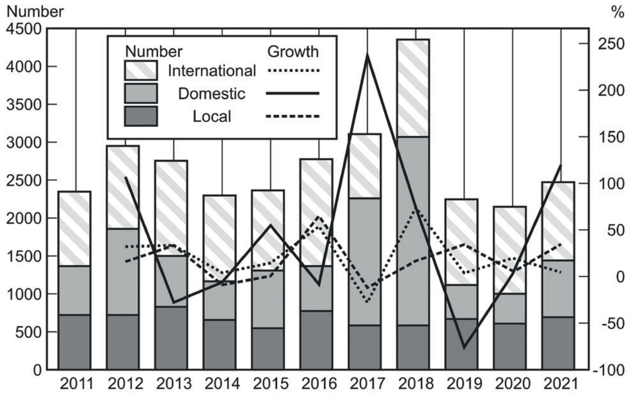

Figure 1. Trends in tourist visits to Samarinda
Source: Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) Kota Samarinda (2022)

There is a perception of a brutal and irresponsible scandal while other forms of criminal acts prevent the revival of the tourism infrastructure (Mataković, Mataković, 2019; Mawby, 2014). Thus, the urgency of this research is to analyze the factors that influence the volume of tourists visiting Samarinda. Its motivation is concerned with showing how tourists as victims of material and non-material losses, including mugging, extortion, theft, fraud, sexual harassment, physical abuse and racism, has led to resistance to visit the destination.

This article is organized into five sections. Section 1 presents the route to reach its goal; section 2 introduces a literature review related to the 'dark side' of tourism and presents hypotheses; section 3 details the research method while section 4 gives the results and discussion based on the findings. Finally, section 5 is a conclusion summarizing the main results, the practical implications, recommendations for further research and the limitations of the article.

2. Literature review and hypotheses

2.1. The 'dark side' of tourism

Altindag (2014) highlights the consequences of international tourists visiting the EU related to the crime at coastal resorts with beach attractions. The growth of tourists visiting the USA is faster than the readiness of law enforcement and although there is a high level of economic tourism in Honolulu, the level of violence correlates significantly with that in Las Vegas (Baker, Stockton, 2014). Amir, Ismail and See (2015) exposed the vulnerability of female tourists, during the day to sexual crimes and pickpocketing as the reason why they are afraid to visit some central sites, whereas as many as 99% stated they felt safe walking around Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, at night. Lisowska-Kierepka (2017) instead focuses on a specific view of developing countries and regions that have lost their tourist charm due to the introduction of 'foreigners' into local communities as an excuse for high crime rates.

Mawby (2017) asserts that tourists are victims but, relatively, they also channel crime. Mohammed and Sookram (2015) argue that very rapid tourism growth stimulates the level of business and employment, however, it has also created problems in some parts of the Caribbean. It is undeniable that there is an imbalance between prosperity and tranquility in tourism, with symptoms of complex tensions. In the long term, the expansion of tourism has had a systematic effect on income inequality in Turkey (Uzar, Eyuboglu, 2019) where in fact, tourism services are not registered and are categorized in the 'shadow economy'. Its 'elasticity' makes it difficult for tourists to be accepted (Din et al., 2016). This injustice also disturbs villagers in world heritage sites in China who have altered their interpersonal relationships, traditional values and lifestyle (Zhuang, Yao, Li, 2019).

2.2. Tourist visits

Tourism is changing with dynamic 'tourism capitalization' releasing 'cosmopolitanism', expressive freedoms of lifestyle regardless of age, social status, gender, wealth and power. In Conventional Tourism Theory, Martin and Woodside (2008) mapped the consequences, decisions, motivations and travel plans controlling visitor behavior.

Pahrudin, Chen and Liu (2021) modify the Theory of Planned Behavior where tourists' decisions to visit a destination are determined by awareness and intention (Wiweka, Arcana, 2019). The Theory of Tourism is based on two kinds of sub-system: the first is an internal one that brings closer human interaction during travel to tourism-producing areas thus triggering 'tourism demand'; the second is external bound by geography, demography, politics, economics, technology, sociocultural conditions, climate, safe accommodation and international trade. Franklin and Crang (2001) and Saleh (2021) compare various features explored by Travel Theory in tourist behavior (loyalty, brand satisfaction and attachment), to destination competence.

2.3. Hypotheses

Based on the above, the decision hypothesis is divided into two parts: the null hypothesis (H_0) and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) which are as follows:

H_0: There is no relationship between mugging, extortion, theft, fraud, sexual harassment, physical abuse and racism to tourist volume.

H_a: There is a relationship between mugging, extortion, theft, fraud, sexual harassment, physical abuse and racism to tourist volume.

3. Methods

3.1. Parameters

The research focuses on 'popular sites' in Samarinda. The database has been collected from government publications and secondary sources, selected for the period 2011–2021. A time series for data has been organized, processed and arranged into one unit using standard algorithms. Data is displayed in Table 2.

The total data sample is 88 (n = 88). The dependent variable, TV, is combined from local tourists, national/domestic tourists and foreign/international tourists. The independent variables, material effects (ROB, EXT, THF and FRD) are nominally converted from IDR to USD while non-material effects (SH, PA and RCS) are examined on a case-by-case basis.

3.2. Analysis procedure

The interpretation of the data was analyzed using a comparative regression technique. The principled regression instrument on the variation of a trend from year to year, which adopts the basic econometric equation function reads:

$$\hat{y} = \beta_0 + \beta_t + \ldots + \mu$$

Next, a model is built matching the two scenarios in the hypothesis examining the response between material and non-material effects on tourist volume, so that it is articulated as follows:

$$lnTV_{1t} = \beta_0 + \delta_1 + ln\beta_1 ROB_t + ln\beta_2 EXT_t + ln\beta_3 THF_t + + ln\beta_4 FRD_t + \mu_{1t}$$

$$lnTV_{2t} = \beta_0 + \delta 7 + ln\beta_5 SH_t + ln\beta_6 PA_t + ln\beta_7 RCS_t + \mu_{2t}$$

Symbol notation: $\hat{y}$ (estimated time series); *ln* (natural logarithm); t (time set); *1, …, 2* (model); β_0 (short-term coefficient); δ (small difference / derivative); $\beta_1, \ldots, \beta_7$ (long-term coefficient) and μ (precision).

4. Results and discussion

Table 3 covers the descriptive statistics of the variables. The impressive record for the FRD variable was shown through a standard deviation score (*SD*) of 4,425,141.9 and the highest mean of 4,586,603.36; while TV achieved the greatest skewness and kurtosis scores: 1.999

Table 2. Variable format

Status	Variable	Label	Measurement	Literature
Dependent	tourist volume	TV	traveling for pleasure to a destination	Stephenson (2021)
Independent	mugging	ROB	a criminal act in which the thief takes tourists' property openly through rude and intimidating actions at their lodgings	Moore, Berno (1995), Palanca-Tan et al. (2015)
	extortion	EXT	an act by a particular individual or group for their own benefit, but puts pressure on and harms tourists	Gurtner (2016)
	theft	THF	stealing property from tourists carried out at the destination	Dimanche, Lepetic (1999), Pratt (2022), Vakhitova et al. (2022)
	fraud	FRD	a ruse or a series of lies, so that tourists feel deceived by what seems valid, either directly or indirectly	Jawabreh et al. (2018), Pearce (2011)
	sexual harassment	SH	incidental sexual acts, causing offence, discomfort or physical and mental danger to tourists	Ajagunna (2006), Chiu, Lin (2011), Norio (2021), Wen, Li (2015)
	physical abuse	PA	physical violence against a traveler that results in pain, illness or serious injury	Eger (2021), Devine, Ojeda (2017)
	racism	RCS	doctrine of equality based on skin color, race, ethnicity and biological origins that limit or violate the rights and freedoms of tourists	Li et al. (2020)

Source: authors.

and 4.706. Among other variables, RCS achieved the lowest *SD*, mean, and kurtosis scores: 102.08, 358.54, and −0.543. The lowest skewness figure is for ROB at −0.870.

