DETUROPE

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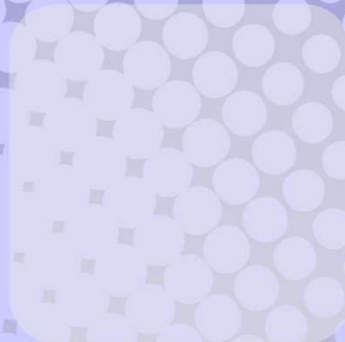
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THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

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INFLUENCE OF INTENSIVE WATER MANAGEMENT AND WATER QUALITY ON RECREATION AND BUSINESS IN TOURISM IN TREBON REGION

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Abstract

The main aim of the current study was to find out the influence of intensive water management in ponds and related water quality on recreation and business in tourism during the months of June, July and August in the area of the ponds in the Třeboň region, CZECHIA. The most important characteristics of different types of tourism were defined from the point of view of Czech and foreign literature and were subsequently characterized for a particular area. Another issue discussed here, is the influence of tourism on the particular area. In this perspective, the first part of the paper describes a theoretical outline of the aforementioned issue in light of the literature and subsequently its effects on the area of Třeboňsko. The information obtained were then used for the SWOT analysis, Defert's tourist function and the design of measures leading to the sustainable development of tourism.

Keywords: Tourism, area of South Bohemian ponds, sustainable management, Czech Republic

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the most important socio-economic phenomena of the present age, and together with the automotive and oil industry, has become one of the world's largest export industries. The purpose of the tourist industry is to offer tourists satisfactory, extraordinary, memorable, and valuable experiences (Čaušević et al. 2021). However, the development of tourism is also inherently linked to far-reaching impacts, both positive and negative. A strong tourism sector directly contributes to the national income of the country, combats unemployment and improves the balance of payments (Mavrommarti et al. 2021). Tourism can also make enormous economic profits for the area, bring a lot of jobs for the locals, it is

often an impulse to develop infrastructure and help increase people's education in areas including information on foreign places and the way of life of other world cultures. Conversely, the development of tourism must also have its limits and must be sustainable for the area. Insensitive tourism development can disrupt natural and social conditions in the area, suppress local culture, and also have a major negative impact on the environment.

Therefore, the current study was designed to analyse and valorise the conditions of provided current, new and innovative products and services according to recent trends, potential of given locality and preferences of customers which have influence on the attractiveness, increase of turnout and increase of profits with the support of marketing communication and sales promotion of offered products and services.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Tourism, leisure time and recreation are concepts that belong inseparably to each other, but their meaning is different. For example, Dumazedier (1989) defines leisure as an activity – apart from obligations of work, family, and society – to which the individual turns at will, for either relaxation, diversion, or broadening his knowledge and his spontaneous social participation, the free exercise of his creative capacity (Veal, 2019). Broadly speaking, leisure refers to the free time that people can spend away from their everyday responsibilities (e.g. work and domestic tasks) to rest, relax and enjoy life (Gelná, & Fialová 2010, 2011; Fialová et al. 2018). Whereas recreation refers to all those activities that people choose to do to refresh their bodies and minds and make their leisure time more interesting and enjoyable (e.g. walking, swimming, meditation, reading, playing games and dancing etc) (Khasnabis, et al. 2010). Recreation itself is divided into passive and active recreation depending on the age and socio-economic characteristics of people. And it is considered that active recreation includes for example, walks in nature, fishing, various sports, hunting, etc. (Coppock & Duffield, 1975). On the other hand, there is no solid definition of tourism. The definition of tourism by UNWTO (2010) sees tourism as a subset of travel, where travel refers to the activity of travellers. A traveller is then someone who moves between different geographic locations for any purpose and any duration. Next to this definition of tourism there are many varieties among different persons and sources which are actually based on two basic directions. The first direction explains tourism from a participant's point of view and addresses its content, motivation, activities, relationships, etc. The second one mainly focuses

on the institutions and the various sectors providing the services of tourism itself (Vystoupil, et al. 2010).

Tourism is divided typologically into different forms and types, depending on the reasons and needs of the participants of the tourism industry as well as the duration and nature of the objectives (Fialová et al., 2010). In this context, stating the typology of tourism, it has been described that tourism has two basic parts – movement and consumption, influencing the environment a lot (Williams, 2009; Gjorgievski, et al., 2013). For example, Pásková defines tourism from the point of view of geographic, economic, social, and other conditions, and its effects, and the way it is carried out (Pásková, 2008). However, different types of tourism, whose division is rather complex, have been described in full details by Gjorgievski and colleagues. They divide tourism by several criteria – such as according to the place of realization (domestic and foreign, active and passive), the way of participation and forms of reimbursement of costs (free and tied), the way and the organization of services (not organized and organized, often excluded tourism outside public forms - cabins, weekend houses, etc.), group sizes (group and individual), duration of participation (short and long term), time rhythm (daily, weekend, weekly and longer) and distribution during the year (seasonal, year-round) (Gjorgievski et al., 2013). Another classification is based on the means of transport used, the prevailing location (urban, suburban, rural, coastal, and mountainous, agro-tourism), the age of the participants or the impact on the environment (soft and hard) (Bacsi, & Tóth, 2019) and the use of natural and anthropogenic resources (mass, consumer, alternative and sustainable).

Likewise, there are three categories reflecting the various factors influencing tourism. Among them the first is a group of natural prerequisites, second a group of cultural-historical prerequisites, and finally a group of social prerequisites (Vystoupil et al., 2010; Hristov, 2015). Currently, the most common classification of tourism and recreation prerequisites divides them into localization prerequisites, including natural and cultural prerequisites, selective prerequisites and, finally, implementation prerequisites (Williams, 2009). Localization prerequisites and factors influencing tourism are those that include natural, cultural, and cultural-historical features where natural prerequisites mean the relief of the area, its climatic conditions, water, fauna, and flora (Vystoupil et al., 2010). Nature-based tourism is one of the tourism forms with an increasing appeal (Bacsi & Szanati 2021). These natural conditions most influence the majority of tourism and recreation activities, especially their residential forms.

Water-based tourism can be considered as a special part of nature-based tourism. The relationship between water and tourism is characterized by a dual understanding of this element: as a precious resource and as an attraction. As a tourist attraction, water represents a resource with a strong potential to attract tourists. Different types of bodies of water can sustain several, diverse forms of tourism, such as beach tourism, river tourism, tourism of reservoirs, lakes and natural pools and tourism of thermal waters (Folgado-Fernández et al, 2018).

The definition of water-based tourism according to Jennings says, that water-based tourism relates to any touristic activity undertaken in or in relation to water resources, such as lakes, dams, canals, creeks, streams, rivers, canals, waterways, marine coastal zones, seas, oceans, and ice-associated areas (Jennings, 2007). Similarly, but more specifically Hall and Harkönen (2006) define lake tourism as tourism that occurs not only on the lake itself, but also in the surrounding area.

The significance of lake tourism lies in its various recreational activities. Such as fishing, pilgrimage or activities related to boating, surfing, or yachting for example. Thanks to these wide possibilities, staying by the water is a very desirable form of spending free time and holidays. In the Czech Republic, up to a third of the holiday accommodation base is located around the water areas and streams (Toušek et al. 2008). Round the water, and in particular near the mineral springs, spas are built, as an example of longer-lasting recreation. Flora and fauna, i.e. plant and livestock, are also irreplaceable. The plants basically shape the landscape, and they are completely dependent on the natural conditions of the area. The cultural and historical prerequisites, as the second component of the localization prerequisites, differ from the natural ones by being created by human activity (Williams, 2009). Without realization prerequisites, it would not be possible to carry out tourism and recreation itself (Vystoupil et al. 2010). In essence, they create a link between tourism and recreation areas of interest and destinations, and tourism and recreation areas - in other words, the link between demand and supply. There are nine basic functional types of tourism and recreation centers in the Czech Republic - resorts of summer recreation near the water, mountain resorts of summer and winter recreation, historical towns and centers of international and national importance, historical towns of non-regional significance, other towns, natural attractions, spa resorts, other tourist resorts and finally the most important centers of second homes (Pásková, 2008; Vystoupil et al., 2010).

Generally, the factors are classified into demographic, urbanization, economic and socio-cultural and socio-political groups. The issue of sustainable tourism development has been the most important paradigm of tourism geography in recent decades. Currently, the research focuses on the growing importance of long-term sustainable tourism and the sustainable development of regions and cities; for example, to create a sustainable urban environment, it is crucial to identify areas of opportunity as well as concern and to respond by developing realistic sustainability goals with a long-term perspective (Blagojević, et al. 2020). The sustainable approach also deals with the impacts on the natural and social environment and seeks to optimize these impacts through strategic tourism planning, management, and organization (Toušek et al., 2008).

DATA AND METHODS

The main aim of this paper was to find out the influence of intensive water management in ponds and related water quality on recreation and business in tourism during the summer months in the Třeboň region. For this purpose, the hypothesis was set as:

"Intensive farming in ponds and related water quality influences tourism and business in the region".

The method of observation was applied during a statistical survey and controlled interviews with asked participants of the qualitative and the quantitative research in the course of the summer season 2020 with repetition in the summer season 2021 in the selected area.

Selecting the area of interest

The Třeboň region was selected for the current study as a unique water system, consisting of ponds and connected by sewers, that have been built in the region since the 14th century. The ponds of Třeboň region are a system of shallow basins of different size (1-420 ha) connected by sewers. The ponds were built in a flat basin drained by the river of Lužnice, partly by the Nežárka river. Many ponds have rugged banks with richly developed littoral stands. They pass into communities of high sedge, swamp alder and willow. The forests around the ponds are predominantly secondary borne and spruce forests. The water in ponds is largely atrophied; mesotrophic only in some small ponds.

Figure 1 Map - The Třeboň region

Source: Okolo Třeboně, výlet k rybníkům do malebné jihočeské krajiny | iReceptář.cz (ireceptar.cz)

Research approaches applied

Both quantitative and qualitative methods of research were used, as these methods are considered very beneficial for this kind of research.

Quantitative research is based on positivism, and it is supported by deduction. To carry out quantitative research, the questionnaire method is used, applicable to a large number of respondents. Personal questionnaires are generally used for assessing customer satisfaction in spite of their expensive and time-consuming character, because questionnaires can provide excellent quality information (Lőke et al., 2018). It is also easier to involve the participants, as the method is anonymous.

There are three approaches to quantitative research according to Veal (2006):

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Type A: hypothetical-deductive quantitative research conforms to the hypothetical-deductive model discussed under positivism earlier. This model is implicit in many discussions of quantitative methods.

Type B: statistical quantitative research makes use of statistical methods and tests but is not necessarily hypothetical-deductive. It can be descriptive, exploratory and/or deductive.

Type C: inductive quantitative research is based on numerical data but makes little or no use of statistical test; its most sophisticated statistical measures are usually the percentage shares and sometimes means/averages. Type C quantitative research is more informal than type B or type A and is closer in approach to qualitative methods.

In the context of the quantitative research based on the deductive approach, the hypotheses was determined, and verified by the data obtained from:

a)   the questionnaire survey of tourists (1);

b)   the questionnaire survey of operators of accommodation, catering and other facilities in the region (2);

c)   the questionnaire survey of the mayors of the territory concerned (3).

Questionnaire 1 was composed of 21 questions that are open, closed, and semi-closed. The open questions were asked to find the least distorted opinion of a participant. The closed questions were mainly of a general nature (gender, education, etc.). The semi-closed questions that combined the two previously mentioned types should avoid overriding the possibility of answering the question. For the scaling of the responses, Likert's scale was used to measure the respondent's attitude. A random selection was used to choose the respondents. In total, 289 questionnaires were spread in the areas of Hejtman, Chlum u Třeboně, Majdalena, the ponds of Svět and Opatovický rybník, Staňkov and Třeboň.

Questionnaire 2 was composed of 20 questions that are open, closed, and semi-closed. In total, 43 questionnaires were spread in the areas of Dvořiště, Hejtman, Chlum, Jemniča, Lomnice nad Lužnicí, Lutová, Lužnice, Opatovický rybník, Staňkov, Svět and Třeboň.

Questionnaire 3 consisted of 10 questions and types of questions and the evaluation procedure was consistent with the previous procedures for questionnaires 1 and 2. The questionnaire was distributed among 22 mayors and deputy mayors of the territory concerned. The mayors were contacted personally, by email and by phone.

Qualitative research is based on phenomenology, entomology, symbolic interactionism, and relies on induction. It is commonly defined as non-quantitative investigation and interpretation of social reality (Disman, 2002; Aguinis & Solarino, 2019). Qualitative research is an addition to quantitative research and is aimed at uncovering unknown facts about social and socio-psychological phenomena, including the existence of phenomena, their characteristics and functions, and factors related to social and social-psychological phenomena (Surynek, 2001; Blair, 2015). Qualitative research is focused on the behaviour of social subjects.

The qualitative research was conducted in the form of a semi-structured interview. As part of the interview technique, there is a direct encounter between the interviewer and the participant. The interviewer tries to get information by asking questions that reveal experience, memories and knowledge. Through the interview, the interviewer identifies attitudes and opinions of people (Surynek, 2001; Zich, 2004). The basic rule is to ask only what cannot be measured, determined, calculated (Surynek, 2001). The processing of the data obtained from the interviews was done by the coding method, which is divided into the basic three groups: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019). In our case, the qualitative research only supplemented the quantitative research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Part I.

The first part is focused on the evaluation of visitors' survey and their view of water quality in the recreational area of Třeboň region. There was a total of 289 participants in the research, of which 133 were women and 156 were men. Among them 76% learned about Třeboň region from the recommendations of people they know and only 10% from the internet and print advertising.

As shown in Fig. 2a, the Třeboň region can be regarded as a popular location for all ages, however, most respondents were aged 31-40.

Figure 2 a) Age of the participants; b) Regions of the Czech Republic where the visitors are from; c) Who do the visitors of the region come with?; d) The most common reason of the visit.
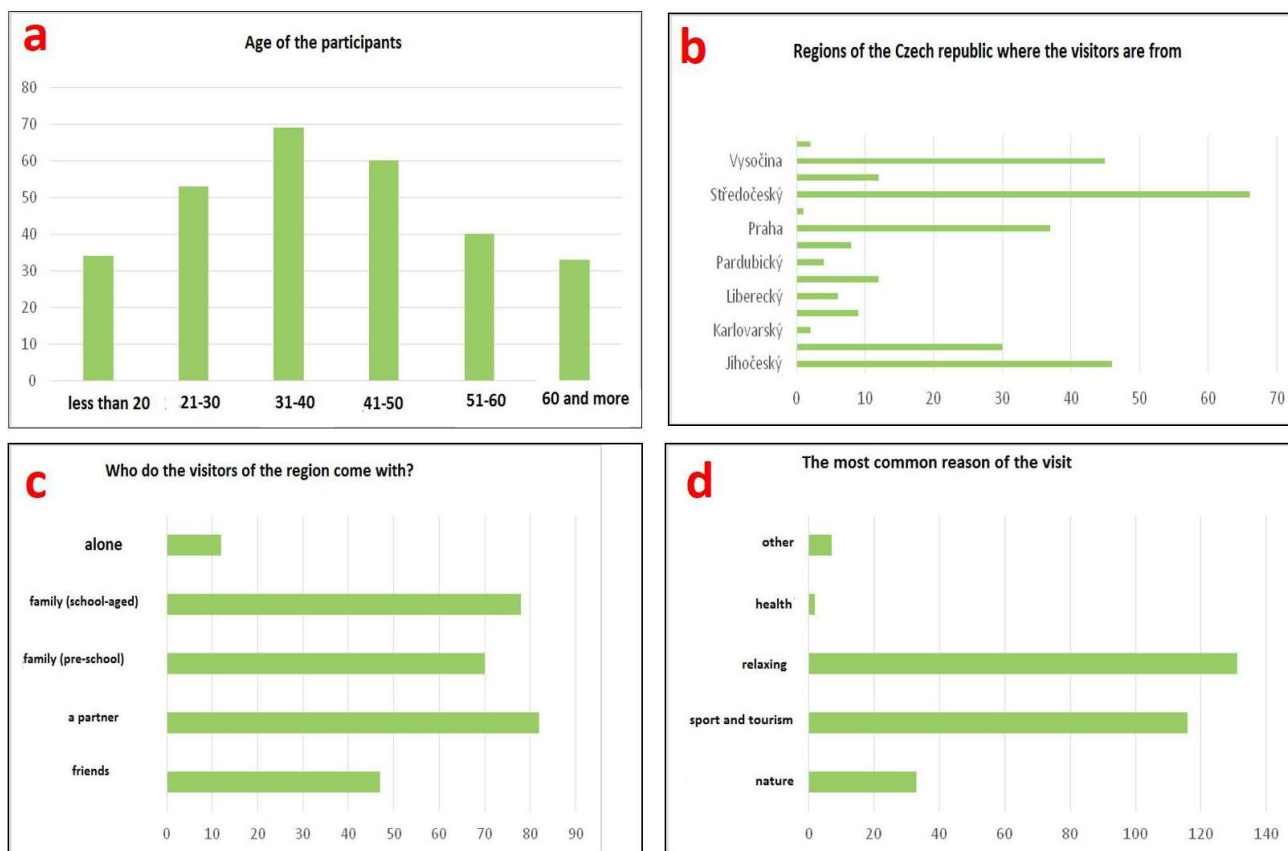
Source: own results

Fig. 2b, shows the localities of the visitors in Czech Republic from where they came. Mostly they were from the Central Bohemia region and Vysočina, followed by the region of South Bohemia (Fig. 2b). A similar trend has prevailed for more than seven years, as revealed by comparison with previous research.