Table 3. Summary of descriptive statistics

Variables	*SD*	Mean	Skewness	Kurtosis
ROB	152,313.52	375,125.91	−0.870	−0.376
EXT	14,547.41	41,926.45	−0.580	−0.382
THF	5,637.92	7,463	0.770	0.030
FRD	4,425,141.9	4,586,603.36	1.552	2.138
SH	360.02	636.45	0.981	0.383
PA	231.99	216.63	1.181	−0.198
RCS	102.08	358.54	0.930	−0.543
TV	625.81	2,703.81	1.999	4.706

Source: authors.

Table 4 tracks the correlation performance of the material effect variables. In fact, at 1% probability ($p < 0.01$), ROB is negatively significantly correlated with EXT (−0.829) and THF (−0.951). Another negatively significant correlation occurs between EXT (−0.913) and THF (−0.779) on FRD. Even so, there was a positively significant correlation at 5% probability ($p < 0.05$) in the relationship of EXT with THF (0.846).

Table 4. Estimation of correlation (model 1)

Variables	ROB	EXT	THF	FRD	TV
ROB	1	-0.829^{**} (0.002)	-0.951^{**} (0.000)	0.743^{*} (0.009)	0.163 (0.633)
EXT	-0.829^{**} (0.002)	1	0.846^{**} (0.001)	-0.913^{**} (0.000)	0.150 (0.659)
THF	-0.951^{**} (0.000)	0.846^{**} (0.001)	1	-0.779^{**} (0.005)	−0.157 (0.645)
FRD	0.743^{*} (0.009)	-0.913^{**} (0.000)	-0.779^{**} (0.005)	1	−0.063 (0.855)
TV	0.163 (0.633)	0.150 (0.659)	−0.157 (0.645)	−0.063 (0.855)	1

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.
Source: authors.

Table 5 examines the correlation performance for model 2. At its peak, at 1% probability ($p < 0.01$), SH appears to be negatively significantly correlated with RCS (−0.808), but opposite to the positively significant correlation with PA (0.971). In fact, at 5% probability ($p < 0.05$), the relationship between PA and RCS is negatively significant (−0.710).

Table 5. Estimation of correlation (model 2)

Variables	SH	PA	RCS	TV
SH	1	0.971^{**} (0.000)	-0.808^{**} (0.003)	−0.049 (0.887)
PA	0.971^{**} (0.000)	1	-0.710^{*} (0.014)	−0.041 (0.904)
RCS	-0.808^{**} (0.003)	-0.710^{*} (0.014)	1	−0.154 (0.652)
TV	−0.049 (0.887)	−0.041 (0.904)	−0.154 (0.652)	1

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.
Source: authors.

Table 6 shows the relationship between material effects and TV. Consistently, there is a negatively significant indication of all variables in the partial test towards TV ($p = 0.048 < 0.05$). EXT and THF also have a significant negative effect on TV because $p = 0.003 < 0.1$ and $p = 0.045 < 0.05$.

Table 6. Hypothesis test statistic (partial test) in model 1

From	To	β	*t*	*p*
Constant	–	−535.542	−0.152	0.048^{*}
ROB	TV	0.497	0.459	0.662
EXT	TV	−1.455	−1.506	0.003^{**}
THF	TV	−0.550	−0.485	0.045^{*}
FRD	TV	0.469	0.576	0.585

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.
Source: authors.

Table 7 shows the variables with non-material effects and TV, where the constant scores are shown to have a negatively significant effect ($p = 0.007 < 0.1$). There are negatively significant effects of SH ($p = 0.040 < 0.05$) and RCS ($p = 0.028 < 0.05$) on TV. The details of the feasibility test for the model are contained in Figure 2 according to the existing variables. In the interval 0.4–0.59, the coefficients for model 1 and model 2 show a 'moderate' level of determination. The coefficient R^2 suggests that 59.4% of the factors in model 1 lower TV, while in model 2, it is 40.3%.

Table 7. Hypothesis test statistic (partial test) in model 2

From	To	β	*t*	*p*
Constant	–	−5,836.619	−2.139	0.007^{**}
SH	TV	−1.839	−0.897	0.040^{*}
PA	TV	1.169	0.682	0.517

Table 7 (cont.)

From	To	β	*t*	*p*
RCS	TV	–0.810	–1.166	0.028*

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.
Source: authors.

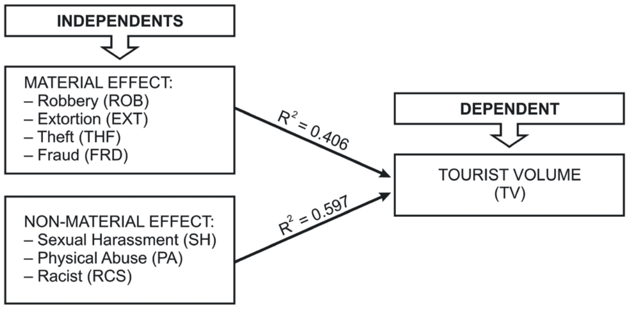

Figure 2. R^2 between material effects and non-material effects
Source: authors

The literature that highlights and provides critical insight into security aspects concerning tourist volume vulnerability are demonstrated in Fourie, Rosselló-Nadal and Santana-Gallego (2019), Hamarneh and Jeřábek (2018), Kurež and Prevolšek (2015), Mawby et al. (2016) and Qeidari et al. (2021). These show that international tourists can distinguish security threats such as corruption, terrorism and criminality from instability in the host country. The failure or success of a tourist destination depends on its flexibility to provide a secure environment, for example in the countries of the former Yugoslavia. Contemporary politics and modern security also have implications for elements of tourism destinations. In the context of law and order in Brașov, Romania, tourism is often called a 'crime generator' and this continues to be a dilemma. In the case of Torqabeh and Shandiz County (Iran), the role of security has boosted the development of tourist villages.

Allen (1999) devises a hierarchy of specific criminal offences that are often directed at tourists and which gain media attention. In the New South Wales, Australia, example this is linked to murder, serious assault and rape. Glensor and Peak (2004) argue that crimes against tourists in the USA are responded to by tourism law guidelines addressing the problems of terrorism, vacation home robbery, the sale of stolen property, pickpocketing and prostitution. Although many events are resolved immediately, the end result is a significant lack of trust from visitors in some destinations. The literature on crime in tourism continues (e.g. Biagi, Brandano, Detotto, 2012; Corona, 2018; Hua, Li, Zhang, 2020; Ke, O'Brien, Heydari, 2021) and there is a long-running debate about how to monitor and eliminate its opportunities. Crime totals have been affected by the arrival of tourist groups in areas of Italy. Findings from 31 states in Mexico show that international tourists are intimidated by death threats.

5. Conclusion, suggestions and future research directions

The priority of this research has been to investigate the impact of material and non-material losses on tourists who want to or who are visiting 'popular sites' in Samarinda. These include mugging, extortion, theft, fraud, sexual harassment, physical abuse and racism and they are divided into two models. As a result, it is known that the non-material effect is more dominant in harming the volume of tourists. The following are the main conclusions:

1. Material effects reduce the volume of tourists. From the 'partial' test, the more extortion, theft, sexual harassment and racist behavior increase, the more the volume of tourists decreases.
2. During the observation period, despite the increase in mugging, fraud and physical abuse, tourist volume actually increased.
3. The fear and anxiety of tourists must be reduced through 'optimal control'. We recommend suggestions to stakeholders in the tourism industry to channel more ideal, innovative and cooperative access to facilities related to health, security and information.
4. To restore the 'destination image' of Samarinda and provide human help for tourists as victims who have suffered violence, the firmness of law enforcement management should be tested through intervention, intensive coordination, regulation tightening and anticipating crimes that will hinder tourism sustainability.
5. The research results have pioneered an academic idea different to previous publications. The key is that the success of a destination is not only focused on its sustainability, but also the preventive response to reduce and combat the potential for all criminal acts. The conclusions of this article are valuable initiatives for other locations with high crime rates.

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Crisis-led transformation or no transformation at all? A multifaceted inquiry towards destination recovery

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ABSTRACT

Though there has been an upward rise in the number of publications on COVID-19, tourism and hospitality, researchers have turned a blind eye towards conducting a multifaceted stakeholder assessment of its impact on a given destination and the possible effects of recent developments on the destination's recovery. To address the latent gap, this study first attempts to assess the impact of COVID-19 on various aspects of a destination's businesses, workforce and the local community. Taking into consideration the recent pharmaceutical developments and ease in travel restrictions, it then explores the effects of such an intervention on the destinations' recovery process. 142 valid questionnaires were collected from employees of travel agents, tour operators, transport operators and hotels in the northern part of India. Subsequently, PLS-SEM (partial least squares structural equation modeling) was applied using SmartPLS to test the proposed hypotheses. Through two individual studies in September 2020 and November 2021 i.e. at different stages of the pandemic, this study not only offers insights into the current status of destination recovery but also tests the validity and applicability of recent publications, their proposed recommendations and future practices. Recovery at a destination was found to be a result of the recovery of its businesses, workforce and community. These factors also had positive and negative impacts on each other. The article further suggests the low transformational ability of the pandemic in the context of tourism and hospitality. It is amongst the first few studies to have carried out a temporal assessment of stakeholders for an investigation into the pandemic's impact on destinations in addition to their recovery.

KEYWORDS

destination recovery, COVID-19, crisis, transformation, stakeholders

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1. Introduction

While numerous reports (Gopalakrishnan, Peters, Vanzetti, 2020; Vanzetti, Peters, 2021) and studies (Abbas et al., 2021; Foo et al., 2021; Jaipuria, Parida, Ray, 2021; Škare, Soriano, Porada-Rachoń, 2021) have reflected upon the economic impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry, they have primarily taken a bird's eye view (overall and cursory) without a real-time assessment of the businesses, workforce and communities contributing to a destination's success. While it is logical that an understanding of economic disruption would reveal the magnitude of the impact on the industry and a given destination, it is only through a multifaceted study that we can understand the profound nature of disruption with an emphasis on the stakeholders' approach in dealing with it (Chong, Io, 2021). In other words, it is the translation of numbers that would help us understand all that has changed or remained for tourism businesses, the workforce, communities and destinations. In their critical commentary on the impact of crises on tourism, Hall, Scott and Gössling (2020) cast doubt upon the pandemic's ability to transform the tourism system by reflecting upon past trends of crisis-led transformations. On the other hand, several researchers have distinguished this crisis and have predicted a complete evolution of the tourism and hospitality sectors (Brouder, 2020; Gani, Singh, Najar, 2021; Haywood, 2020; Ioannides, Gyimóthy, 2020; Sharma, Thomas, Paul, 2021). What warrants further research on stakeholders' behavioral, emotional, psychological and ideological reactions is the fact that "the nature and degree of crises-led transformations depend on whether and how these stakeholders are affected by, respond to, recover and reflect on crises" (Sigala, 2020, p. 313). A complete shutdown of the tourism industry in the early stages of the pandemic, the recent pharmaceutical interventions (vaccines etc.) and easing of travel restrictions call for a comprehensive assessment of the current state of destinations to understand what lies ahead for the industry as a whole. More specifically, this study attempts to empirically test a path to destination recovery (adverse effects) based on the recovery (adverse effects) of its businesses, workforce and community. It also attempts to encapsulate the many aspects of stakeholders' well-being (economic, social, emotional and psychological). Such an investigation becomes even more necessary in developing countries where the quality of service is often questioned (Malhotra et al., 2004) and unorganized aspects of the service sector are apparent.

2. Literature review

2.1. Businesses and the tourism destination landscape

Businessmen (Hall, 2005) and "entrepreneurs act as key 'tourism influencers' that are highly influential at given points in time, inherently dynamic, capable of creating and supporting culture for tourism, and of having long-lasting effects on shaping the fortunes of a destination over time" (Ryan, Mottiar, Quinn, 2012, p. 119). Before such an inference was made in the context of small firms and entrepreneurs (Mottiar, Tucker, 2007), Britton (1991), through the exemplar of a hotel, demonstrated how the construction of such an establishment signaled confidence in the chosen location and acted as a trigger for further development at the destination in question. Research has shown that small, medium and large firms epitomize the tourism sector (Thomas, Shaw, Page, 2011) and play a key role in employment generation (Wanhill, 2000), destination development, competitiveness (Johns, Mattsson, 2005; Manhas et al., 2021), and the creation of social benefits (Kokkranikal, Morrison, 2002). In an attempt to better understand the functioning of businesses in the context of destinations, Thomas, Shaw and Page (2011) reflect upon the multifarious role and significance of networking and adopting certain practices for development. Following suit, Ryan, Mottiar and Quinn (2012) postulate that the influence of entrepreneurs not only goes beyond infrastructural development and marketing but also prompts large businesses to act and depend on small businesses for various aspects of the tourism product. At the most elementary level, tourism and hospitality businesses play a crucial role in the economic prosperity of a destination (Kozak, Rimmington, 1998). Given the low barriers to entry in the tourism and hospitality sector, a constant supply of new businesses adds an element of dynamism to the industry (Gavron et al., 1998). Based on the findings of Gavron et al. (1998), Chell and Pittaway (1998) and Kozak and Rimmington (1998) postulate that small business proprietors in the tourism and hospitality sector may not always be motivated to improve or expand a business that is already yielding profits.

2.2. Workforce and the tourism destination landscape

Destinations "seeking to develop quality tourism will strive to provide an overall product that combines high-quality facilities, amenities, infrastructure and service with cultural or educational experiences likely to attract the 'quality' tourist" (Sharpley, Forster, 2003, p. 688). However, the service aspect of a destination depends on its extant businesses. Given the intangible and heterogenous nature of the tourism industry, employee ability is often the first line of service-judgement for consumers (Tajeddini, 2010). In this context, the translation of an organization's strategy into results depends upon its employees' actions, as they themselves are the service (Cadwallader et al., 2010). O'Cass and Sok (2015), in their study, further reflect upon the need for tourism service providers to demonstrate their ability to translate strategy into results by proposing a comprehensive model for value creation. Given the orientation and dependence of the tourism and hospitality sectors on service delivery, it becomes imperative for firms to uphold a certain standard in their offerings to consistently attract consumers. Sharpley and Forster (2003, p. 688) propound that "the success of any quality initiative depends upon the willingness and ability of staff to respond and adapt to demands for increased quality in the delivery of services". As such, the workforce's attitude, behavior and motivation is a fundamental aspect of quality management in tourism (Witt, Muhlemann, 1994). Training plays a significant role in ensuring the success of culture change and employee commitment. Interpersonal skills and personal judgments are particularly of great relevance to service providers in this context (Witt, Muhlemann, 1994). In terms of motivation, Sharpley and Forster (2003) found that most tourism and hospitality sector employees are driven by the money being offered and not by their commitment to the service. This was followed by the sense of being valued at the establishment, i.e., the management culture. Businesses with the lowest staff turnover were organizations where customers experienced the most superior service (Hope, Muhlemann, 1998). At the same time, these were also the establishments where implementing an inclusive culture was the most challenging task. In other words, high staff turnover acts as a barrier to the development and existence of a quality service culture amongst employees (Sharpley, Forster, 2003). Through the notion of adverse effects on the workforce and their recovery (encompassing the above aspects), this study investigates its impact on tourism destinations.