Similarly, most of the respondents came to the Třeboň region with a partner, followed by the family holiday with school-aged children and pre-school children, see Fig. 2c. They come for the adventure brought to them by camping and cycling. We found that 93% of the visitors get to the region by car, which they sometimes use during their stay. Only 5% of respondents use the bus and train link. The trend in the use of means of transport has changed over the past 5 years, when train and bus connections were used more intensively (around 20%).

The data showed that relaxation is the most common reason for the stay (45%), followed by sport and active tourism (40%) and the nature and landscape (11%), (see Fig. 2d).

An interesting finding is the respondents' awareness of the Třeboňsko Biosphere Reserve, as more than 55% of the visitors are familiar with the site and its nature, see Fig. 3a.

Figure 3 a) Awareness of the UNESCO biosphere reservation – TŘEBOŇSKO; b) Have you visited region Třeboňsko before?; c) length of stay of the participants; d) Evaluation of the services by visitors
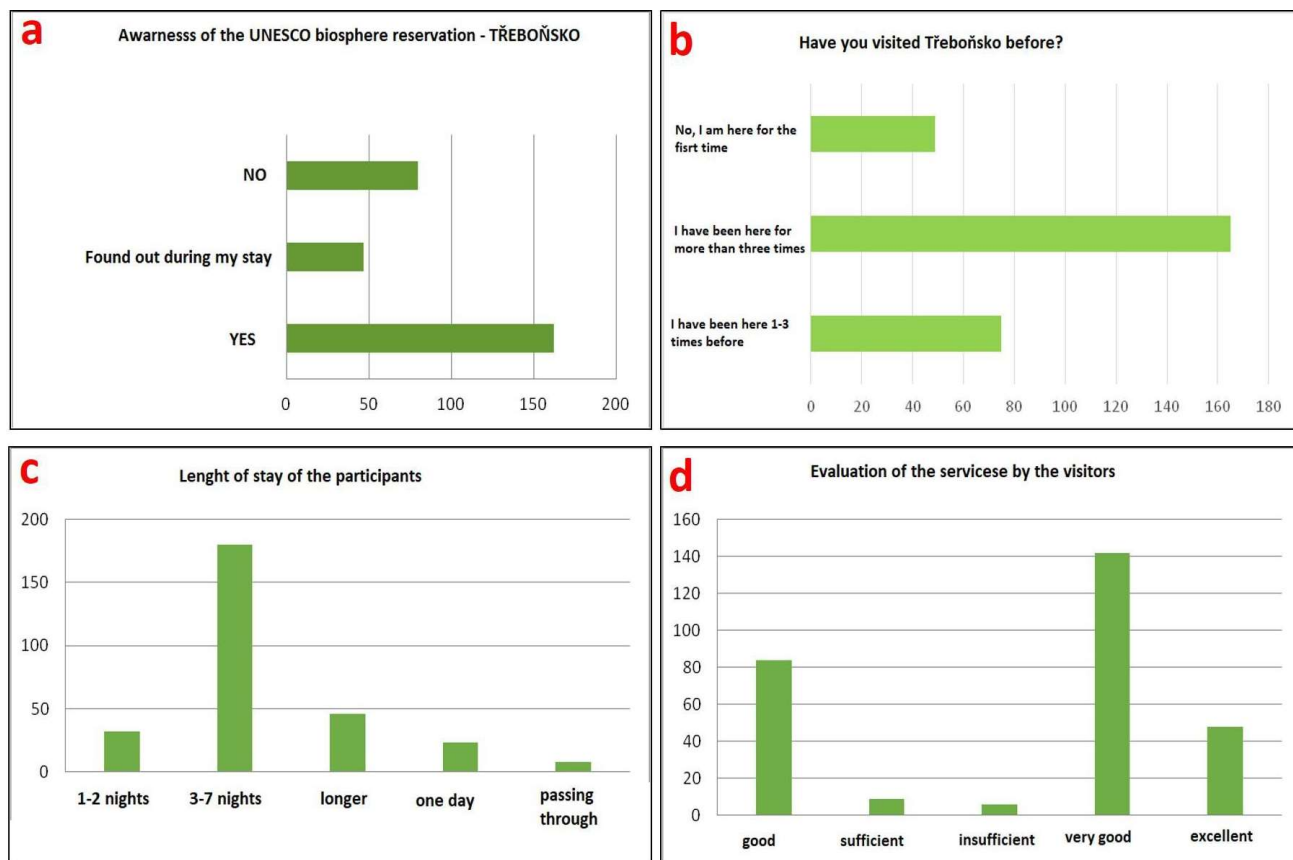
Source: own results

A positive trend is related to repeated visits to the region, as 57% of the respondents have visited Třeboň region more than three times, and only 26% have visited the site for the first time, (see Fig. 3b). This fact is also influenced by the satisfaction of visitors with the services they use during their stay.

Třeboň region is gradually becoming a popular holiday destination where visitors stay for three to seven nights. From previous research seven years ago, it was obvious that people here stayed for the weekend and the extended weekend. At present, this limit is shifted to weekly stays (see Fig. 3c).

The evaluation of the services in Třeboň region was determined by other research questions. Quality and satisfaction with services are rated by 49% of the respondents as very good and only 2% see them as insufficient, (see Fig. 3d).

An extended stay of visitors means a higher reputation for service providers, and better profit. On average, a person spends from 400 to 700, - CZK per day, as reported by 42% of the respondents; 34% of respondents spend to 400, - CZK per person per day, (see Fig. 4a).

During their stay, 77% of respondents use the ponds for swimming. 19% do not use it because of other sports activities and illnesses, as reported in the questionnaire survey. Only 4% of respondents do not use them due to pollution and poor water quality, (see Fig. 4b).

The respondents using the ponds for swimming assess the water quality in the following way: 50% of respondents find it satisfactory; 44% average, 4% worsening and only 2% as dissatisfactory, (see Fig. 4c). The visitors do not see the semi-intensive farming in the ponds as a negative phenomenon, they see it as a part of an intensive production. 9% of the respondents perceive the loss of biodiversity that they associate with the increasing pond management, only 7% of the respondents have seen the negative impact of the management on water quality, (see Fig. 4d).

Figure 4 a) Average spending per person and day in CZK; b) Use of the ponds for swimming; c) Water quality in the ponds used for swimming; d) Perception of intensive farming in the ponds by the visitors
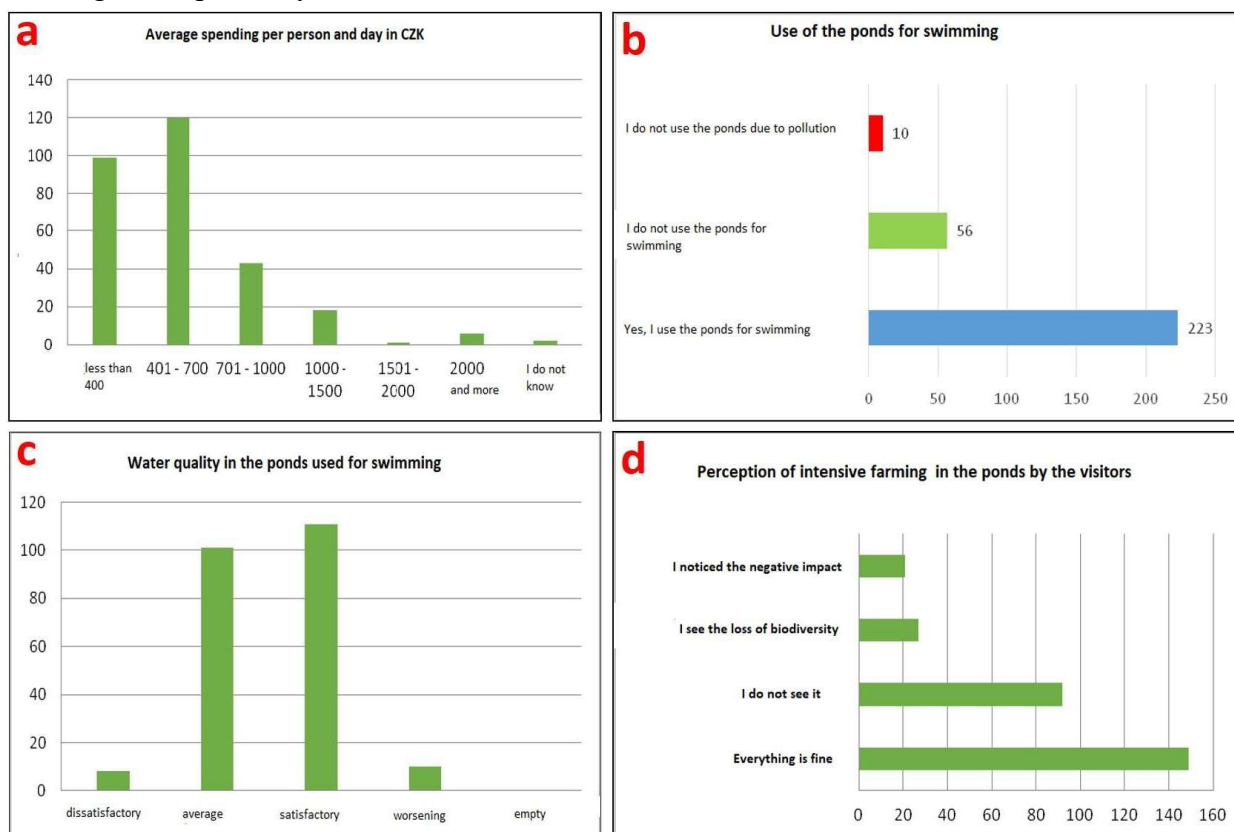
Source: own results

A total of 77% of respondents are satisfied in the region, 33% lack better quality of the social facilities in camps, poor serviceability, non-binding cycling routes, higher number of services and information boards. 82% of the respondents do not see any issues in the region; the remaining 18% are bored by a large number of bikers, poor labelling and higher prices.

The research shows that the Třeboň region is one of the most popular destinations where visitors want to come back. A total of 69% of respondents already knew at the time of the survey that they would visit the site next year and 25% would visit it sometime later.

Part II.

The second part of the research was aimed at the providers of accommodation, catering and other facilities in the region. The aim of the survey was to find out whether the management of ponds and the associated quality of water had an impact on the recreation and tourism businesses. In total, 43 providers from the area of Hejtman, Staňkov, Svět, Třeboň, Chlum, Lutová, Svět, Lomnice nad Lužnicí, Opatovický rybník, Dvořiště and Jemčina took part in the survey. 53% of respondents have been active in the region for more than nine years; (see Fig. 5a), given the fact that they are able to compare the current situation to the situation ten years ago.

More than a half of the respondents (53%) come from the region, and they run their business here, and 21% of the providers have lived in the area for a long time and run their business here (Fig. 5b). This finding provides us with an adequate sample to assess the state of the region in connection with the increase in intensive tourism.

Figure 5 a) Length of running a business in the region; b) Where are the providers from?; c) Age of providers in the region
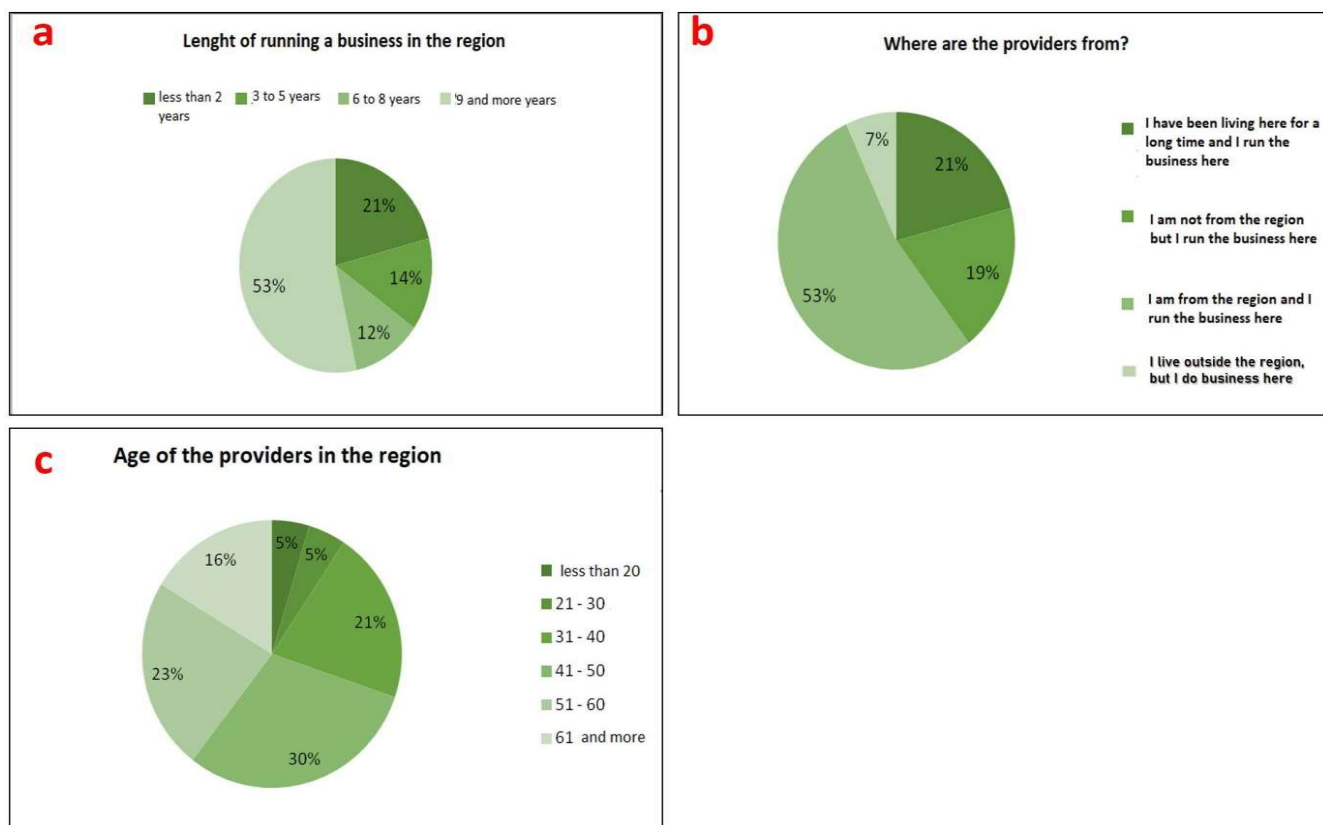
Source: own results

Regarding age, 30% of the providers in the survey are 41-50 years of age, 23% of 51-60 years old, (see Fig. 5c). The mentioned respondents already have experience with business in the region and know the strengths and weaknesses of the site in detail.

Based on the qualitative interviews, it was found that the entrepreneurs are more aware of the needs and weaknesses of the region, unlike larger enterprises employing nine and more employees. The retailers are more dependent on other services in the region, compared to larger guest houses and hotels that provide most of the complex services on their own.

There are different types of activity in which the respondents run the business, including catering services as the most common ones, to bike and water sports rentals.

The 51% of the respondents are self-employed persons, and 28% of them are employers having up to three employees.