2.3. Community and the tourism destination landscape

By bringing tourists with money to spend on local goods and services, tourism links communities to the global economic system (Roe, Urquhart, 2004). "The living local culture, the fabric of the lives of local communities, constitutes a significant part of the product sought by domestic and international tourists" (Goodwin, 2002, p. 339). While tourists are sold a limited experience wrapped up in the tangible aspects of a destination's geography, it is the local people who complete the sought-after product (experience) through their everyday lives in exchange for money. For instance, in locals' words, Chen, Huan and Bao (2016) reflect on how tourists show interest in renting out the boats of fishermen in Yalong Bay, China. As such, understanding their attitude is key to tourism development at any given destination (Gursoy, Chi, Dyer, 2010). Studies (Bao, Sun, 2006; Chen, Huang, Bao, 2016; Li, 2006) have found economic benefits to be a dominant factor guiding local community's behavior. As asserted by Chen, Huang and Bao (2016, p. 13), "tourism has been the major or even the only income source for the local community" in destinations around the world. Economic gains are what locals can realistically expect from their direct or indirect participation in tourism development (Chen, Huang, Bao, 2016). However, this does not mean that they are unaware of tourism's adverse effects on a destination (Goodwin, 2002). In reality, residents of a destination were found to have positive perceptions of tourism's economic impact, if most of the services were offered and controlled by them (Nejati, Mohamed, Omar, 2014). "Local communities seek to attract tourist dollars by providing additional excursion opportunities (visits to caves and guided walks often to viewpoints including a wildlife viewing opportunity or canoeing), handicraft sales and homestays, camping and picnic sites" (Goodwin, 2002, p. 341). The provision of these services often leads to the locals' entry into tourism businesses like guesthouses, travel agencies, restaurants (Lacher, Nepal, 2010), etc. In tourism-dependent destinations, locals show greater interest in providing services that complement tourist experiences (cooking meals for tourists at their homes, music and dance performances). However, such income is highly seasonal depending upon the destination in question (Goodwin, 2002; Luo, Bao, 2019). Regarding employment, people from the local community are often found at low occupational positions which in some way offers them job security (Goodwin, 2002). Furthermore, tourism provides ample opportunities for women in labor-intensive small-scale businesses (Luo, Bao, 2019). Local residents also act as critical suppliers for businesses at tourist destinations. Goodwin (2002) found that hotels depend on the local community for milk, dairy products, vegetables and the employment of domestics in his study at Bharatpur, India. This not only indicates the reliance of locals on tourism but also the dependence of businesses on the local community.

2.4. Hypothesis development and conceptual framework

Ever since the Coronavirus outbreak, the number of publications pertaining to the pandemic and tourism increased with the growing restrictions on travel. For the most part, these publications were conceptual and prognostic in nature. As mentioned earlier, while a few researchers cast doubt upon the transformation of the tourism industry post COVID-19, many predicted changes in tourism as a result of the pandemic. Table 1 represents the works that envisioned transformation for tourism suppliers post COVID-19. This empirical study attempts to validate these predictions through primary data collected in a country (India) that at one point had the greatest number of COVID-19 cases (Phartiyal, Pal, 2021) and subsequently, the greatest number of vaccine doses (Das, 2021). India was considered an ideal location for this study as it is a major hub for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and also houses the second largest labour force in the world (World Bank, n.d.). With the COVID-19 pandemic, India started seeing a decline in tourist arrivals starting February 2020 with the trend reaching its peak on the declaration of nationwide lockdowns in March 2020. This was followed by a second wave of infections between April and May 2021, when the tourism industry was hoping for a revival. The National Council of Applied Economic Research (2021) in India reported an overall economic loss of INR 11.6 trillion during the course of the pandemic.

Based on the above literature review, the inter-relationships discussed (businesses, workforce and community with that of the tourism landscape) and the unfolding of events during the pandemic (lockdowns, vaccines etc.), the following assumptions were formed along with a conceptual framework (Figure 1). Split in two stages, the conceptual framework adopts items through deductive and inductive reasoning (MacCarthy, 2021). While exploring the effects and recovery of stakeholders in the tourism supply chain, this study also explores their inter-relation with destination effects and recovery.

H_1: The effects of COVID-19 on businesses (business adverse effects) have negatively affected the tourist destination (destination adverse effect).

H_2: The effects of COVID-19 on the workforce (workforce adverse effects) have negatively affected the tourist destination (destination adverse effect).

H_3: The effects of COVID-19 on the community (community adverse effects) have negatively affected the tourist destination (destination adverse effect).

H_4: The effects of COVID-19 on businesses (business adverse effects) have negatively affected the workforce of the tourism and hospitality industry (workforce adverse effects).

H_5: The effects of COVID-19 on businesses (business adverse effects) have negatively affected the community (community adverse effects).

H_6: The effects of COVID-19 on the workforce (workforce adverse effects) have negatively affected the community (community adverse effects).

H_7: The effects of pharmaceutical intervention and ease in travel restrictions on businesses (business recovery) have positively affected destination recovery.

H_8: The effects of pharmaceutical intervention and ease in travel restrictions on the workforce (workforce recovery) have positively affected destination recovery.

H_9: The effects of pharmaceutical intervention and ease in travel restrictions on the community (community recovery) have positively affected destination recovery.

H_{10}: The effects of pharmaceutical intervention and ease in travel restrictions on businesses (business recovery) have positively affected workforce recovery.

H_{11}: The effects of pharmaceutical intervention and ease in travel restrictions on the workforce (workforce recovery) have positively affected community recovery.

H_{12}: The effects of pharmaceutical intervention and ease in travel restrictions on businesses (business recovery) have positively affected community recovery.

Table 1. Research predicting pandemic-led transformations for tourism suppliers

Authors	Transformation envisioned post COVID-19 (reset/restart)
Sigala (2020)	– crowd management and social distancing practices – redesign of tourism experiences – re-engineering business operations – contact free business models – rethink of business ecosystems and partnerships – new cleaning and hygiene protocols: protective equipment, masks, sanitizers, disinfecting wipes
Lew et al. (2020)	– ‘Alternate Realities’ (including new business models, government policy)
Sharma, Thomas, Paul (2021)	– new business models – proximity tourism – hostility from locals (need for sustainable practices) – reduced carbon footprints
Kuščer, Eichelberger, Peters (2021)	– innovation – modified products and quality improvement – employee empowerment (training and education) – digitalization
Orîndaru et al. (2021)	– new/modified products (innovation and empathy) – safety assurances – local tourism – cheaper T&T products – reinventing communication systems – appreciate and build customer’s loyalty – comply with health standards

Source: authors.