The next part of the questionnaire was aimed at the satisfaction of the providers with local administration. The survey was also focused on the extent to which the providers are informed about the strategic plans in the region.

Working together with the local authorities was rated as excellent by 14 providers, as very good by 8 providers, 13 of them rated it as good, 3 as sufficient and only 5 as insufficient. The dissatisfaction with the authorities was mainly addressed by small businesses and one provider with more than nine employees from the localities of Staňkov, Lutová and Lomnice nad Lužnicí.

The communication between the private and public sectors through the awareness of the intentions of the towns and the region is evaluated by 15 respondents as excellent, very good or good by 18 respondents, 4 as adequate and only 6 respondents see it as insufficient, the others did not know how to rate the situation. The administrative procedure is not satisfying for 5 operators only, who have been running the business in the region for more than eight years and are mainly from Lutová, Staňkov, Svět and Lomnice nad Lužnicí.

An interesting finding is related to the dissatisfaction with the transport infrastructure, as 14 respondents rated it as insufficient, especially from the localities of Lutová, Staňkov, Chlum, Třeboň. The inadequate transport infrastructure has been in place for more than 5 years, its reconstruction has been going on for a long time and inefficiently.

The evaluation of the technical infrastructure is more favorable in comparison with the transport infrastructure, as reported by the respondents, as only 5 respondents expressed dissatisfaction, 7 respondents rated it excellent and 14 respondents as good. The technical infrastructure has improved significantly in 10 years and the trend of innovation is obvious.

The providers of accommodation, catering and other facilities would welcome support for procurement, information on development plans, and construction of sewage systems from the

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municipality. Respondents in many cases did not have a specific idea of what they would like. The next part of the survey is focused on the evaluation of water quality issues and their impact on business. As shown in (Fig. 5a), 51% of respondents reported a decrease in water quality over the last 10 years, mostly in the areas of Chlum, Lutová, Třeboň, Hejtman, Svět, Lomnice nad Lužnicí, Lužnice. The main cause of pollution is seen in climate change, which affects not only the Třeboň region. Another cause of pollution is the intensive management of ponds focused solely on the production of carp. 35% of the respondents did not see any change in water quality. 14% of the respondents reported better quality, mostly in the areas of Dvořiště, Chlum, Hejtman, Svět, such respondents have been active in the region for more than 5 years.

Another question was focused on the impact of water quality on business. As revealed in (Fig.6b), 37% of the respondents see no influence on their business, 26% reported a positive influence and only 9% reported a highly negative influence.

Figure 6 a) Change in water quality by the providers; b) The impact of water quality on business in the region; c) Future development of the region by the providers
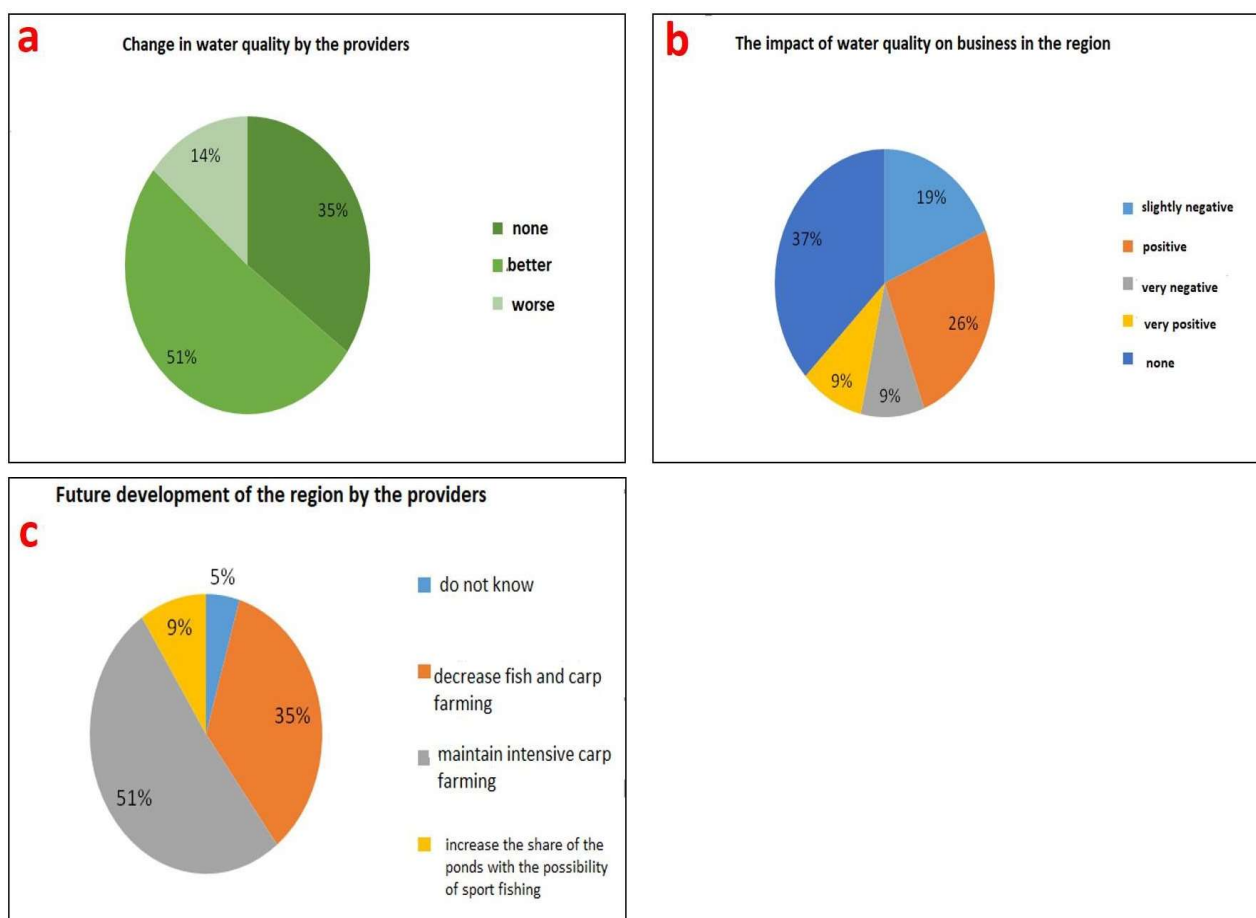
Source: own results

The respondents, in order to improve the quality of water quality in ponds, raised negotiations at the level of fisheries management, especially in the area of Staňkov. In the areas of Hejtman, Lužnice, and Třeboň the respondents report activities such as segregation of waste, cleaning of beaches and camp sites. Another finding was related to the position of the local government, and what is considered its main task. The providers see the main role of municipalities and local authorities in dealing with fishermen and management of ponds and see their position as an intermediary in communication between the entities. The development of the Třeboň region is a strategic objective in many conceptual documents of the South Bohemian Region. The providers see the main need for the overall development of the region (51% of respondents) in preserving carp farming, followed by increasing the share of the ponds with the possibility of sports fishing, (see Fig. 6c).

The results of the research show that the quality of the water in the Třeboň region ponds is evaluated as satisfactory both by most of the tourists and the providers. There is a conflict of interests mainly in Staňkov, where the entrepreneurs negotiate with the management of the ponds. The quality of water in ponds does not have a major impact on business activities and does not limit the attendance of the camp sites. The area of Třeboň region is a repeatedly visited locality, where people return several times, and the time of stay is gradually increasing from weekend stays to weekly stays.

Part III.

The third part of the study is focused on local governments, and 22 mayors and vice-mayors from the municipal authorities of Třeboň region were addressed. The purpose was to find out attitudes and opinions of the public administration on the impact of intensive farming in the ponds and water quality management on recreation and tourism businesses. All the municipalities addressed had a strategic document on the development of the region, designed either completely or at least partially. Based on qualitative interviews, it was found that only 40% of the respondents had a complex strategic document, approved by the council. 30% of the respondents stated having a document called Development Plan though lacking a system. The remaining 30% reported having a 10-to-15-page document, of which 10 pages dealt with history and cultural and historical sites of the village.

Another area of the survey is the quality of water, however the local governments were rather afraid to discuss such an issue, because of political reasons, as a number of enterprises contribute to the development of infrastructure, help with subsidies, therefore the

representatives were careful when responding. Therefore, it is not possible to see the answers to this question as significant. 45% of the respondents have not seen a change in water quality over the past 10 years. Even 23% see the change for the better. The respondents, who see deterioration in water quality, report climate change as the main reason for it (73%); only 27% see the pond management as the reason. In the qualitative interviews, more than 50% of the respondents pointed out that there was not intensive, but semi-intensive farming. The quality of water in local ponds has a great impact on tourism, but on the basis of the number of tourists, the respondents are convinced that water quality is good. The respondents report that they are in touch with pond management operators, and they assess their relationships as standard. The local authorities (the respondents) believe that for the future development of the region, it is necessary to maintain the traditions and related management of ponds while increasing the share of ponds with the possibility of sports fishing, which will also lead to a higher quality of water.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the data obtained in the current research supports the rejection of the hypothesis saying that "intensive farming in ponds and related water quality influences tourism and business in the region". The results showed that visitors, providers of catering, accommodation, and other facilities, as well as local authorities think that the management of ponds and the associated water quality have an impact on tourism and business in the region. The attitude of the tourists and the providers, who do not consider the water in the ponds to be heavily polluted is crucial as they do not see the pond management as a major problem. Local governments perceive the situation as a problem, but they are afraid to comment on it for reasons previously mentioned (sponsorship, infrastructure financing, etc.). Furthermore, the obtained data highlighted the most developed types of tourism in the Třeboň region, including cultural, sports, spa, gastronomic, congress and sustainable tourism. Cultural tourism is popular in the area, especially due to the presence of important cultural sites. However, the number of visitors of the sites is strongly influenced by seasonality, which causes uneven revenues of the local entrepreneurs. There is no demonstrable deterioration in the status of historical objects in relation to the number of visitors and therefore there is no need to reduce their attendance.

This fact is especially obvious in the supply and demand of gastronomic facilities. The existence of ponds affects the overall image of the area. Tourism is further influenced by fish

farming, which is typical for the area. Tourists here have the opportunity to get acquainted with the history of fish farming in the Czech Republic. Fishing itself, however, is not very attractive among the tourists. The spa complexes attract the tourists throughout the year. It is mainly the center of the area, the town of Třeboň, where the complexes are located. Spa guests do not move only in the spa areas, but also use the services outside. They are the most frequent visitors to theatres, concerts, and exhibitions among tourists, so it is appropriate to tailor the programs of these events to such guests. Recently, the importance of rural tourism, agro-tourism and eco-tourism has also increased. These types of tourism have minimal negative impacts on the area, and it is therefore appropriate to support their development. Moreover, they should contribute to the preservation of the rural environment, demographic condition, and cultural heritage (Gajić et al. 2019). Tourism in the area of the ponds in South Bohemia is a highly developed sector employing a significant part of the population. The occupancy of the area was also determined. The Defert´s function was used for this purpose. This function expresses the intensity of tourism in the municipality by the ratio between the density of potential visitors spending the night in a tourism facility that provides accommodation services in the municipality and the population of the municipality (Pásková, 2008). According to the results of Defert's tourist function Třeboň region is an area with a significant but not overwhelming tourist activity. For the healthy functioning of the region, the emphasis should also be put on the development of other economic sectors that are suppressed to a certain extent by the tourism industry. The main issues are related to the transport infrastructure and also to the decreasing number of permanent residents in the main tourist centers due to the increasing hostility towards tourists. In evaluating the internal and external environment (SWOT analysis), the strengths of tourism over the weaknesses, and the opportunities over the threats were identified. For sustainable tourism development, it is advisable to focus on preserving the strengths and maximizing the opportunities. Therefore, it is necessary to put the emphasis on preserving the quality of the environment, the landscape and the cultural heritage offered by the area. The increase in the number of tourists is not desirable for the Třeboň region, as the increasing attendance could increase the risk of negative impacts of the weaknesses and the increasing importance of the threats.

Based on the research, some measures were proposed to enhance sustainable development. The first measure is to modify and regulate the information boards, leading to preservation of the landscape character of the area and reduction of negative ecological impacts. The second proposal is to hold historical markets in the premises of the Třeboň Chateau with the involvement of the providers of sustainable tourism services. The aim is to suppress the

seasonality of visiting cultural monuments (the chateau) and the promotion of sustainable forms of tourism. Třeboň region is, however, typical of its beautiful landscape and nature (as a part of the Protected Landscape Area). The construction of new buildings would be a further interference to the landscape and the environment. It is therefore not desirable in this location. The problem is, in particular, the insufficient sports facilities that could be used in bad weather.

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Original scientific paper

FOOD AND BEER MATCHING TO PROMOTE DESTINATIONS: A CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to determine and evaluate Central and Eastern European (CEE) consumers' food and beer matching preferences with a view to encouraging tourism stakeholders to promote local destinations. A literature review determined the characteristics of beer that interacted with different types of food and revealed issues for consideration when matching beer with food. A series of tasting sessions was conducted with 214 hospitality and tourism, food and beverage educators and industrialists from six CEE countries, comprising roughly equal numbers of males and females aged from 20 to 64. Seven foods (oily, acidic, salty, mild and spicy high protein, high fat, sweet) were offered alongside seven styles of beer. The tasters' preferred matches were recorded. The most popular match (67.3%) was dark chocolate with Belgian fruit beer followed by sausages with both Bohemian pilsner and Hefeweizen beer. Every beer was matched by some tasters with every food; the least popular match (7.5%) was spicy meatballs with Belgian fruit beer. Further research into food and beer matching is recommended to validate the findings and to benefit publicans and restaurateurs. As it focuses on food and beer matching, as opposed to pairing, is located in CEE and suggests ways in which microbreweries in CEE can promote health and sustainable tourism, the research is original. Recommendations are made for stakeholders including the managers of F&B outlets and destination managers, who are advised to operationalise sense of place by developing a unique, dedicated toolkit to inform destination branding, and for further research.

Keywords Beer; Food; Matching; Promotion; Tourism; Central and Eastern Europe

INTRODUCTION

'Beer most likely first came about by accident' noted Dulye and Herz (2018, 4), who surmise that Neolithic people in the middle east grew barley, ground it into gruel then experimented with additional ingredients including bitter herbs such as turmeric. They propose that this mixture became colonised with wild yeast and was then fermented to produce an early form of beer. Subsequently different styles of fermented beverages developed, influenced by variable climates and the availability and flavours of local ingredients; hence, regional and local styles of beer emerged. Additionally, the evolution of beer has been shaped by religious, political, economic and social factors (Dulye & Herz, 2018).

Traditionally beer has been consumed without food and has even been classified as a food (cf. Chemistry World, 1996), whereas wine has often been matched or paired with food. In most European countries, the drink/drive laws have had a powerful effect on the consumption of alcohol. In attempts to increase their sales, many public houses are offering food throughout the day to supplement their profits from alcohol sales. Recently, the focus on healthy eating is reflected in menu offerings via 'healthy options' and calorie counts. "Beer contains fewer calories measure-for-measure than wine, milk or fruit juice, with spirits having more than six times the calories of beer" (Clarke & Roux, 2007, 43) so it should be given serious consideration in this context. Also, in its favour, it has been mooted that because the ingredients and brewing processes in beer are wider ranging, beer offers more diverse flavours and is much less concentrated than wine in the key sensory components that react significantly with food flavours and textures, that is, alcohol, acid and tannin (Block, 2012) so it is argued that beer is a preferable choice for food matching. Based on these premises, using the findings from primary research in CEE, the present paper examines ways in which food and beer may be matched, taking account of possible cultural preferences and responds to five research questions. The response to the final (sixth) research questions puts the primary research into a tourism context, in particular with reference to destination management and marketing, 'sense of place' and Slow Food.

The initial purpose of the present study was to inspire publicans and restaurateurs, and in turn consumers, to move towards this potentially more palatable, more flexible and healthier option of food and beer matching. In turn, based on these findings, the aim of the present research is to put forward menu suggestions to promote local products so attracting local guests, as well as domestic and international tourists, to sample and enjoy the tasting experiences. Sparks, Bowen & Klag (2003) also stated the importance of the F&B experience in attracting tourists to destinations while Sims (2009) pointed out that food plays an important role in tourism and local food can provide a tourist with a bond to the area and to local culture and heritage, thereby improving the quality of the tourist experience. Therefore, in the context of the findings, recommendations are made for destination and local business managers and further research.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Matching and pairing food and alcoholic beverages

For several decades, advisory textbooks (for example, Beckett, 2002; Bell-Johnson, 1999; Robinson, 1987; St Pierre, 2001) and numerous menu recommendations have been made for

matching and/or pairing food and wine. Researchers have reported 'ideal' food and wine pairings with, for example, 33 burgundy grand crus (Lecat, & Chapuis, 2017), so promoting food and wine tourism (cf. Croce, & Perri, 2010; Santeramo, Seccia, & Nardone, 2017). Pairing suggestions on the menu for food with wine by the glass were shown by Terrier and Jaquinet (2016) to increase the sales of wine by the glass significantly; they discuss practical applications of this strategy. Searches indicate that most of the food and beverage (F&B) pairing and matching literature and practice focusses on wine; there is only sparse research on food and beer pairing and matching.

Nevertheless, there are numerous articles in the trade press, with corresponding advice on food outlet websites, predominantly from the USA, claiming to guide diners regarding specific recommendations for food and beer pairings (for example, Cole, 2013; Kallas, 2011; Mather, 2014; The staff, 2011) but very few cover the broader spectrum of food and beer matching (for example, Block 2012; Foottit, 2011). Michel Roux Jr. (2006, 10) experimented by serving Liefman's Kriek cherry beer with a spicy seared tuna dish and it was so successful he decided to add beer to his menu in London: "In the past beer has often been neglected in top restaurants and perceived merely as a thirst-quencher. I believe that beer should be perceived as a sophisticated, gourmet drink … a sophisticated drink that goes wonderfully with food…beer is indeed beginning to rival wine's traditional standing as food's best friend" (Clarke, & Roux, 2007, 43). Subsequently, Mather (2014, 21) advised consumers to ask an expert, the beer sommelier, who is "a trained professional who specialises in the service and knowledge of beer".

Beer: composition and styles

The ingredients of beer, of which there are two main types - ale and lager, are water (over 90%), malted barley, hops and yeast; the latter determines whether the beer is an ale or a lager. The difference is that ale yeasts collect on the top during fermentation and ales ferment at warmer temperatures (60-75°F) than lager yeasts, which are "bottom fermenting" at cooler (40-60°F) temperatures (http://homebrewacademy.com/beer-ingredients/). In consequence, ales are 'heavier bodied' and more complex, for example stout and India pale ale (IPA), whereas lagers tend to be 'light' and 'crisp', such as pilsner style beers (http://homebrewacademy.com/beer-ingredients/). A less common yeast, weizen (wheat), is used in some German wheat beers such as Hefeweizen.

A by-product of fermentation is carbon dioxide gas (CO_2), which is sometimes introduced by force carbonation (measured in volumes of dissolved gas per volume of liquid, with 2.5 to 2.7 being the most common) as can nitrogen, which creates smaller bubbles and a softer mouth feel than CO_2 (Dulye & Herz, 2018). The pH score measures the alkalinity (>7) or acidity (<7) of a liquid with tap water having a pH of 7; sour beer styles, post-fermentation, are in line with red wine (pH 3.3-3.6); the pH of most beer styles post-fermentation is 4-4.5 (Dulye & Herz, 2018). The colour Standard Reference Method (SRM) for beer ranges from light yellow (1-1.5), straw (2-3), pale (4), gold (5-6), light amber (7), amber (8), medium amber (9), copper/garnet (10-12), saddle brown (16-17), dark brown (18-24), dark (25-39) to black (40+) (Dulye & Herz, 2018). Usually, colour is determined by the drying, or malting, of germinated barley grains; the longer and hotter the barley is kilned, the darker it becomes (Roberts, 2015).

Effects of beer on the sense of taste

"The sense of taste is activated when certain classes of chemicals contact specialised epithelial taste receptor cells in the tongue, palate, throat and, sometimes, near the epiglottis and the upper oesophagus" (Breslin & Spector, 2008, R148). They explain that taste is a function of touch, related to the sensation of F&Bs on our palates and comment that most researchers categorise taste perceptions into one or more combinations of sweet, umami, salt, sour and bitter; they recognise and attribute individual differences in taste to genetics and environmental factors (cf. Risso et al., 2017). "Most taste perceptions are composed also of distinct additional attributes: intensity; hedonic; oral localisation; and temporal features (rise and decay and aftertaste) (Breslin & Spector, 2008, R151).

The affective or hedonic component of a taste refers to whether the stimulus is liked or disliked... Without question, the hedonic domain of taste function can be characterised by its fundamental role in food selection and the control of intake in both humans and animals" (Breslin & Spector, 2008, R154). Prescott (1998), in making intercultural taste comparisons, suggested that familiarity with the products has an important influence on individual tastes and, in consequence, individual likes or dislikes; more recently, Arellano-Covarrubias, Gómez-Corona, Varela and Escalona-Buendía (2019) noted cultural differences in beer flavour pairings. Furthermore, cultural preferences may change when consumers move from one culture to another, suggesting that familiarity with taste can influence their choices so food and beer are best matched locally (Betancur, Motoki, Spence, & Velasco, 2020).

Additionally, although training has been shown to improve tasters' ability to identify, discriminate amongst and match beers, it appears that such benefits do not generalise to beers not experienced during training (Van Doorn, Watson, Timora, & Spence, 2020).

As the styles of beer continue to expand, personal preferences, which have been attributed to biological, psychological and socio-cultural factors, including national and regional ethnocentricity, may come to the fore (cf. Betancur et al., 2020). Furthermore, product-intrinsic attributes, i.e. the sensory aspects of the beer per se and product-extrinsic attributes, i.e. external sensory characteristics, for example packaging, in addition to contextual and environmental influences such as familiarity, habit, peer preferences, location, context, occasion and reason for drinking etc., have become evident in line with food preferences (for example, Betancur et al., 2020; Siemieniako, Kubacki, Glińska, & Krot, 2011). Therefore, to allow for personal preferences, and to accommodate the hedonic domain of the taste function in individuals, the present study focuses on food and beer matching as opposed to food and beer pairing.

Tasting beer

Prior to tasting beer, its visual and olfactory features should be noted; they include colour, clarity, head/lacing, carbonation and smell, for example, fruit, bread, sugar, spice etc. On tasting the beer, acidity, bitterness, sweetness, fruitiness, hops etc. accompany the mouth-feel which may be warming, effervescent, 'with body', smooth or balanced. The aftertaste follows (http://www.qblp.com/education/beer-tasting-101/). Taking the scientific perspective, Brányik, Vicente, Dostálek and Teixeira (2008) remark that certain flavour active compounds in continuous fermentation systems can control the flavour of beer so that characterising its taste only by the analytical determination of some of its components is too simplistic. They believe that, in practice, the flavour of some compounds is suppressed or accentuated by others and the final taste profile results from the interplay of various taste features. Furthermore, they state that beer flavour is influenced by beer type and circumstances, which depend on country of origin and fashion. In addition, numerous technological parameters affect flavour formation, for example, flavour may be controlled by applying "non-recombinant mutants and/or genetically manipulated recombinant brewing yeast strains'; 'the potential of metabolic engineering using genetic tools is enormous" (Brányik et al., 2008,10). Betancur et al. (2020) remarked on cultural preferences for visual appearance, in particular colour.

The present study relies on a relatively simplistic and practical impact of the ingredients of beer on its flavour, for example, water can add mineral and metallic flavours to the beer (Barlow, & Barlow, 2008). Malted barley may comprise a blend of the following malts depending on its style of beer: base malts; kilned or colour malts; crystal or caramel malt and/or roasted malt (Mosher, 2009). The sensory vocabulary associated with malt includes: grainy; bready; caramel; toffee; nutty; roasted; coffee; chocolate; espresso; burnt; raisins; prunes; and dried fruit (Mosher, 2009). Mosher (2009) links hops to bitterness and aroma, with a sensory vocabulary embracing: spicy; floral, lavender; pine; resin; citrus; blackcurrant leaf; and cat's pee, denoting yeast as a low aroma and flavour component, associated with vegetal, 'oxidised', buttery, ethyl acetate, clove, barnyard animal and banana.

Matching beer with food

The key characteristics of beer that interact with food are intensity of flavour, body, acidity, hop bitterness, maltiness, sweetness, fruitiness, carbonation and alcohol content (cf. Morais, 2017). Factors that might be considered when matching food with beer are heaviness, body (light dishes work well with delicate beers; heavier dishes need a heavier beer) and flavour intensity (the more intense the flavour of the food the more intense the flavour of the beer). Also, the cooking methods, such as roasting, frying, grilling and smoking, can increase flavour intensity; maltiness often complements different cooking methods; hop bitterness, roasted malt flavours, carbonisation or alcohol content can balance fattiness whilst and sweetness and maltiness may complement acidity in food (Brewers' Association, 2017).

   With respect to sauces, other accompaniments and seasoning, hop bitterness, roasted malt, alcohol and carbonation balance creamy sauces, and sweetness, for example, a light herby beer could complement a herbal dish whereas a sweet malty beer could accompany a spicy sauce. Hop bitterness emphasises heat so malty or sweet beers moderate heat and spiciness. Additionally, sweetness and richness complement full flavoured beers; therefore, high alcohol beers and hop bitterness compliment sweetness, stout goes well with dark chocolate and the acidity in fruit beers matches fruit tarts and fruity/creamy desserts (cf. Brewers' Association, 2017; Dorenburg, & Page, 2006; Morais, 2017). It is easier for consumers to make decisions if there is an explanation for the match; ideally, the word 'balance' should accompany the recommendation says Block (2012), referring not only to the food and the beer but also to the contrasting flavours. Tab. 1 summarises Mosher's (2009) views on matching food with selected beers.

Table 1 Matching food with beer styles: examples

Beer	Flavour	Aroma	Balance	Food matching
Bohemian pilsner	Sweet malt, hints of caramel	Clean malt, plus spicy perfume of Saaz hops	Medium or high hops, clean finish	Wide range of lighter foods such as chicken, salad, salmon and bratwurst. Mild cheese and light desserts
Hefeweizen (German)	Light graininess with milky texture, low hops and high carbonation	Fruity, bananas, spicy, cloves	Dry, grainy, rich and creamy	Light foods, salads, seafood, white sausage, goat's cheese, herbed cheese spread. Light desserts
Witbier (Belgian)	Dry creaminess, soft acidic finish	Spicy, yeasty, notes of orange and coriander	Milky texture but slightly sour	Light foods such as fish, chicken and pork, light and herb cheese, citrus desserts and dark chocolate
Belgian fruit beer	Delicate fruitiness, underlying acidity, clean crisp finish	Fruitiness	Crisp, sweet with level of sweetness depending on the beer	Salads, light foods and desserts
IPA	Plenty of malt but dominated by hops	Spicy hops and nutty malt	Always hoppy but to varying degrees	Strong spicy food, blue cheese, bold sweet desserts such as carrot cake
Bitter	Fresh hops plus nutty maltiness, crisp finish	Hops with woody, malt, spice and fruit	Hop and malt balance, bitter finish.	Wide range of food, roast meat, fried fish and chips, spicy food such as curry and mild cheese
Stout	Roasted flavours, with caramel and hops	Roasted malt without hop aroma	Dry to very sweet	Hearty rich food, steak, meat pies, seafood including oysters, old cheddar style cheese and, often, chocolate or coffee desserts

Compiled from Mosher (2009)

Interestingly, more recent research into food-wine and food-beer pairing (Eschevins, Giboreau, Julien, & Dacremont, 2019) determined that French sommeliers tended to follow the conceptual associations and established norms as did the wine experts; however, the beer experts relied more on experiential discourse. Following a critical review of F&B pairing literature, Spence (2020a) concluded that there were two broad approaches to the pairing: cognitive/intellectual and perceptual and mooted cultural matches were a subset of the former, although they are influenced strongly by perceptually pleasing combinations. Spence (2020b) expands on these approaches to pairing.

Destination management, sense of place and the Slow Food Movement,

Taking account of the international and cultural dimensions, it became clear that the research findings would have implications not only for tourists and local consumers but also for local businesses in terms of destination management and sense of place. Leiper (1979) identified the elements of the tourism system as tourists, generating regions, transit routes and destination regions, which comprise the tourist industry (the heart of the system). He maintained that, within this 'open' system, these elements operated within physical, cultural, social, economic and political environments, all of which interacted with technology and had both spatial and functional connections. Hence he perceived a destination as a generating area or transit zone within the context of a wider tourism system in which each component is interrelated and has a strong functional reliance on the others. In terms of planning and development, the predominant focus here is on the tourists in terms of their origins (including home country) and the F&B outlets in the destination or region.

Applying these concepts to the present study, the notion of sense of place in the context of destination management is considered to be appropriate. Destination managers and local tourism stakeholders need to project a positive brand image to attract consumers (cf. Anholt, 2010; Pike, Gentle, Kelly & Beatson, 2018; UNWTO, 2009) and communicate this positive image and reputation to residents and visitors through 'the emotional power of a destination's tone' including not only its ambiance, physical fabric and character but also 'the attitude of its people, its heritage, and narratives', in short, a destination's 'sense of place' (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride, 2011, 12), which Anholt (2009, 30) denoted as those aspects that make a location distinctive and memorable and thus communicate its personality, including the physical and cultural environment, products with which the place is associated and the people; therefore destination branding strategies should begin by understanding what constitutes this sense of place (cf. Campelo, Aitken, Thyne & Gnoth, 2014). Jarratt, Phelan, Wain & Dale (2019) advocate stakeholders in destination management to operationalise sense of place by developing a unique, dedicated toolkit to inform destination branding.

Increasingly, as consumer demands are driven by environmental, ethical, social and health concerns, the Slow Food Movement has sought to educate consumers about traditional and local F&B, while also protecting food and agricultural heritage (cf. Jung, Ineson & Miller, 2014; Nosi & Zanni, 2004). Recognising that most tourism destination organisations tend to focus on marketing and promotion at the expense of resource conservation and planning with serious consequences for destination sustainability (cf. Jamal & Stronza, 2009), Jung, Ineson

& Miller (2014) examined the contribution of the Slow Food Movement to sustainable tourism development. They confirmed that public–private partnerships, involving close involvement of local stakeholders, were a key to success and could contribute strongly to promoting sustainable tourism development in rural areas; also a focus on local produce could make a substantial contribution to local economies as well as adding value to sustainable practices. A content and discourse analysis of consumers' responses, undertaken in Australia by Germov, Williams & Freij. (2010), revealed themes, metaphors and imagery pertaining to Slow Food including: conviviality (social pleasures of sharing "good food"); localism (social, health and environmental benefits of local produce); and romanticism (of idyllic rural lifestyles as an antidote to the time-poverty of urban life). Interestingly, in researching visitor experience and revisit intentions at a Slow Food festival, although Jung, Ineson, Kim & Yap (2015) found programmes, food and other amenities and entertainment all impacted directly the visitors' overall experience and satisfaction, only the food (quality and locally produced Slow F&B) and other amenities (local producers'exhibits, friendliness of the stall holders, sufficient places to sit and rest, cleanliness of festival site and the interactive foodie activities, workshops and tasting sessions for all the family), contributed directly to revisit intentions.

In conclusion, the following research questions are posed:

RQ1 What are the most popular food and beer matchings?

RQ2 Are there any cultural differences in terms of preferred food and beer matchings?

RQ3 On the basis of the findings from the taste panels, what general recommendations for matching food flavours with beer styles can be made?

RQ4 On the basis of the findings from the taste panels, what specific menu recommendations can be made?

RQ5 On the basis of the findings from the taste panels, what practical food flavour and beer style matching recommendations can be made to assist publicans and restaurateurs?

RQ6 What might be the impact of the primary research findings for local stakeholders and destination managers?

DATA AND METHODS

This practical qualitative study employed evaluative comparative taste testing to measure target consumers' likes and dislikes; it is time and cost efficient and useful for product positioning and competitive benchmarking and to determine interactions between products (AROXA, 2018) and also permits comparisons and can highlight other key performance

indicators of food or drink products (Kuhn, 2021). The target consumers may be referred to as the taste panel who, in this instance, have the collective duty to taste combinations of beer and selected food products in order to determine factors relating to their combined flavours and texture. In some instances, consumer preference taste panels are large and untrained; standards are not provided and decisions are based on preferences alone (Bradley, 1953). To be useful, panels should be representative of the consumer market of interest and, ideally, test procedures should be kept simple (cf. Bradley, 1953).