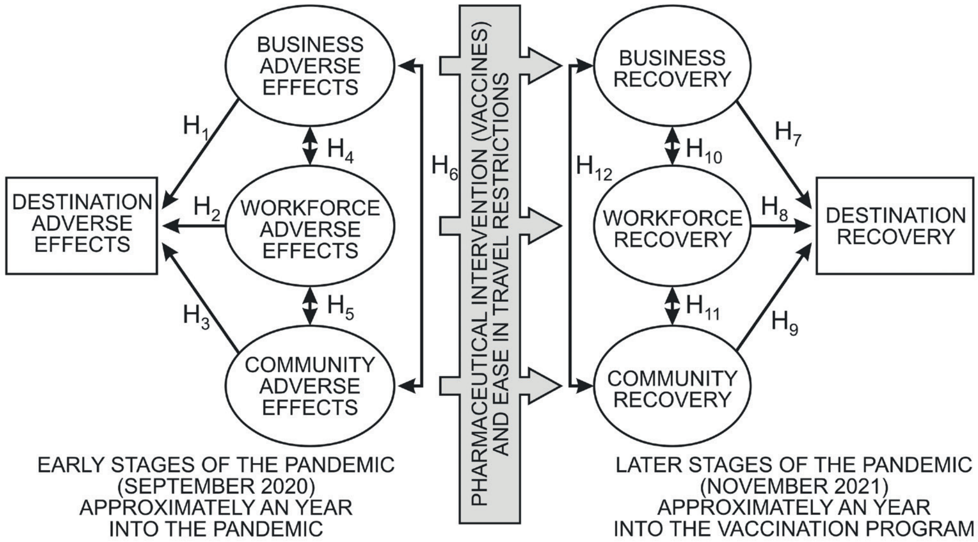

Figure 1. Conceptual framework
Source: authors

3. Methodology

3.1. Data collection and analysis

Given the objectives and the proposed relationship amongst factors in the hypotheses of this study, partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was found to be the most suitable analytical tool (Peng, Xiao, 2018). To analyze the impact of COVID-19 and vaccinations on businesses, workforce, community and subsequently a destination, it was imperative to choose places that were tourism-dependent (Dogra, Karri, 2021) along with a sample population that could well be in a position to reflect on all the factors taken into consideration. For this purpose, employees of inbound tour operators, travel agents, transport operators and hotels were consulted across various destinations in India. These were essentially responses from the northern part of the country (a largely tourism-dependent region). As illustrated in the conceptual framework, this study was conducted in two phases, i.e. the early stages of the pandemic and the later stages of the pandemic. The first phase was carried out in September 2020, wherein a google form (questionnaire 1) was developed (see Table 2) and shared amongst participants through e-mail and WhatsApp groups. In that, 147 valid responses were received from employees of different tourism businesses. Items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Data was subsequently analyzed for the validation of hypotheses pertinent to that phase. For the second phase of this study, data was collected in a distinct google form (questionnaire 2, see Table 3) from the same respondents (from phase one) through e-mail and WhatsApp groups in November 2021.

Table 2. Items designed to measure factors in the early stages of the pandemic

Factors	Code	Items
Business adverse effects	BAE1	COVID-19 has caused a reduction in the number of customers to our firm
	BAE2	COVID-19 has led to an increased cost of operating a business, like buying technology or following new standards of procedures, etc.
	BAE3	COVID-19 has caused an increase in preventive measures against a probable crisis in our firm
	BAE4	COVID-19 has caused a reduction in revenues for our firm
	BAE5	COVID-19 has caused rapid cancellations of bookings at our firm
	BAE6	COVID-19 has caused the non-availability of raw materials and production activities
	BAE7	COVID-19 has caused a change in the work culture of our firm
	BAE8	COVID-19 has led to a reduction in costs of our products
	BAE9	COVID-19 has forced our firm to move into a new field of operation
	BAE10	COVID-19 has led to a loss of skilled workforce at our firm
	BAE11	COVID-19 has affected our firm's service quality

Table 2 (cont.)

Factors	Code	Items
Workforce adverse effects	WAE1	COVID-19 has caused stress to be built up among our employees
	WAE2	COVID-19 has caused significant layoffs and furloughs for our employees
	WAE3	COVID-19 has caused a reduction in training resources for our employees
	WAE4	COVID-19 has caused wage/salary cuts for our employees
	WAE5	COVID-19 has caused a reduction in the motivation of our employees due to fears that they might be left unemployed in this crisis
Community adverse effects	CAE1	COVID-19 has caused the threat of labor shortage/supply of migrant workers
	CAE2	COVID-19 has affected the usage and purchase of locally produced goods and services associated with our firm
	CAE3	COVID-19 has affected the livelihood of locals associated with our firm
	CAE4	COVID-19 has affected tourism and hotel associated community businesses
	CAE5	COVID-19 has affected collaboration with the firm's pre-pandemic contacts due to business diversification/shutdown etc.
	CAE6	COVID-19 has instilled a hostile attitude amongst locals towards tourists
Destination adverse effects	DAE1	COVID-19 has affected our destination's tourism and hospitality industry in a negative manner
	DAE2	COVID-19 has resulted in the loss of customers to the destination's tourism and hospitality industry
	DAE3	COVID-19 has affected the overall revenue contribution of tourism and hospitality to our destination of operation
	DAE4	COVID-19 has caused social disruption in our destination of operation
	DAE5	COVID-19 has affected the growth of our destination in terms of tourism
	DAE6	COVID-19 and its outbreak has negatively affected our destination's image
	DAE7	COVID-19 reduced the pollution levels (or other environmental effects) at our destination

Source: authors.

Table 3. Items designed to measure factors in the later stages of the pandemic

Factors	Code	Items
Business recovery	BR1	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have improved the revenue of our firm compared to that of last year
	BR2	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have resulted in an improvement in the number of stays/trips/tours
	BR3	Vaccination has caused a reduction in the preventive measures against probable crises at our firm
	BR4	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have increased the number of bookings
	BR5	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reduced the cost of operating business like getting rid of new standard procedures that were in place when vaccines were not available etc.
	BR6	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have allowed the resumption of raw materials and production activities
	BR7	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have helped us return to our earlier business model that was much efficient and cost-effective compared to the model our hotel adopted when vaccines were not available
	BR8	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have resumed bookings for events, conferences, weddings, etc.
	BR9	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to the return of pre-pandemic tariffs

Factors	Code	Items
	BR10	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to the removal of our firm's self-imposed restrictions like limited intake of bookings etc.
	BR11	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have negated/reversed the need for business innovation adopted in face of the pandemic
	BR12	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have brought back our pre-pandemic plans of expansion
Workforce recovery	WR1	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have relieved stress built among employees of our firm
	WR2	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have resulted in reinstating employees who were laid off or furloughed
	WR3	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have resulted in the recruitment of new employees and interns
	WR4	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reversed salary cuts for employees and workers that were made last year as a result of the pandemic
	WR5	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have eased employees' mental stress regarding employment, job security, salary, etc.
	WR6	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reduced concerns about employees' exposure to the disease
	WR7	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to employees resuming work in a pre-pandemic fashion
Community recovery	CR1	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reversed the effects of COVID-19 on the livelihood of locals associated with our firm
	CR2	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to a resumption in purchases of locally purchased goods and services that might be economically or environmentally friendly
	CR3	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reversed the effects of COVID-19 on firm associated community businesses
	CR4	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have removed the threat of labor shortages/supply of migrant workers
	CR5	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to collaboration with our hotel's pre-pandemic local contacts
	CR6	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have brought back vendors and others who contributed to our customer's experience
	CR7	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reinstated feelings of friendliness in locals towards tourists
Destination recovery	DR1	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have negated/reduced the negative effects of COVID-19 on our destination's tourism and hospitality industry
	DR2	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have improved sales within the tourism and hospitality sector of our destination
	DR3	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have put the growth of our destination with regards to tourism back on track
	DR4	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have settled the disruption caused by COVID-19 at our destination
	DR5	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to the resumption of services that were halted
	DR6	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have improved the profitability of the hotel industry
	DR7	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have corrected the affected rate of revenue contribution from the tourism and hospitality sectors to our destination of operation
	DR8	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to the return of pre-pandemic pollution levels (or other environmental effects) at our destination

Source: authors.