The taste panel comprised 214 invited seminar participants, all of whom were employed in the hospitality/tourism sector (industry-59%; education-41%), predominantly in F&B roles. The tasting sessions took place in eight locations across six CEE countries comprising: Bulgaria (n=40); Czech Republic (n=44); Poland (n=19); Romania (n=59); Serbia (n=21; and Slovenia (n=31). There was roughly an equal number of males and females aged from 20 to 64, with a modal age group of 30-39.

In each location, tasting sessions were set up, presented and conducted identically.

Following the recommended procedures, prior to each tasting session, everyone was expected to wash their hands. In each location, the test samples were purchased and tasted by the facilitator in advance the tasting session to ensure the quality, standard and authenticity of each of the products and to create a positive and safe taste-testing environment. The taste panels were instructed to wait to taste each of their samples until they had been given the background information and told to start tasting (cf. UCSD Centre for Community Health, 2022).

An introductory lecture was given to raise the participants' awareness of: factors that might: influence the character of beer; beer characteristics that interact with food; and issues for consideration when matching food with beer based on the literature. Seven generic, international and readily available and contrasting styles of beer (ale, lager and lambic), ranging from a light blonde to a heavy stout, were chosen for the present research. The beers selected were sufficiently different to elicit different matchings (cf. Eschevins et al., 2015). The range of beers provided in an identical sequence in each location. They included: Bohemian pilsner; German Hefeweizen beer; Belgian Witbier; Belgian fruit beer; IPA; Bitter; and Stout (cf. Barlow, & Barlow, 2008). In order that the taste buds would not be confused by flavour combinations, the foods on offer were simple, commonly available. They reflected various basic taste and texture sensations suggested by the literature, in which some of the food types on offer had been linked to the chosen beer styles whilst others had not. It was not only of interest to identify matches that 'worked' but also those that did not work. The foods

for tasting alongside the beers comprised: oily (fish); acidic (pickles); salty (hard strong-flavoured cheese); high protein (mild and spicy meatballs); high fat (sausage); and sweet (dark chocolate). The beers were introduced in sequence (light to dark) and small bite-sized portions of each of the accompanying foods were made available throughout the tasting session plus water and bread to clear the palate. The five steps in taste testing were followed: (recognise it, inspect it, smell it, taste it, score it) (cf. UCSD Centre for Community Health, 2022). Without consultation, each member of the taste panel was asked to record his/her individual food/beer preferences (matched pairs only) on a 6x7 grid. Following each tasting session, the number of matches in each square of the grid was calculated then the overall totals were cumulated and compared for analytical purposes.

RESULTS

RQ1 What are the most popular food and beer matchings?

The cumulated findings revealed 3002 out of 10,486 possible (28.6% of the total options) preferred food/beer matchings, indicating that there was no clear overall consensus. Based on these positive responses, 12 of the possible 49 matched dyads were voted for by over 40% of the tasters (Ref. Tab. 2), suggesting that two out of every five CEE consumers might enjoy matching beers of the style similar to those tasted, with menu items incorporating such flavours and textures as the foods sampled.

Table 2 The top 12 ranked food and beer matchings

Beer	Food	Ranking	% votes
Belgian fruit beer	Dark chocolate	1	67.3
Bohemian pilsner	Sausage	2	53.7
Hefeweizen	Sausage	3	53.3
IPA	Spicy meatballs	4-	48.6
Stout	Dark chocolate	4-	48.6
Witbier	Strong hard cheese	6	47.2
Hefeweizen	Oily fish	7	46.3
Bitter	Mild meatballs	8	44.9
Hefeweizen	Mild meatballs	9	43.5
Hefeweizen	Hard cheese	10	43.0
Witbier	Oily fish	11	42.1
Bohemian pilsner	Strong hard cheese	12	41.6

The top match was Belgian fruit beer and dark chocolate (63.7%), followed not very closely by Bohemian pilsner (53.7%) then Hefeweizen beer (53.3%), both with sausages. Strong hard cheese was matched with Witbier and Bohemian pilsner. It will be noted that, to some extent, the key findings confirm a number of general, and more specific, suggestions for pairing and

matching put forward by Dorenburg and Page (2006), Morais (2017) and Mosher (2009). Interestingly, Donadini, Fumi and Lambri (2013) found that although beer preference dominated cheese preference, cheese flavour dominance over beer flavour increased pair appreciation. Further, Donadini, Fumi and Newby-Clark (2015) maintained that familiarity with the beers enabled more profitable exploitation of the cheese and beer pairing in terms of liking and sensory properties.

By far the lowest overall percentages matched Belgian fruit beer with spicy meatballs (7.5%) and Bohemian pilsner with chocolate (7.9%). Although they may be served with sausages in Germany, cheese in Switzerland and in the United Kingdom and as a snack or side dish with beer in some CEE countries, pickles were generally not favoured as an accompaniment to beer; their best matches were with Belgian fruit beer (25.6%) and Hefeweizen (24.4%).

RQ2 Are there any cultural differences in terms of preferred food and beer matchings?

Turning to the cultural dimension, there is evidence of diversity across CEE. The strongest consensus in terms of the food/beer matchings was found in Poland (cf. Siemieniako et al., 2011) whilst the most disparate opinions emerged from Serbia. For example, Belgian fruit beer was matched with dark chocolate by over two-thirds of the tasters in every country except Serbia (only 23.8%); in stark contrast, every taster in Poland voter for this matching! Therefore, it is important to consider and evaluate the cultural dimension when tasting food and beer (cf. Arellano-Covarrubias et al., 2019; Prescott, 1998).

RQ3 On the basis of the findings from the taste panels, what general recommendations for matching food flavours and beer styles can be made?

Following the research findings, Tab. 3 offers some general recommendations for food and beer matches, ranked according to popularity.

Table 3 Recommendations for matching food flavours and beer styles

Food flavour → Beer style	Salty	High fat	Spicy high protein	Mild high protein	Sweet	Oily	Acidic
Hefeweizen Beer (German)	5	1	3	3		2	
Witbier (Belgian)	1	5		4	3	2	
Bohemian pilsner	2	1	4-	4-		3	
Stout	2		3-	3-	1		
Bitter	4	3	1-	1-			
Fruit beer	2				1		3
IPA		2	1-	1-			

The findings suggest that Hefeweizen beer is the most versatile in terms of food matching, followed closely by Bohemian pilsner and Witbier, with protein being the most versatile food. In contrast, pickles (sour taste) were only matched with Fruit beer at rank 3 and oily food only managed rank 2 with Witbier.

RQ4 On the basis of the findings from the taste panels, what specific menu recommendations can be made?

Interestingly, every beer was matched with every food by at least 7.5% of the tasters, indicating the versatility of the palate and the variability of individual taste sensations. A further development of this idea is illustrated in Tab. 3, which includes examples that relate to food/beer matchings made by at least 30% of the tasters overall. Column 2 in Tab. 4 indicates the percentage of the total sample making more than one food match with each of the beers tasted. These findings confirm the preference for referring to 'matching' as opposed to 'pairing' beer with food. In line with this premise, it is advocated that, perhaps, in their promotional advertising and menus, food outlets might consider recommending more than one beer to accompany each food item, possibly offering a small taste so that the consumer may make an informed decision according to his /her personal preference. To expand the findings beyond the simple foods tasted, a few examples of possible matches (consider offering options as or within tapas/nibbles, appetisers/starters, entrées and/or desserts) for publicans, restaurateurs and consumers are suggested in Tab.4.

Finally, in order to take a practical perspective, the food flavours and beer styles were matched as shown in Fig. 1. Based on the research findings, it is concluded that consumer preferences are as follows: Witbier and/or Hefeweizen beer should be served with salty foods; Bitter and/or IPA with protein foods; Fruit beer and/or Stout with sweet foods; and Bohemian pilsner with high fat foods. Publicans and restaurateurs are advised to take heed of these findings in making recommendations to consumers, especially in CEE. Interestingly, the tasters did not appear to differentiate between the 'heavier bodied', more complex ales and the light, crisp lagers when matching the food flavours with the beer styles.

Table 4 Matching food with beer styles: examples based on the CEE findings (>30% matched overall)

Beer	% of total making > 1 match	Suggested snack foods for matching in descending order of preference
Hefeweizen Beer (German)	34.9	1. Sausages, salami 2. Oily fish (paté/mini fish cakes/bites from herring; kippers; mackerel; sardines; smoked salmon; whitebait etc.) 3-. Spicy or mild red meat snacks (meatballs, mini-burgers/sliders etc., all offered with optional mild, spicy or curry flavoured hot dipping sauce) 5. Assorted local cheese bites, hot cheese with bread
Witbier (Belgian)	33.3	1. Assorted local cheese bites, hot cheese with bread 2. Oily fish (paté/mini fish cakes/bites from herring; kippers; mackerel; sardines; smoked salmon; whitebait etc.) 3. Dark chocolate (bars; mousse; cake) 4. Non-spicy red meat snacks (meatballs, mini-burgers/sliders etc., all offered with hot dipping sauces) 5. Sausages, salami
Bohemian pilsner	29.6	1. Sausages, salami 2. Assorted local cheese bites, hot cheese with bread 3. Oily fish (paté/mini fish cakes/bites from herring; kippers; mackerel; sardines; smoked salmon; whitebait etc.) 4-. Spicy or mild red meat snacks (meatballs, mini-burgers/sliders etc., all offered with optional mild, spicy or curry flavoured hot dipping sauce)
Stout	28.2	1. Dark chocolate (bars; mousse; cake) 2. Assorted local cheese bites; hot cheese with bread 3-. Spicy or mild red meat snacks (meatballs, mini-burgers/sliders, etc. all offered with optional mild, spicy or curry flavoured hot dipping sauce)
Bitter	27.2	1-. Spicy or mild red meat snacks (meatballs, mini-burgers/sliders etc., all offered with optional spicy or curry flavoured hot sauce) 3. Sausages, salami 4. Assorted local cheese bites
Fruit beer	23.6	1. Dark chocolate (bars; mousse; cake) 2. Assorted local cheese bites 3. Pickles
IPA	23.5	1-. Spicy or mild red meat snacks (meatballs, mini-burgers etc., all offered with optional spice or curry flavoured hot sauce) 3. Sausages, salami

RQ5 On the basis of the findings from the taste panels, what practical food flavour and beer style matching recommendations can be made to assist publicans and restaurateurs?

Figure 1 Overview of food flavours matched with beer styles
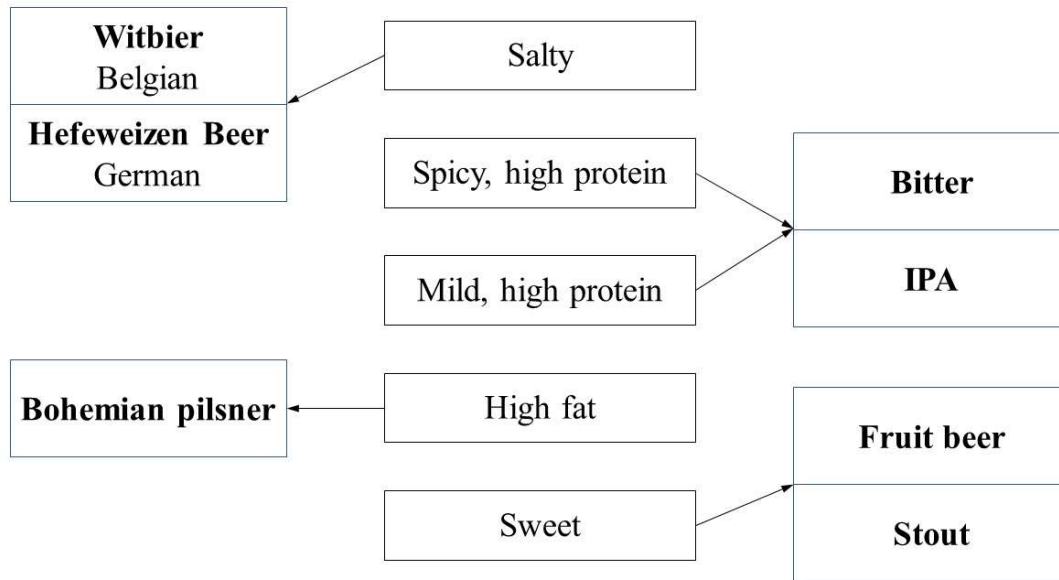
RQ6   What might be the impact of the primary research findings for local stakeholders and destination managers?

Leiper (1979) suggested that his Tourism System could be used by managers to underpin and inform their operational plans. In order to promote local products, destination managers will be required to strengthen their stakeholder engagement and understanding. Therefore, the application of theoretical models, such as Leiper's (1979), with regard to supply and demand, i.e. developing an understanding of the motivations and desires of both local and international consumers (demand) and the ability of host community to deliver (supply) is recommended. Additionally, business managers are advised to employ a positive brand image to develop sense of place toolkits (cf. Jarratt et al., 2019) with stakeholders (supply) to encourage greater ownership of local culture, produce and identity, all of which could lead to enhanced and sustainable visitor and host community experiences. Subsequently, destination managers would then be in a position to inform local business owners in terms of future marketing and promotion.

Destination Management considerations include liaison with local stakeholders to develop a unique sense of place toolkit (See Jarratt et al., 2019) then employing the kit, in conjunction

with the above research findings, to inform targeted marketing messages that are aligned with consumer preferences so reinforcing the local heritage and vernacular through the promotion of local produce. The F&B offerings could be enhanced further by providing micro- and craft brewers opportunities to compete with conglomerate brands, so underpinning sense of place and helping to drive visitors to less well known areas that have capacity to relieve pressure on hotspots. In this way, current consumer demands for new authentic experiences can be met whilst addressing any unintended impacts of "Overtourism".

CONCLUSION

Practical recommendations

As noted at the outset, due to recent research into the impact of obesity and alcohol on health, plus the tightening of the drink drive laws in most European countries, many modern consumers do not want to drink beer alone. Based on the above findings, various options are open to publicans/restaurateurs, especially to attract both national and international tourists. If the consumer desires only to snack whilst drinking, suggested matches on a table or bar menu might be in the form of small bites or tapas. It is recommended that the styles of beer on offer are listed alongside the food offerings but with possible matches as opposed to direct pairings, or with suggestions of three to four options with appropriate taste and flavour descriptions. In this way, consumers' initial choices may be beers or dishes and, if necessary, verbal recommendations may be sought from the host/service provider/ beer sommelier. Robinson & Clifford (2012) purported that a focus on the quality of service provision could be separated from F&B as it can offer positive experiences which can enhance revisit intentions. They suggested that interactive F&B matching could be linked to historical and/or cultural contexts. In addition, interactive terminals and simulators can be available on-site to aid visitors' understanding of how local raw food materials were produced using sustainable methods (cf. Jung, Ineson, Kim & Yap, 2015).

One interesting possibility, which offers the guest flexibility and variability, is to set a fixed price for two, three, four or five beers and a corresponding number of dishes, served alongside one another on a suitable wood slice, tray or platter. The beer should be served in a choice of 250, 400 or 500 ml. measures, with the portion size and type of glass (See Fig. 2 for examples) being selected according to the style of beer, local tradition and the order of each consumer.

Figure 2 Examples of types of beer glass

Source: https://homebrewacademy.com/beer-glass-types/

In general, the variety of local CEE beers, especially from small producers, is increasing. Additionally, due to the need to reduce food and drink miles, so promoting sustainable tourism, local and in-town producers are offering Slow Food accompaniments to their beer products which also may be brewed locally.

It was pointed out that the LA County health regulations associated with COVID 19 have made tasting rooms unsustainable, leading possibly to the closure of some breweries (Madler, 2020). On the other side of the pond, a United Kingdom couple have found a novel solution to the problem of pub closures (Eastern Daily Press, 2020). They offer virtual brewery tours during which users visit from remote locations via the internet and the virtual visitors may ask live questions, followed by a beer tasting with the beers that have been delivered to the tasters' homes. These virtual tours may be bought as family gifts so that families and friends, often separated by COVID regulations and lockdown, may reunite to taste and drink beer together. Clearly, even after COVID restrictions are lifted, this innovative idea could be extended to include food and beer matching. In this context, another suggestion, that reflects not only the consumers' concerns about the drink-drive laws but also healthy eating, is associated with the recent growth in the consumption of non/low alcoholic beverages that can provide

microbrewers with opportunities to support food outlets or to offer beer and food matching on site.