4. Results and findings

Table 4 showcases the demographic profile of the respondents consulted for this study. The sample included a broad mix of employees at different occupational levels from different types of firms and contracts.

This further helped in effectively capturing the transformational ability of COVID-19 in the context of tourism and hospitality.

Table 4. Demographic profile of the respondents

Demographic variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	male	82	55.8
	female	65	44.2
Age	20–29 years	25	17.0
	30–39 years	75	51.0
	40–49 years	26	17.7
	50 above	21	14.3
Current position/level	top level senior manger	33	22.4
	mid-level manager	68	46.3
	supervisory level	29	19.7
	other	17	11.6
Status of employees	on roll of the chain or company	33	22.4
	off roll	70	47.6
	management contract	25	17.0
	other	19	12.9
Work experience	less than three years	38	25.9
	4–7 years	43	29.3
	8–11 years	38	25.9
	more than 11	28	19.0
Type of firm	travel agent	35	23.8
	tour operator	27	18.4
	hotel	55	37.4
	transport operator	30	20.4

Source: authors.

4.1. Factor analysis results

Factor analysis was done on 22 items pertaining to the early stages of the pandemic. Principal components analysis and varimax rotation (vertical rotation) were then used to determine the factor structure and obtain significant interpretable factors. Only the data with an eigenvalue higher than one and a factor loading higher than 0.50 were considered (Girden, 2001). Among the 22 independent variables, three were deleted because of the cross-loadings viz. BAE9, BAE 11 and CAE6. The values of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin were 0.890, and the Bartlett's test of Sphericity (chi-square = 1577.585; *df* = 171; *significance* = 000) indicates the data's adequacy for factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974). The extracted factors accounted for 66.37% of the variance.

Similarly, factor analysis was conducted on 26 items pertaining to the later stages of the pandemic. DR8 was the only item to be eliminated, given its low communality value (below 0.50). The remaining items were extracted into four factors. The value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin was 0.867, and the Bartlett's test of Sphericity (chi-square = 1234.57; *df* = 136; *significance* = 000) indicates the data's adequacy for factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974). The extracted factors accounted for 77.42% of the variance. The results of factor analysis are shown in the table 5.

Table 5. Results of factor analysis

Business adverse effects	Loadings	AVE	Mean	*SD*
COVID-19 has caused a reduction in the number of customers to our firm (BAE1)	0.768	**28.94%**	4.16	1.497
COVID-19 has led to an increased cost of operating business, like buying technology or following new standards of procedures, etc. (BAE2)	0.726		4.13	1.420
COVID-19 has caused an increase in preventive measures against a probable crisis in our firm (BAE3)	0.738		4.04	1.587
COVID-19 has caused a reduction in revenues of our firm (BAE4)	0.747		4.11	1.486
COVID-19 has caused rapid cancellations of bookings at our firm (BAE5)	0.825		4.22	1.451
COVID-19 has caused the non-availability of raw materials and production activities (BAE6)	0.797		4.11	1.509
COVID-19 has caused a change in the work culture of our firm (BAE7)	0.818		4.18	1.457
COVID-19 has led to a reduction in costs of our products (BAE8)	0.776		4.16	1.460
COVID-19 led to a loss of skilled workforce at our firm (BAE10)	0.820		4.17	1.468
		Overall mean	**4.14**	**1.160**
Workforce adverse effects				
COVID-19 has caused stress to be built up among our employees (WAE1)	0.896	**18.25%**	4.57	0.794
COVID-19 has caused significant layoffs and furloughs of our employees (WAE2)	0.770		4.51	0.961
COVID-19 has caused a reduction in training resources for our employees (WAE3)	0.801		4.54	0.916
COVID-19 has caused wage/salary cuts for our employees (WAE4)	0.764		4.49	0.961
COVID-19 has caused a reduction in the motivation of our employees due to the fears that they might be left unemployed in this crisis (WAE5)	0.898		4.63	0.769
		Overall mean	**4.54**	**0.87**
Community adverse effects				
COVID-19 has caused the threat of labor shortage/supply of migrant workers (CAE1)	0.769	**19.18%**	4.31	0.866
COVID-19 has affected the usage and purchase of locally produced goods and services associated with our firm (CAE2)	0.777		4.07	1.092
COVID-19 has affected the livelihood of locals associated with our firm (CAE3)	0.713		4.10	1.186
COVID-19 has affected tourism and hotel associated community businesses (CAE4)	0.810		4.16	1.051
COVID-19 has affected collaboration with the firm's pre-pandemic contacts due to business diversification/shutdown etc. (CAE5)	0.844		4.33	0.894
		Overall mean	**4.22**	**0.72**
Business recovery				
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have improved the revenue of our firm compared to that of last year (BR1)	0.772	**35.36%**	4.16	1.497
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have resulted in an improvement in the number of stays/trips/tours (BR2)	0.779		4.13	1.420
Vaccination has caused a reduction in the preventive measures against probable crises at our firm (BR3)	0.783		4.04	1.587
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have increased the number of bookings (BR4)	0.767		4.11	1.486
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reduced the cost of operating business like getting rid of new standard procedures that were in place when vaccines were not available etc. (BR5)	0.798		4.22	1.451
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have allowed a resumption of raw materials and production activities (BR6)	0.758		4.11	1.509

Table 5 (cont.)

Business adverse effects	Loadings	AVE	Mean	*SD*
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have helped us return to our earlier business model that was more efficient and cost-effective compared to the model our hotel adopted when vaccines were not available (BR7)	0.816		4.18	1.457
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have resumed bookings for events, conferences, weddings, etc. (BR8)	0.716		4.16	1.460
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to the return of pre-pandemic tariffs (BR9)	0.788		4.17	1.468
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to the removal of our firm's self-imposed restrictions like a limited intake of bookings etc. (BR10)	0.754		4.01	1.417
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have negated/reversed the need for business innovation adopted in the face of the pandemic (BR11)	0.777		4.07	1.375
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have brought back our pre-pandemic plans for expansion (BR12)	0.774		4.00	1.575
		Overall mean	**4.32**	**0.98**
Workforce recovery				
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have relieved stress built among employees of our firm (WR1)	0.755		4.14	1.493
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have resulted in reinstating employees who were laid off or furloughed (WR2)	0.778		4.11	1.415
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have resulted in the recruitment of new employees and interns (WR3)	0.773		4.04	1.587
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reversed salary cuts for employees and workers that were made last year as a result of the pandemic (WR4)	0.796	**23.00%**	4.11	1.486
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have eased employees' mental stress regarding employment, job security, salary, etc. (WR5)	0.815		4.22	1.451
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reduced concerns about employees' exposure to the disease (WR6)	0.769		4.11	1.509
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to employees resuming work in a pre-pandemic fashion (WR7)	0.831		4.18	1.457
		Overall mean	**4.41**	**0.70**
Community recovery				
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reversed the effects of COVID-19 on the livelihood of locals associated with our firm (CR1)	0.860		4.57	0.794
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to a resumption in purchases of locally purchased goods and services (CR2)	0.792		4.51	0.961
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reversed the effects of COVID-19 on firm associated community businesses (CR3)	0.848		4.54	0.916
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have removed the threat of labor shortages/supply of migrant workers (CR4)	0.722	**19.05%**	4.49	0.961
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to collaboration with of our hotel's pre-pandemic local contacts (CR5)	0.873		4.63	0.769
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have brought back vendors and others who contributed to our customer's experience (CR6)	0.790		4.48	0.960
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reinstated a feeling of friendliness in locals towards tourists (CR7)	0.836		4.44	0.952
		Overall mean	**4.35**	**0.56**

Source: authors.

4.2. Reliability test

Reliability analysis was then conducted to check the reliability of each dimension and their Cronbach's alpha coefficient (see Table 6). The results of Cronbach's alpha were found to be above the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 6. Results of reliability test

Dimensions	No. of items	Cronbach's alpha (α) value
Business adverse effects	09	0.913
Workforce adverse effects	05	0.876
Community adverse effects	05	0.858
Destination adverse effects	07	0.898
Business recovery	12	0.769
Workforce recovery	07	0.806
Community recovery	07	0.789
Destination recovery	07	0.756
Overall	59	0.809

Note: Cronbach's alpha (α) for all the constructs is above the threshold level 0.60.
Source: authors.

4.3. Measurement model

In the measurement model, item loadings were found to be above the recommended value of 0.60 (Chin, 1998). Composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were used to check the convergent validity of the constructs. Both the values were above the recommended values of 0.07 and 0.50 (Hair et al., 2006), thereby holding convergent validity. Lastly, discriminant validity was assessed. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), discriminant validity is upheld when the square root of each construct's AVE (diagonal values) is larger than its corresponding correlation coefficients. The values of the square root of AVE were more significant than the values of the correlation coefficients, thereby presenting the proof for discriminant validity. The overall results of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) are shown in Table 7, while the discriminant validity is shown in Tables 8 and 9.

Table 7. Confirmatory factor analysis results

Factor	Item	Indicator loadings	AVE	CR
Business adverse effects	BAE1	0.768	0.609	0.933
	BAE2	0.726		
	BAE3	0.738		
	BAE4	0.747		
	BAE5	0.825		
	BAE6	0.797		
	BAE7	0.818		
	BAE8	0.776		
	BAE10	0.820		
Community adverse effects	CAE1	0.769	0.615	0.888
	CAE2	0.777		
	CAE3	0.713		
	CAE4	0.810		
	CAE5	0.844		
Workforce adverse effects	WAE1	0.896	0.916	0.685
	WAE2	0.770		
	WAE3	0.801		
	WAE4	0.764		
	WAE5	0.898		
Destination adverse effects	DAE1	0.906	0.950	0.731
	DAE2	0.858		
	DAE3	0.816		
	DAE4	0.892		
	DAE5	0.813		
	DAE6	0.877		
	DAE7	0.817		
Business recovery	BR1	0.772	0.947	0.599
	BR10	0.754		
	BR11	0.777		
	BR12	0.774		
	BR2	0.779		
	BR3	0.783		
	BR4	0.767		
	BR5	0.798		
	BR6	0.758		
	BR7	0.816		
	BR8	0.716		
	BR9	0.788		

Table 7 (cont.)

Factor	Item	Indicator loadings	AVE	CR
Community recovery	CR1	0.860	0.934	0.670
	CR2	0.792		
	CR3	0.848		
	CR4	0.722		
	CR5	0.873		
	CR6	0.790		
	CR7	0.836		
Workforce recovery	WR1	0.755	0.920	0.622
	WR2	0.778		
	WR3	0.773		
	WR4	0.796		
	WR5	0.815		
	WR6	0.769		
	WR7	0.831		
Destination recovery	DR1	0.711	0.921	0.623
	DR2	0.838		
	DR3	0.786		
	DR4	0.762		
	DR5	0.823		
	DR6	0.825		
	DR7	0.768		

Source: authors.

4.4. Hypotheses testing

After confirming the measurement model, the present study tested the proposed hypotheses through partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). SmartPLS software was used to test the proposed hypotheses. The results of structural equation modeling, along with the path coefficient, are shown in Figures 2 and 3. Inference for each hypothesis is given in Table 10.

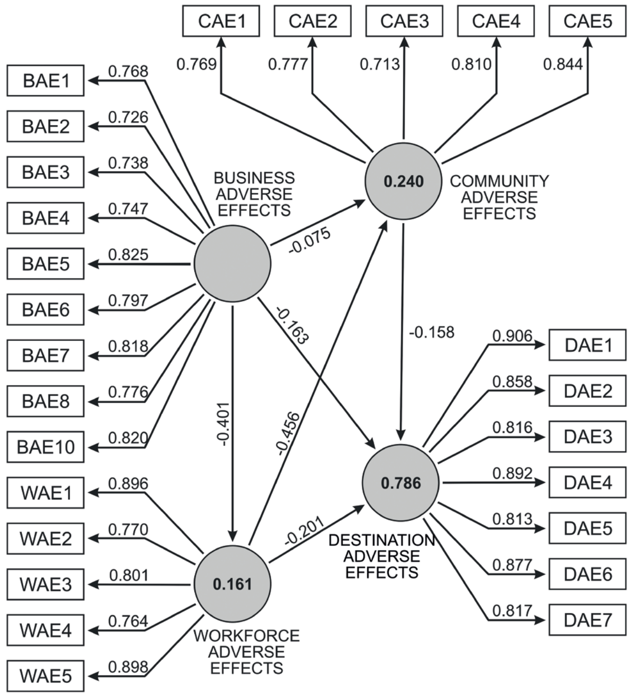

Figure 2. The estimated SEM path model of early pandemic stages
Source: authors

Table 8. Discriminant validity results (early stages of the pandemic)

	Business adverse effects	Community adverse effects	Destination adverse effects	Workforce adverse effects
Business adverse effects	**0.780**	–	–	–
Community adverse effects	0.257	**0.784**	–	–
Destination adverse effects	0.203	0.019	**0.854**	–
Workforce adverse effects	0.401	0.486	0.189	**0.828**

Source: authors.

Table 9. Discriminant validity results (later stages of the pandemic)

	Business recovery	Community recovery	Destination recovery	Workforce recovery
Business recovery	**0.774**	–	–	–
Community recovery	0.375	**0.819**	–	–
Destination recovery	0.452	0.585	**0.789**	–
Workforce recovery	0.991	0.368	0.439	**0.789**

Source: authors.