Limitations and future research

This study has a few limitations worth noting; in particular the biased sampling (taste panels comprising educators and local industrialists as opposed to visitors) is likely to impact the external validity of the findings. In order to improve the representativeness of this study, future research should focus on discrete locations and ensure proportional representation from locals and tourists. As certain features may be associated with food and beer matching preferences, such as country of origin, gender and age, it would be interesting also to profile the consumers, including their contextual and environmental influences such as food and beer drinking habits and preferences via a brief survey prior to or during the F&B tasting. Although the present study has developed a simple model appropriate to the limited data, it lacks the qualitative depth to understand the reasons behind the matching preferences. Future researchers (and F&B managers) are advised to question consumers to determine the reasons behind their beer and food preferences. Furthermore, the validity of the developed here could be tested and extended within a different cultural context, for example, in a Western European country, America or Asia, using larger location specific sample size to confirm or refute the generalisability of the findings.

Research contribution

As the types of beer on offer increase, especially with the development of craft, local and low alcohol beers, and the fact that microbreweries are offering food accompaniments to their products, research into food and beer matching is of practical value in inspiring not only consumers but also producers and hospitality and tourism vendors to be even more sustainable. Furthermore, if we consider the trends related to enjoying alcohol with food, as opposed to alcohol per se, visitors should be encouraged to sample the matchings preferred by the local people (cf. Betancur et al., 2020) if they are to immerse themselves totally in a cultural, sustainable tourism experience.

With respect to the research implication for destination management, the study demonstrates that the Slow Food Movement can make a substantial contribution to local economies in addition to adding value to sustainable practices. The present study highlights the links between local produce and identity through sense of place. It stresses the need for

close and continued involvement of stakeholders led by destination management organisations. The involvement of local stakeholders in public–private partnerships can contribute to the success of rural tourism destinations when the Slow Food and Cittaslow Movements are considered as alternative approaches to sustainable tourism development.

The above data illustrate the cultural versatility of the palate and the variability of individual taste sensations and confirm the argument for referring to 'matching' as opposed to 'pairing' beer with food. The present study is original not only because it focuses on food and beer matching, as opposed to pairing but also because it is set in CEE. Further, the present study raises the awareness of the importance of stakeholder collaboration in promoting beer and food matching. A process, led by destination managers and fuelled by local business owners, should enable the promotion of innovative visitor experiences through high quality, locally sourced product offerings and a clean comfortable environment, accompanied by a friendly local welcome.

To conclude: further national and comparative studies within and outside CEE would be of substantial interest to verify or refute and consolidate or expand the present study, in particular with respect to national cultural preferences and products.

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Original scientific paper

MICROBREWERIES IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC: HOW DOES A CONNECTION TO THE LOCAL PLACE INFLUENCE MARKETING COMMUNICATION?

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Abstract

Place-based brands emphasize local identity through connection to the local place where they realize their business. The marketing strategy that emphasizes local attributes to strengthen the local identity is called neolocalism. A strategy in which companies closely linked to their place of business use elements of neolocalism in their communication has become common in recent years and is typical for microbreweries. This article aims to answer the question if there are differences in marketing communication mixes of microbreweries having their own local points of sale, and if the location of that local point of sale (i.e., in the center of the town, in suburban areas, or outside the town) influences which communication tools the microbreweries prefer in their marketing communication mix. We performed a quantitative survey to identify the prevailing marketing communication mix tools used by microbreweries in the Czech Republic. The results confirmed that microbreweries with their own local points of sale utilize different marketing mix components; to varying degrees, they use ATL/BTL communication tools and a varied mix of ON-LINE vs. OFF-LINE communication tools. Similarly, the location of the point of sale further influences the components of the marketing communication mix; microbreweries use a varied mix of ON-LINE vs. OFF-LINE communication tools and without any difference in using of ATL/BTL communication tools.

Keywords: Microbreweries; Neolocalism; Marketing communications; SMEs; Marketing strategy

INTRODUCTION

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) represent a key element in European Economy (European Commission, 2015). In 2018 there were approximately 25.1 mil. SMEs in the European Union (EU), which represents approximately 99.8 % of all business subjects. SMEs in the EU employ over 97 million people, and their average contribution to the EU budget is 56 %. SMEs play an integral role in economic growth, regional development, job creation, and innovation. The literature identifies different size categories of small and medium enterprises, including micro-enterprises (up to 10 employees), small enterprises (up to 50

employees), and medium enterprises (up to 250 employees). There are also categories characterized by the uniform type of production, i.e., brewing (Hall et al., 2004; Psillaki & Dasaklakis, 2009; Jõeveer, 2013; Moritz et al., 2016; Kenourgios et al., 2019). Due to their size, all the stated SME categories face many major limitations (across the industries in which they deliver their activities). This also includes missing internal skills, such as marketing or marketing communication skills (Beck & Demirguc-Kunt, 2006; European Commission, 2007; Beck et al., 2008; Palacín-Sánchez et al., 2013; European Central Bank, 2014; Kumar & Rao, 2015; Baños-Caballero et al., 2016; Kersten et al., 2017). Thus, support of adequate digital skills and activities related to e-commerce is vital to foster the competitiveness of SMEs (Parliament of the Czech Republic, 2020; Nica et al., 2019). Special attention is paid to skills and knowledge related to digital tools (Millman & El-Gohary, 2011), such as online marketing.

The presented paper focuses on analyzing all the above-stated skills and aims to identify the characteristics that influence the use of online and off-line tools of marketing communication in the selected SMEs segment in the Czech Republic. Many studies addressed communication mix in SMEs (Liu & Li, 2008; Badi, 2018; Santana et al., 2021; Sari, 2017). Our analysis focuses on a group of micro-enterprises that face extreme limitations based on their size (Munoz et al., 2015; De Mel et al., 2008; Bruhn, 2013). These enterprises deliver their activities in the brewing industry, which has been historically very important for the Czech Republic. The overall production of the entire brewing industry in 2019 was 21.6 mil. hl (Hortig, 2020), which represents 4.9 billion CZK of revenues to the national budget of the Czech Republic (Customs Administration of the Czech Republic, 2018). Brewing has a very long history in the Czech Republic, and the country has been a long-term leader in the global consumption of beer per capita, which further emphasizes the significance of this industry in the Czech Republic.

The selected group of SMEs for this research are microbreweries. Microbreweries are defined as independent enterprises with a small number of employees, with no (or small) capital coming from larger industrial companies. They are also limited by their production (up to 10 thousand hl per year), mostly with a unique story behind, using traditional ingredients and production methods, often without pasteurization and filtration of the final product, which is characterized by a unique flavor, aroma, and color (Euromonitor International, 2019). A common trait in many microbreweries is direct sales as the distribution model. Microbreweries often run their own restaurants or pubs near their production facility and support their belonging to the local community and region through individual stories. Through

this, they offer a one-of-a-kind experience. Microbreweries often directly impact local development as they play a significant role in tourism support (Murray & Kline, 2015; Rogerson, 2016; Ikäheimo, 2021). They also opt for a specific marketing communication mix that emphasizes local motives, connection to real places and peoples, or distinctive products (Debies-Carl, 2019). Referencing local names, people, events, landscape elements, or symbols on the labeling and often in their names helps microbreweries to establish connections with the local culture and environment (Mathews & Patton, 2016).

On the other hand, some microbreweries follow a different strategy, building their marketing communication on specific manufacturing processes, unique ingredients, or innovations in production (Cabras & Bamforth, 2016). As consumers tend to prefer and appraise local and unique experiences, microbreweries are facing a growing interest (Pokrivčák et al., 2019; Tremblay et al., 2005; Král et al., 2020; Pícha et al., 2018). Such customers usually prefer products with more flavor and personality, like to experiment, appreciate the craftsmanship behind the products, and care about where their food and drink come from (Savov & Szarková, 2022; Brown, 2020).

The so-called craft revolution has also hit the Czech Republic, and since 2010 there has been a significant increase in this group of SMEs. At the moment, there are 480 craft breweries in the Czech Republic. Concerning this dynamic evolution (number of microbreweries established) and growing competition pressure, the use and correct timing (application) of marketing communication is becoming of strategic importance (Eze et al., 2020).

Microbreweries in the Czech Republic currently use a broad portfolio of marketing tools to communicate with their environment (customers, supporters, and other stakeholder groups). These tools can be identified through the websites of the individual breweries, mass media (e.g., radio, TV, and other public media – if a microbrewery advertises there or collaborates with the media in another form, such as via story coverage, etc.), public documents (e.g., Brewing calendar – Frantík, 2019) and statements (e.g., Research Institute of Brewing and Malting, 2020), social media (most microbreweries using social media in the Czech Republic use Facebook and Instagram), etc.

Despite sketchy reports and studies, the microbrewery phenomenon is still somewhat unknown and practically undocumented; scientific literature on the broader scale is absent. This may also result from the fact that the actual subjects ("micro-enterprises") have not been sufficiently studied so far (Gherhes et al., 2016).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The neolocalism phenomenon linked to microbreweries constitutes a major discussion stream in the academic literature (Ikäheimo, 2021; Holtkamp et al., 2016). Neolocalism expressed through the brand-related narrative is why microbreweries have recently been recalled as place-based brands (Taylor Jr. & DiPietro, 2020; Debies-Carl, 2019; Eberts, 2014). Microbreweries intensify their local image through connection to the local place (Melewar & Skinner, 2020; Schnell & Reese, 2014) and emphasize their local identity through the marketing strategy (Eades et al., 2017; Murray & Kline, 2015). Microbreweries admit that by highlighting the local attributes for their marketing communication, they can foster closeness with customers (Taylor Jr. & DiPietro, 2020; Hede & Watne, 2013; Schnell & Reese, 2003; Pícha & Skořepa, 2018). This is reflected in company and beer names, beer labels and other imagery, and narratives linking the products (Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2019; Fletchall, 2016).

Location, place, and social ties play an important role in craft brewing as it often becomes a critical part of the brewery's identity (Reid & Gatrell, 2017). Microbreweries significantly benefit from location-related aspects in terms of increased incoming traffic from local customers as well as visitors looking for a specific and unique beer experience (Nilsson et al., 2018). In terms of promotion, the location of the sales point is important (Donadini & Porretta, 2017). Thus based on the cited literature, we have formulated the research question **RQ1**, whether the existence of a microbrewery's direct sales point affects the marketing communication of the microbrewery.

Moreover, according to Březinová et al. (2019), Jones (2017), and Withers (2017), the place of the sales point (Ikäheimo, 2021; Cresswell, 2009; a sales point may come in different forms, such as a restaurant, pub, street vending point, gift shop, etc.) affects the composition of the marketing mix. The selection of marketing tools is guided by the "place". The tools of the marketing communication mix that microbreweries use in connection with the local identity and relation to place (Moore et al., 2016) support their unique character (Schnell & Reese, 2014). This is further emphasized by the actual location of the sales point (if a micro-enterprise has it; in the center vs. on the outskirts). Sales points in the centre do not have to use as many marketing communication tools as posters or printed media ads.

On the other hand, those on the outskirts must focus more on events to generate incoming traffic (which comprises fewer random passers-by that appear in the center, i.e., they organize more events, tastings, and excursions). Equally, microbreweries operating sales points outside

the center use more online tools, as the sale point is less visible (awareness). Therefore, based on the cited literature, we have formulated the research question **RQ2**, whether the location of the microbrewery direct sales point affects the marketing communication of that microbrewery.

This paper aims to fill in the missing knowledge on the marketing communication of microbreweries in the Czech Republic. The analysis pays special attention to the phenomenon of neolocalism, particularly the "place" factor (Ikäheimo, 2021). By outlining the substantial growth of literature discussing the role of neolocalism in the craft beer industry, this study contributes to a better understanding of how neolocalism affects the choice of marketing communication mix tools.

METHODS

For this research, we defined marketing communication as components of the marketing communication mix. The studied components were pre-selected upon a preliminary test with a limited group of microbreweries, whose representatives indicated these tools as the most frequently used ones. The analyzed marketing tools (23 in total) are the following: labels; coasters; tablecloths; glasses; signboards; free tastings; paid tastings; limited discounts; excursions (to own brewing facilities); competitions (participation in beer competitions); reference of existing customers; own website; sponsoring of local groups and charities; organizing of cultural events; social media; advertising in printed media (regional newspapers, magazines); advertising in radio (regional stations); advertising in printed media (newspapers, magazines); advertising in radio; advertising banners on the internet; posters; billboards; websites of other subjects (e.g., municipalities). The use of a specific marketing tool is captured as a binary variable (use 1 / don't use 0). At the same time, the tools were categorized by their character to ATL (Above The Line) / BTL (Below The Line), and ON-LINE vs. OFF-LINE (see Annex 1). The categorization of marketing tools for the ATL/BTL group was based on an evaluation of three marketing experts (two scholars, one from business).

The location of the direct sales point has been operationalized as a nominal variable (in the center; on the outskirts; outside the municipality). The direct sales point has also been of binary character (no own sales point 0 / own sales point 1).

With regards to the research questions, we have formulated the following research hypotheses:

H1: The existence of a microbrewery's direct sales point affects the composition of the marketing communication mix.

H2: The location of a microbrewery's direct sales point affects the composition of the marketing communication mix.

To test the relationship between the variables, we used the Pearson $\chi 2$ independence test. Before each analysis, we always checked if the prerequisites for the used method have been met, i.e., the contingency table does not have more than 20 % cells with an expected (theoretical) value below 5 and at the same time that the expected value in either of the cells is below 2. This prerequisite has been met in all of the analyses delivered. An exception was that of analyses performed with the variable (marketing tool) of "advertising in nationwide printed media" and "advertising in national radio stations," where the frequencies were very low and were therefore excluded from the set of the assessed marketing tools.

An analogical method had also been defined for testing the (in)dependence of the assessed parameters (existence of direct sales point and direct sales point location) on the use of ATL vs. BTL tools or ON-LINE vs. OFF-LINE tools. The Pearson $\chi 2$ independence test had been used, where the values in the contingency tables were the frequencies of ATL and BTL, and ON-LINE and OFF-LINE tools in the individual variants of the variables assessed.

In this case, the specific formulation of the hypotheses is the following:

H3: The existence of a microbrewery's direct sales point affects the use of ATL vs. BTL tools.

H4: The existence of a microbrewery's direct sales point affects the use of ON-LINE vs. OFF-LINE tools.

H5: The location of a microbrewery's direct sales point affects the use of ATL vs. BTL tools.

H6: The location of a microbrewery's direct sales point affects the use of ON-LINE vs. OFF-LINE tools.

It is important to highlight that the presented analyses included the assessment of the frequency of use of the individual marketing tools in the addressed microbreweries, not the expenditures on these tools.

DATA COLLECTION

Questionnaires were electronically distributed across the entire population (all microbreweries in the Czech Republic) in three rounds. The first round occurred in January 2017, the second in May 2017, and the last in January 2018. The research team strived for the highest possible

response rate, which had been 21 % after the first round, 35 % after the second round, and 44 % after the third round. In each of the additional rounds of the data collection, only those microbreweries had been addressed that did not respond in the first or the second round or microbreweries that had been recently established. The response rate after the third round had been evaluated as sufficient or as the maximum possible. Out of the total number of 374 microbreweries (data as of 30 January 2018), 165 questionnaires had been collected. Four questionnaires had been discarded from the data set due to being incomplete. The remaining 161 microbreweries, therefore, represent the studied sample, which accounts for 43 % of all microbreweries in the Czech Republic.