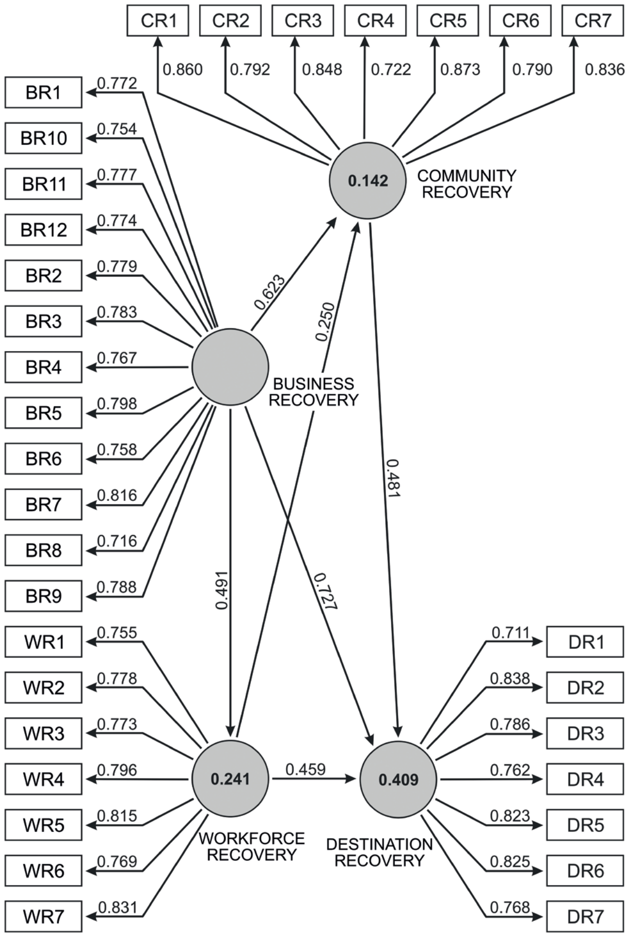

Figure 3. The estimated SEM path model of later pandemic stages
Source: authors

5. Conclusion and implications

As mentioned earlier, this study has tried to examine a path to destination recovery (adverse effects) based on its businesses, workforce and community's recovery (adverse effects). With an underpinning objective of assessing the transformative potential of the COVID-19 pandemic, this study inquired into the many aspects of stakeholder well-being. To the best of the authors' knowledge, it is amongst the first few studies providing insights into the nature of tourism through a temporal investigation of the tourist destinations' condition (pre and post pandemic). To undertake such an investigation, 12 hypotheses were developed centered around pharmaceutical developments (vaccines) and easing of travel restrictions (Figure 1). Stakeholders (inbound tour operators, travel agents, hotels, transport providers) from several destinations in India were consulted as India was the nation with the highest number of cases and subsequently, vaccine doses. A total of 61 items encompassing varied aspects of well-being (economic, social, emotional and psychological) were constructed across eight factors to test the proposed hypotheses. From the examination of path coefficients, it was discovered that the impact of COVID-19 on businesses has negatively affected the destination, its workforce and the community while they have also affected each other independently. Subsequently, the effects of vaccine availability and the ease in restrictions on businesses led to the recovery of the destination, its local community and workforce while also contributing to each other's recovery.

Table 10. Hypothesis testing results

Path coefficients	Path coefficient	*t*-statistics	*p* values	Inference
Business adverse effects → community adverse effects	−0.075	0.821	0.412	not support
Business adverse effects → destination adverse effects	−0.163	2.878	0.000	supported
Business adverse effects → workforce adverse effects	−0.401	4.108	0.000	supported
Community adverse effects → destination adverse effects	−0.158	3.855	0.000	supported
Workforce adverse effects → community adverse effects	−0.456	3.566	0.000	supported
Workforce adverse effects → destination adverse effects	−0.201	2.138	0.000	supported
Business recovery → community recovery	0.623	2.409	0.000	supported
Business recovery → destination recovery	0.727	5.239	0.000	supported
Business recovery → workforce recovery	0.491	5.958	0.000	supported
Community recovery → destination recovery	0.481	4.789	0.000	supported
Workforce recovery → community recovery	0.250	2.585	0.000	supported
Workforce recovery → destination recovery	0.459	4.774	0.000	supported

Source: authors.

While the former findings were well established in the COVID-19 literature, the latter empirically validates a path to destination recovery based on the recovery of its businesses, community and workforce. More importantly, the findings suggest the pandemic to have simply been a magnification of seasonality nuances that service providers on the ground have always been facing. Given the low barriers to entry and the reduced cost of setup in the tourism industry (Quinn, Larmour, McQuillan, 1992), businesses lack financial backing and expertise (Welsh, White, 1981), tending to fail more often than those in other industries. Gavron et al. (1998) comment that about 64% of the UK's small businesses shut down within four years of inception. In the same vein, Chell and Pittaway (1998) found that about 50% of restaurants were shut down within the first two years of running the business. This study, therefore, postulates the extension of Darwin's evolutionary theory, i.e. *survival of the fittest* to the likes of tourism and hospitality. Going by past trends, inefficient small businesses have been continually shutting down in this industry. In that, the pandemic happened to play a facilitator's role in the closure of these businesses at an earlier stage. This study also points towards the relevance of measures like lay-offs and cost cuts for businesses to stay a-float during a crisis. It can be noted that businesses which implemented such measures were able to survive the crisis and recover well after the crisis was gone.

Despite recent lockdowns during the most catastrophic wave in the country (April–June 2021), destinations showed early signs of recovery in a relatively shorter period (five months, based on the time of data collection). Vaccines and ease in travel restrictions led to the undoing of practices adopted during the surge, bringing in an element of normalcy in the region. Respondents agreed to the reduction in preventive measures (BR3), cancelling of the new standard operating procedures (BR5), switching back to previous business models (BR7), resumption of bookings for MICE (BR8), return to pre-pandemic tariffs (BR9), removal of booking caps (BR10), reversal on product alterations and business innovation (BR11), pursuing the pre-pandemic plans for expansion (BR12), reduction of mental stress amongst employees (WR1), reinstating furloughed employees (WR2), reversal on salary cuts (WR4), resumption of purchases from locals (CR2), an appropriate supply of labor (CR4) and the homecoming of vendors (CR6). With restrictions still in place for international tourism (in the investigated region), the industry has heavily relied on domestic tourism for the past two years. While the prognosis of Orîndaru et al. (2021) and Sharma, Thomas and Paul (2021) regarding the rise of proximity and local tourism is reasonable enough, there seems to be no signs of transformation with respect to the operational aspects of destinations. With tourists showing an interest in traveling further away (Bhargava, Chandra, 2021), Farmaki (2021) reflects upon their forgetfulness, evidenced by their post-crisis travel patterns. In addition to that, findings of this study suggest the abating of economic, social, emotional and psychological effects of COVID-19 on a destination's workforce and the local community. With no change in the way tourism products are consumed, there is little scope for a change in how they are produced and offered. This study, thereby, contributes to the ongoing debate of crisis-led transformation in which it provides evidence for the continuance of pre-pandemic practices that have been there for a longer period of time. In other words, it substantiates the prognosis of Hall, Scott and Gössling (2020) in which they cast doubt upon the transformational ability of the pandemic. However, the pandemic, as predicted by Orîndaru et al. (2021) and Sharma, Thomas and Paul (2021), has led governments and tourism authorities to realize their domestic tourism potential. Given the rise in the above-mentioned forms of tourism, tourists have expanded their basket of alternative destinations. With the greater need to capitalize on the economic recovery of destinations, authorities in countries like India should continue to promote domestic tourism at a larger scale, emphasizing environmental sustainability, responsibility and community integration. At the same time, local authorities should try to differentiate their destination from that of another given the rise in competitiveness and accordingly frame policies that cater to both international and domestic tourists.

6. Limitations and future research

Similar to any empirical research, this study too had several limitations. Given that it was carried out in India, the findings and implications of this study might not be applicable to a different geographical location. That is, where business, workforce and community recovery were found to affect destination recovery in India, this might not stand true for a different geographic location. Therefore, an international study in this regard, may yield generalizable results. Furthermore, this study did not consider destination recovery as a formative construct in its PLS path model, as there might be other constructs that lead to destination recovery in general (Hair et al., 2006). Future studies may dwell upon the other factors that contribute to destination well-being and incorporate them in their assessment of destination recovery. While this work provides evidence for the notion that crises such as the pandemic fail to bring long-term changes to the system, future studies should explore the nuances within the crisis that may induce change. If not for a crisis, how do systems change? The identification of a catalyst, such as the internet or the pandemic (in the case of the education sector) that brings a revolution, becomes necessary for a better understanding of the sector in question.

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