RESULTS

The existence of a microbrewery direct sales point **significantly affects** the use of the following marketing tools:

1. Organizing of cultural events (microbreweries **without a direct sales point** organize significantly **less** events than the expected frequency) – $p < 10^{-6}$, $\chi^2 = 33.8$, $df = 1$

2. Advertising – regional printed media (microbreweries **without a direct sales point** advertise significantly **less** than the expected frequency) – $p = 0.0005$, $\chi^2 = 12.3$, $df = 1$

3. Posters (microbreweries **with a direct sales point** post significantly **more** posters than the expected frequency) – $p = 0.000004$, $\chi^2 = 21.3$, $df = 1$

4. Competitions (microbreweries **with a direct sales point** participate in significantly **more** competitions than the expected frequency) – $p = 0.0008$, $\chi^2 = 11.2$, $df = 1$

5. Tablecloths (microbreweries **with a direct sales point** use tablecloths significantly **more** than the expected frequency) – $p = 0.00008$, $\chi^2 = 15.5$, $df = 1$

6. Signboards (microbreweries **with a direct sales point** use signboards significantly **more** than the expected frequency) – $p < 10^{-6}$, $\chi^2 = 64.2$, $df = 1$

7. Tastings – paid (microbreweries **with a direct sales point** run significantly **more** tastings than the expected frequency) – $p = 0.03$, $\chi^2 = 4.6$, $df = 1$

8. Excursions (microbreweries **with a direct sales point** run significantly **more** excursions than the expected frequency) – $p = 0.005$, $\chi^2 = 7.8$, $df = 1$

9. Websites (microbreweries **without a direct sales point** use them significantly **more** than the expected frequency) – $p = 0.004$, $\chi^2 = 8.3$, $df = 1$

10. Sponsoring (microbreweries **with a direct sales point** sponsor significantly **more** than the expected frequency) – $p = 0.01$, $\chi^2 = 6.1$, $df = 1$

11. Advertising – regional radio (microbreweries **with a direct sales point** use it significantly **more** than the expected frequency t) – p = 0.0005, χ^2 = 12.1, df = 1

12. Banners (microbreweries **with a direct sales point** use them significantly **more** than the expected frequency) – p = 0.049, χ^2 = 3.9, df = 1

The results, therefore, confirm hypothesis **H1**, that the existence of a microbrewery direct sales point does affect the composition of the marketing communication mix.

Microbreweries with or without direct sales points use BTL tools less frequently than ATL tools because there are more of them in the sample. However, the analysis also showed that the ratio of using ATL to BTL is higher in microbreweries with direct sales points, whereas microbreweries without direct sales points demonstrate a lower ratio. This means microbreweries with direct sales points "prefer" ATL tools, whereas microbreweries without direct sales points tend to use BTL tools. In other words, microbreweries with direct sales points use significantly more ATL tools compared to the expected frequencies, whereas in microbreweries without direct sales points the situation is the opposite. The existence of a microbrewery direct sales point **significantly affects** p = 0.00004, $\chi2$ = 16.9, df = 1) the use of ATL vs. BTL tools. The results confirm the hypothesis **H3** that the existence of a microbrewery direct sales point does affect the use of ATL vs. BTL tools.

Microbreweries with direct and without direct sales points use OFF-LINE tools more often than ON-LINE tools, as there are also more of them in the sample. However, the analysis also showed that the ratio of using ON-LINE to OFF-LINE tools is significantly higher in microbreweries without direct sales points. In other words, microbreweries without direct sales points "prefer" ON-LINE tools because some OFF-LINE tools cannot be used at all or with some difficulties only (e.g., the tablecloths). The existence of a microbrewery's direct sales points **significantly affects** (p = 0.0009, χ^2 = 11, df = 1) the use of ON-LINE vs. OFF-LINE tools. The results confirm hypothesis **H4** that the existence of a microbrewery direct sales point does affect the use of ON-LINE vs. OFF-LINE tools.

Location of the direct sales point (outside x outskirts x centre) also **significantly affects** the use of the following marketing tools:

1. Advertising – regional printed media (microbreweries **in the center** advertise significantly **less** than the expected frequency, on the other hand, microbreweries **on the outskirts** advertise significantly **more**) – p = 0.002, χ^2 = 12.9, df = 2

2. Posters (microbreweries **in the center** post significantly **less** posters than the expected frequency, on the other hand, microbreweries **on the outskirts** significantly **more**) – p = 0.03, χ^2 = 6.8, df = 2

3. Competitions (microbreweries **in the center** participate in significantly **less** competitions than the expected frequency, on the other hand, microbreweries **on the outskirts** participate significantly **more**) – p = 0.00007, χ^2 = 19.2, df = 2 microbreweries **in the center** use significantly **less** of this tool than the expected frequency, on the other hand, microbreweries **outside municipalities** do so significantly **more**) – p = 0.003, χ^2 = 11,9, df = 2

4. Tastings – unpaid (microbreweries **in the center** run significantly **less** of them than the expected frequency, on the other hand, microbreweries **outside municipalities** do so significantly **more**) – p = 0.002, χ^2 = 12.8, df = 2

5. Tastings – paid (microbreweries **in the center** run significantly **less** of them than the expected frequency, on the other hand, microbreweries **outside municipalities** do so significantly **more**) – p = 0.00001, χ^2 = 22.7, df = 2

6. Excursions (microbreweries **in the center** organize significantly **less** of them than the expected frequency, on the other hand, microbreweries **outside municipalities** do so **more**) – p = 0.008, χ^2 = 9,6, df = 2

7. Websites (microbreweries **on the outskirts** use them **more** than the expected frequency, on the other hand, microbreweries **outside municipalities** do so significantly **less**) – p = 0.006, χ^2 = 10.2, df = 2

8. Advertising – regional radio (microbreweries **outside municipalities** use significantly **more** of it than the expected frequency, on the other hand, microbreweries **on the outskirts** use significantly **less** advertising) – p = 0.0007, χ^2 = 14.6, df = 2

9. Banners (microbreweries **in the center** use them significantly **more** than the expected frequency, on the other hand, microbreweries **on the outskirts** use them significantly **less**) – p = 0.001, χ^2 = 13.4, df = 2

The results, therefore, confirm hypothesis **H2** that the location of the direct sales point does affect the composition of the marketing communication mix.

A further part of the analysis focused on finding out whether the location of the direct sales point affects the use of ATL vs. BTL tools. **It cannot be proved** that the direct sales point location significantly affects (p = 0.46, χ^2 = 1.54, df = 2) the use of ATL vs. BTL tools. The results, therefore, do not confirm the hypothesis **H5** that the existence of a microbrewery direct sales point affects the use of ATL vs. BTL tools.

Regardless of their direct sales point location, microbreweries more frequently use OFF-LINE than ON-LINE tools, as there are also more of them. However, the analysis has shown that the ratio of using ON-LINE to OFF-LINE is significantly higher in microbreweries in the

center. In other words, microbreweries in the center use significantly more often the ON-LINE tools compared to the expected frequencies, whereas in microbreweries on the outskirts and outside municipalities, it is the opposite situation. Direct sales point location **significantly affects** ($p = 0.01$, $\chi^2 = 9.2$, $df = 2$) the use of the ON-LINE vs. OFF-LINE tools. The results, therefore, confirm hypothesis **H6** that the existence of a microbrewery direct sales point does affect the use of the ON-LINE vs. OFF-LINE tools.

An overview table of the summarized results is part of Tab. 1. Marketing tools are shown according to research questions (*RQ1* and *RQ2*).

Table 1 Overview table of summarized results

Marketing tools	Affected by the existence of microbrewery direct sales point	Affected by the location of the direct sales point
Labels	×	×
Coasters	×	×
Tablecloths	✓ (***)	×
Glasses	×	×
Signposts	✓ ***	×
Unpaid tastings	×	✓ (**)
Paid tastings	✓ *	✓ (***)
Limited discounts	×	×
Excursion to own brewing facility	✓ (**)	✓ (**)
Participation in beer competitions	✓ (***)	✓ (***)
Reference of existing customers	×	×
Own website	✓ (**)	✓ (**)
Sponsoring of local associations	✓ (**)	×
Organising of cultural events	✓ (***)	×
Social media	×	×
Advertising in regional printed media	✓ (***)	✓ (**)
Advertising in regional radio	✓ (***)	✓ (***)
Advertising in nationwide printed media	×	×
Advertising in nationwide radio	×	×
Advertising banners on the internet	✓ (*)	✓ (***)
Posters	✓ (***)	✓ (*)
Billboards	×	×
Websites of other subjects (e.g. municipality)	×	×

Note: *Statistical significance – The stars are only intended to flag levels of significance for 3 of the most commonly used levels. If a p-value is less than 0.05, it is flagged with one star (*). If a p-value is less than 0.01, it is flagged with 2 stars (**). If a p-value is less than 0.001, it is flagged with three stars (***).*

DISCUSSION

Theoretical contributions

Neolocalism is a strategy when microbreweries try to emphasize their connection to the location through invoking geography and place in their communication strategies (Eberts, 2014). The purpose of our study was to identify how the existence of microbrewery direct sales points affects the composition of the marketing communication mix (***RQ1***). As per the use of specific tools, the existence of a microbrewery's direct sales point leads to higher use of the marketing communication mix tools connected with the given location (use of neolocalism elements), such as tastings, competitions (which may come with a regional outreach), or excursions. At the same time, it leads to higher use of tools such as sponsoring, banners, posters, or advertising on the radio (**H1**). The microbrewery's local direct sales point leads to different use of ATL/BTL marketing communication tools (**H3**) and the different ratio of using the ON-LINE vs. OFF-LINE tools of marketing communication (**H4**). Microbreweries with a direct sales point have in their marketing communication mix a higher ATL to BTL ratio of marketing communication tools, but at the same time, the microbreweries without direct sales points are forced to use the ON-LINE marketing communication tools more. How microbreweries intensify their local image through connection to the local place (Melewar & Skinner, 2020; Schnell & Reese, 2014) has an impact on the selection of components marketing communication mix.

In the next part of the analysis, we focused on microbreweries with a local direct sales point. We studied how the location of this direct sales point affects the composition of the marketing communication mix (***RQ2***). Microbreweries with direct sales points in the center advertise less in the regional printed media, use less posters, and also use less tools such as competitions, tastings, or excursions than microbreweries with their direct sales points on the outskirts or outside municipalities (**H2**). However, the location of a direct sales point does not affect the composition of the marketing communication mix in terms of the ratio of ATL/BTL communication tools used (**H5**). On the other hand, microbreweries having a direct sales point in the center use more banners or advertising on local radio stations; they also use more ON-LINE marketing communication tools (**H6**). Our results support Donadini & Porretta (2017), who state that the location of a direct sales point is significant in terms of promotion.

Communication strategy is affected by the way of connection to the location, that is whether a microbrewery does or does not have a direct sales point or where this direct sales point is located with regards to the physical situation within the municipality or place (Jones,

2017; Withers, 2017; Moore et al., 2016). Regarding neolocalism, microbreweries use various marketing communication tools and choose different communication strategies based on their physical presence in the local context.

Implication for practice

Microbreweries usually have limited resources they can spend on marketing communication, which also affects their possibilities with regard to using neolocalism in their marketing communication. The results may contribute as a guideline when choosing the composition of the marketing communication mix concerning the way of connection of microbreweries to the local place.

CONCLUSION

In terms of neolocalism, microbreweries' communication strategy is affected by their connection to the location, whether the microbrewery has a direct sales point or where this direct sales point is located (within the municipality or outside it). Under neolocalism, microbreweries use different marketing communication tools and choose different communication strategies based on the local context. The existence of a microbrewery's local direct sales point leads to a different use of ATL/BTL communication tools and a different ratio of using the ON-LINE vs. OFF-LINE marketing communication tools. The location of the direct sales point (in the center, on the outskirts, or outside the municipality) also affects the composition of the marketing communication mix of a microbrewery. Based on our research, we recommend using local media as tools of marketing communication, and, above all, we emphasize the role of cultural centers in the municipalities where microbreweries operate.

Limitations and future research directions

Our research covers samples from 43 % of the total number of microbreweries in the Czech Republic, which is a number that could be considered insufficient (sample bias). The results may be affected by the choice of the analyzed components. These components may not be complete, although they were identified during a preliminary survey. Moreover, the components measured on a binary scale do not necessarily reflect the importance of the component in the marketing communication mix. It is also possible to mention to lack of

follow-up on economic performance. Such limitations also represent an opportunity for future research endeavors.

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Annex 1 The marketing tools analysed and their classification as per ATL/BTL, ON-LINE/OFF-LINE

Marketing tools	ATL	BTL	ON-LINE	OFF-LINE
Labels		✓		✓
Coasters		✓		✓
Tablecloths		✓		✓
Glasses		✓		✓
Signposts		✓		✓
Unpaid tastings		✓		✓
Paid tastings		✓		✓
Limited discounts		✓		✓
Excursion to own brewing facility		✓		✓
Participation in beer competitions		✓		✓
Reference of existing customers		✓		✓
Own website		✓	✓	
Sponsoring of local associations		✓		✓
Organising of cultural events		✓		✓
Social media		✓	✓	
Advertising in regional printed media	✓			✓
Advertising in regional radio	✓			✓
Advertising in nationwide printed media	✓			✓
Advertising in nationwide radio	✓			✓
Advertising banners on the internet	✓		✓	
Posters	✓			✓
Billboards	✓			✓
Websites of other subjects (e.g. municipality)		✓	✓	

BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF DIASPORA TOURISM STUDIES

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to review the studies of diaspora tourism, which is getting more and more attention by tourism scholars. To achieve this goal, bibliometric and visualization analyzes were used. "The most productive journals", "the most cited studies", "the most productive authors", "the annual number of publications", "the most contributing organizations", and "the most contributing countries" parameters based on WoS database were examined. VOSviewer software was used to reveal the leading trends in the diaspora tourism literature. Thirty-seven studies were found with the help of the WoS database, over the period from 2000 – December 2021. Especially in the last two years (2020-21), the literature on diaspora tourism has grown remarkably. China was by far the leading country in diaspora tourism, and there was a lack of research on diasporic travel from countries such as India, Turkey and Israel. The organization that contributed the most to the literature was Hong Kong Polytech University with 10 studies. According to the keyword analysis, the most popular words are 'diaspora tourism', and 'diaspora'.

Keywords: diaspora tourism, diaspora tourist, bibliometric analysis, WoS database, VOSviewer

INTRODUCTION

The term diaspora is actually associated with the dispersal of the Jews by leaving their lands, but over time it has also begun to be used to express immigrants who left their homeland and started to live in other countries (Pande, 2018). Migrants' visits to the homeland were not very frequent in the past (Basch et al., 1994). However, this situation has disappeared thanks to the developments in transportation technologies (Li, 2020). Migrants who are financially eligible and have no obstacle to travel to the homeland have gained momentum in their travels to the homeland. At the same time, thanks to the developments in communication technologies, the attachments between the migrants and their relatives were strengthened, and this was one of the factors that triggered their travels to the homeland (Cıkı & Kızanlıklı, 2021).

These touristic trips of migrants to their homeland have been studied by researchers under various titles, especially diaspora tourism (Huang et al., 2016): homeland tourism, visiting friends and relatives tourism, ancestral tourism, roots-tourism, ethnic tourism, homesick tourism, genealogy tourism etc. Diaspora tourism can be shown as the most popular among the studies on the touristic homeland travels of migrants and diaspora tourism studies are

examined in this study. Diaspora tourism can be briefly defined as tourism movements produced, consumed and experienced by immigrants, and these travels can have various purposes (Coles & Timothy, 2004). As summarized by Huang et al. (2018), previous studies revealed that immigrants visit their homeland for various reasons such as leisure time, genealogy-roots seeking, sharing family traditions with their children, visiting relatives and friends, religion, pilgrimage, language learning, business and cultural events.

It is possible to say that diaspora tourism has various advantages. Although there is a lack of work, it is known that diaspora tourism is not as seasonal as other types of tourism, so tourism spreads throughout the year and can create employment opportunities (Pelliccia, 2016). Diaspora tourism provides an alternative source of income for countries and diaspora members are assumed to promote their homeland in host countries (Newland, 2011). Diaspora tourists do not spend as much money as foreign tourists, but they make significant economic contributions to local businesses and can help new unknown destinations enter the international tourism market (Vong et al., 2017). Countries get foreign exchange flow thanks to diaspora tourism and moreover, thanks to these travels, migrants can be motivated to invest directly in their homeland (Newland & Taylor, 2010). Also, travels to the homeland of migrants can help to preserve their cultural identity and these travels can improve the attachment between their homeland and immigrants (Huang et al., 2013).

Considering that approximately 281 million people are international migrants in 2020, it can be said that diaspora tourism is an important tourism market (IOM, 2021). While the number of immigrants around the world is increasing day by day, the travels of diaspora communities to the homeland are also gaining momentum (Alexander et al., 2017). Researchers' interest in these movements also increases directly proportionally. Studies on the homeland travels of diaspora communities have begun to attract the attention of researchers, especially since the 2000s, and many studies have been conducted on diaspora tourism.

There are many studies on diaspora tourism, but no bibliometric study has been found. In this context, the current study aims to examine the diaspora tourism studies in the WoS database from 2000 to 2021. Bibliometric analysis is used in various research fields because it is an effective way to analyze a particular subject, a particular journal (Shang et al., 2015). Many bibliometric studies have been carried out within the scope of tourism studies (Mavric et al., 2020). Researchers publish studies through bibliometric analysis to facilitate assessment and monitoring of subject development using advanced software programs when their interests reach a certain level of saturation (Koseoglu, 2016). Bibliometric analysis has a combination of statistics, information science and philology in a particular field and provides

a better explanation of the development of a particular research direction using bibliometric indicators (Mulet-Forteza et al., 2019).

The research consists of four sections, apart from the introduction. The introduction section is followed by literature review and methodological procedures and results sections. And finally, the conclusions are presented.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Diaspora tourism includes travel to places where migrants were born, raised or where their ancestors lived or continue to live. These travels are based on reasons such as satisfying the longing for relatives, friends and homeland, seeking roots, family gatherings, and protecting their identity (Bandyopadhyay, 2008; Kaftanoglu & Timothy, 2013; Huang et al., 2018). The above can be shown among the main travel motivations of diasporic tourists. However, it has been revealed in some studies that diasporas consume tourism activities that diasporic tourists consume during their homeland travels, combined with leisure time activities (Cıkı & Kızanlıklı, 2021; Newland & Taylor, 2010).

Each diaspora community has a different migration history (civil war, terrorism, religious oppression, education, better income, geographical difficulties, etc.) and has its own unique cultural identity. In addition, the travels of diaspora communities to the homeland can be affected by generational and origin differences, economic and other conditions of the homeland, geographical location and various similar reasons (Huang & Chen, 2020). It can be said that migrants generally need to visit their homeland, but due to the reasons mentioned above and similar reasons, these travel experiences may also result in negative results (Weaver et al., 2017).

There is increasing interest in the literature on how the generation gap of immigrants affects their attachment to their homeland, their motivation to travel and their intention to revisit. Diaspora members are not always expected to be committed to their homeland and have a high motivation to travel, and the level of attachment may weaken as generations pass (Otoo et al., 2021). Huang and Chen (2020), in a study carried out to examine the travel behaviors of the Chinese diaspora (5 generations) living in North America, found that the intention to travel to the homeland differs among the Chinese migrant generations. In addition, according to the results of the study, the first generation migrants were determined as the group with the highest travel motivation, while the second generation migrants were the lowest group.

According to Li et al. (2019), the diversification of travel patterns of a diaspora community is related to the consistency of that community within itself. The level of acculturation and whether one identifies as part of the ethnic community can also affect the travel patterns of diaspora tourists. In addition, sense of place and place attachment are factors that deeply affect the travels of diaspora tourists.

According to Coles et al. (2005) five modes of travel can occur as a result of migration. First, individuals living as a diaspora in the host country can travel to their homeland. Second, people in the diaspora can visit where their relatives live. Third, diasporas can travel to any destination other than their homeland. Fourth, transition places in the migration process can be preferred. Fifth, they can travel to destinations where they can meet people of the same ethnicity or with whom they feel close.

Categorizations are important to understand the needs of diaspora tourists. While Coles et al. (2005) categorize the travel patterns of diaspora tourists, Li & McKercher (2016) divided diaspora tourists into five different groups in order to segment the market: 're-affirmative', 'quest', 'reconnected', 'distanced', and 'detached' dır. Similarly, Weaver et al. (2017) also grouped diaspora tourists: 'shallow', 'hybrid', 'extrinsic'and 'intrinsic'. According to Li et al. (2019), efforts to develop typologies of diaspora tourists show that the popularity of these travels is increasing, but this effort is not entirely sufficient. However, most of the diaspora tourism studies focus on the demand dimension and tourist needs (Huang et al., 2018; Scheyvens, 2007), and less studies have been done on the supply dimension (Roberts, 2022).

One of these studies belongs to Li et al. (2019). Li et al. (2019) proposed a conceptual framework that deals with the supply and demand dimensions of diaspora tourism in a holistic way. In connection with this study, another study dealing with the supply dimension of diaspora tourism belongs to Roberts (2022). Based on the conceptual framework proposed by Li et al., Roberts (2022) discussed the supply side along with the demand for diaspora tourism in Guyana.

It is known that some tourism products are prepared and marketed for diaspora communities around the world (Collins et al, 2004). However, considering the travel trends of diaspora tourists to the homeland, it is seen that the diaspora tourism market is underestimated by many tourism stakeholders and governments (Scheyvens, 2007). Even when the national statistics for the trips of individuals living outside their homeland are examined, it shows that this market should not be underestimated.

To give a few examples, when the statistics of international tourist arrivals of India before the Covid-19 pandemic are examined, it is seen that 6.9 million of the 17.9 million tourists

who came to the country in 2019 were non-resident Indians in India (Indiastat, 2021). As another example, when Turkey's 2019 international tourist arrival statistics are analyzed, it is seen that 15.9 million of the 51.7 million tourists coming to the country are Turks non-resident in Turkey (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2021). While these promising sample statistics can be diversified, the diaspora population and structure of countries are different from each other. However, even countries with a low diaspora population can make economic gains from this market, and as can be understood from previous studies, these individuals have a high tendency to travel to the homeland and this market should not be ignored (Hughes & Allen, 2008; Nurse, 2011; Scheyvens, 2007, Vong et al., 2017).

Diaspora tourism generally encourages independently planned trips with individual (free independent traveller - FIT) or a certain number of immediate surroundings rather than organized tours (Butler, 2003). Among the most important contributors to this situation, the migrants' hometowns may be unknown and non-touristic destinations. In addition, most of the diaspora tourists know the destination and its surroundings well (Zhu & Airey, 2021). As a result, it becomes difficult to develop and present touristic products that can meet the specific demands of diaspora tourists. The heterogeneity of diaspora tourists' travel motivations and perceived low foreign exchange are some of the reasons that make product development difficult (Roberts, 2022). However, in order to overcome the problems related to this market, which has many advantages, it is necessary for most of the stakeholders to cooperate, to understand the market better and to develop effective marketing strategies in this context. However, in order to overcome some of the problems related to this market, which has many advantages, it is necessary for most of the stakeholders to cooperate, to understand the market better and to develop effective marketing strategies (Collins-Kreiner & Olsen, 2004; Li et al., 2019).

DATA AND METHODS

The current study aims to review diaspora tourism literatüre using a bibliometric analysis. Studies using bibliometric analysis are guiding future studies. It informs interested researchers about the current state of the literature and draws attention to unexplored issues (Mavric, et al., 2021). For this bibliometric study, author collected data in January 2022 from the WOS database. This study has been carried out taking into consideration the studies scanned in only WOS. WOS is known as one of the world's leading databases containing thousands of quality and high-impact journals (Yu et al., 2019).

To define the sample, the keywords "diaspora tourism" and "diaspora tourist" was used. The search was done in the "title" field. When searching, quotation marks were used to exclude unrelated studies from the analysis. At the end of this process (step 1), 37 documents such as articles, conference proceedings, book chapters and book reviews were found in the WoS database (See Fig. 1). The number of documents obtained as a result of the second and third steps is 31. Obtained data were analyzed with VOSviewer software.

Figure 1 Flowchart of the studies
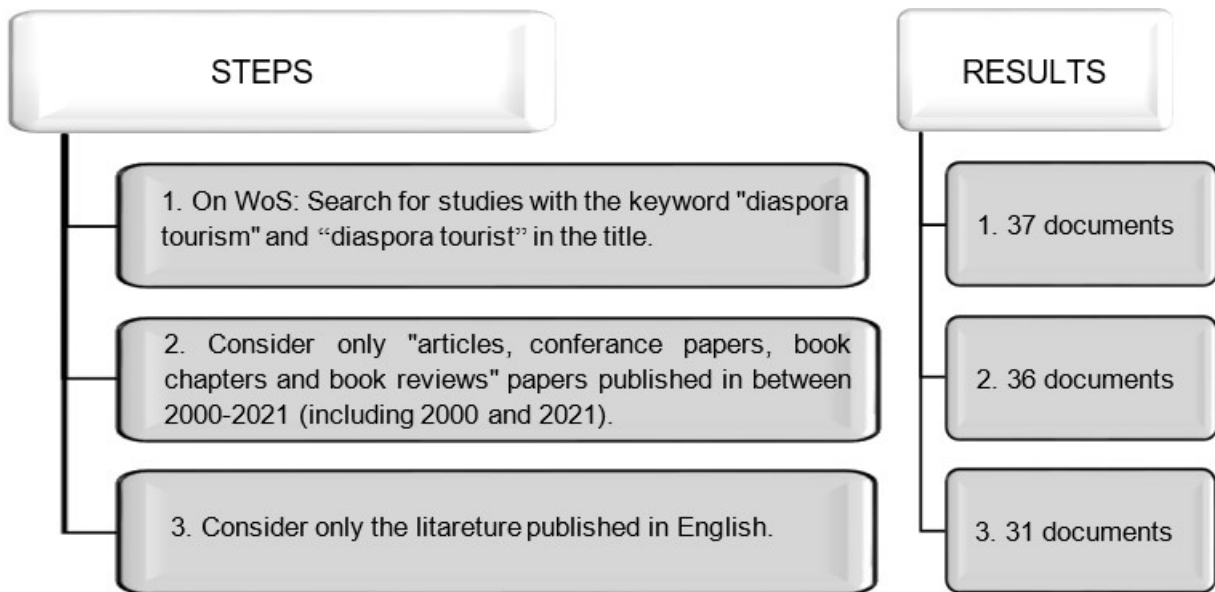
The VOSviewer software originated by Jan van Eck and Ludo Waltman in order to construct and view bibliometric visual maps (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). VOSviewer software is used in many disciplines as well as tourism studies (Mulet-Forteza et al., 2018). Moreover, VOSviewer can analyze data obtained by Web of Science, Scopus, Dimensions, and PubMed (VOSviewer, 2020). In this study, "the most productive journals", "the most cited studies", "the most productive authors", "the annual number of publications", "the most contributing organizations", and "the most contributing countries" were examined.

RESULTS

Most Productive Authors

Fig. 1 indicates the most productive authors about diaspora tourism in WOS. According to the publishing count, the most productive authors are Huang, Wei-Jue and Li, Tingting Elle (with

four papers each), followed by Otoo, Felix Elvis with three papers. Authors other than these three authors published two and one study each.

Figure 2 Most Productive Authors
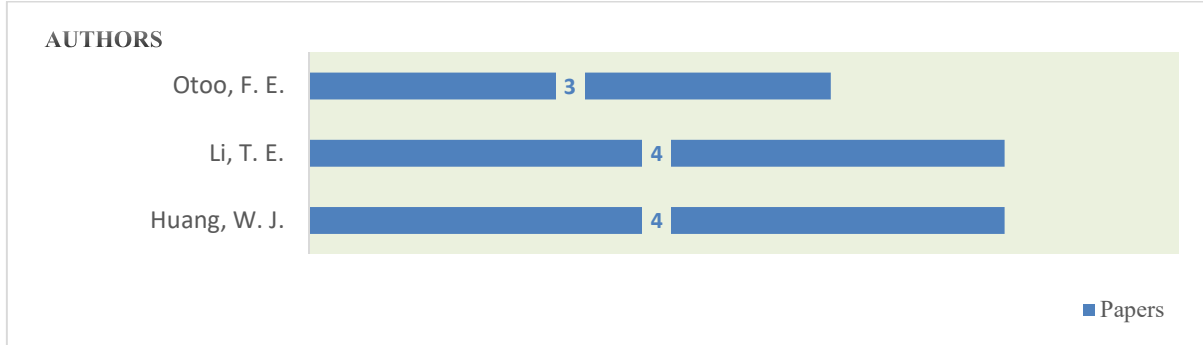
Huang, Wei-Jue (h-index = 12), one of the most prolific writers on diaspora tourism in WoS, published her studies on the subject in 2013, 2016, 2018 and 2021. One of the most cited studies of the author, who has 20 publications in WoS, is "Holiday recovery experiences, tourism satisfaction and life satisfaction - Is there a relationship?" (69). In addition, the total number of citations of his 4 publications on diaspora tourism is 94 (WoS, 2022).

Li, Tingting Elle is one of the most prolific authors (4 papers) on diaspora tourism in WoS along with Huang Wei Jue and has published a total of 10 studies in WoS (h-index = 7). The author's most productive years are 2016, 2020 and 2021, with two publications each. Li, Tingting Elle's most cited study is the article "Developing a typology of diaspora tourists: Return travel by Chinese immigrants in North America", which was published in 2016 and received 32 citations (WoS, 2022).

The second most prolific author, Otoo, Felix Elvis (h-index = 10) has 22 publications on WOS. Otoo's most cited work is "Understanding culinary tourist motivation experience, satisfaction, and loyalty using a structural" (49). Otoo's 3 studies on diaspora tourism were also published in 2021, and the total number of citations of these 3 studies is 16. Although Otoo is not the most prolific author on diaspora tourism, he draws attention with 8 studies published only in 2021 (WoS, 2022).

The Most Cited Studies in WoS

Table 1 shows the most cited studies published in the WoS database between 2000 and 2021. While preparing the table, the top ten most cited studies were taken into consideration. The most cited study (with 38 times) until December 2021 was "Homecoming or tourism? Diaspora tourism experience of second-generation immigrants". This article, published in

2016, has 38 citations. It is noteworthy that the articles in the top 3 of the list focus on the homeland travels of the Chinese diaspora.

Table 1 Most Cited Studies During The Period of 2000 to 2021 (WOS)

Author(s)	Title	Journals / Books	Citation (WoS)	Method	Type
Huang, Ramshaw and Norman (2016)	Homecoming or tourism? Diaspora tourism experience of second-generation immigrants	Tourism Geographies	38	Qualitative	Article
Li and McKercher (2016)	Developing a typology of diaspora tourists: Return travel by Chinese immigrants in North America	Tourism Management	32	Qualitative	Article
Huang, Hung and Chen (2018)	Attachment to the home country or hometown? Examining diaspora tourism across migrant generations	Tourism Management	26	Quantitative	Article
Huang, Haller and Ramshaw (2013)	Diaspora tourism and homeland attachment: an exploratory analysis	Tourism Analysis	26	Quantitative	Article
Sim and Leith (2013)	Diaspora tourists and the Scottish Homecoming 2009	Journal of Heritage Tourism	23	Both qualitative and quantitative	Article
Etemaddar, Duncan and Tucker (2016)	Experiencing "moments of home" through diaspora tourism and travel	Tourism Geographies	20	Qualitative	Article
Li, McKercher and Chan (2019)	Towards a conceptual framework for diaspora tourism	Annals of Tourism Research	15	Conceptual	Article
Li and Chan (2020)	Diaspora tourism and well-being over life-courses	Annals of Tourism Research	9	Qualitative	Article
Li (2020)	Guanxi or weak ties? Exploring Chinese diaspora tourists' engagements in social capital building	Current Issues in Tourism	9	Qualitative	Article
Otoo, Kim and Choi (2021)	Developing a Multidimensional Measurement Scale for Diaspora Tourists' Motivation	Journal of Travel Research	9	Quantitative	Article

Huang et al. (2016) argue in their research that diaspora tourists travel to their homeland with 3 types of trips: sightseeing tours with family, independent family trips to visit relatives or attend family events, and travel study programs. In addition, four themes related to the homeland travels of diaspora tourists were identified in this article: language and appearance, search for authenticity, family history, and sense of home.

The second most cited work is "Developing a typology of diaspora tourists: Return travel by Chinese immigrants in North America" with 32 citations. It was published by Li and McKercher in 'Tourism Management' journal in 2016. Five different types of diaspora tourists were identified in the article: 're-affirmative', 'quest diaspora tourist', 'reconnected diaspora tourist', 'distanced diaspora tourist' and 'detached diaspora tourist'.

The paper conducted by Huang, et al. (2018), "Attachment to the home country or hometown? Examining diaspora tourism across migrant generations" may be noticed in the third place of Table 1 with 26 citations. The article gives ideas about the impact of diaspora tourism on regional development. The findings provide important implications for developing marketing strategies for many countries. In addition, this article argues that diaspora tourists usually travel across the country and these trips can take a long time.

Another study with 26 citations is "Diaspora tourism and homeland attachment: an exploratory analysis". The article was published in 2013 by Huang et al. published in journal of Tourism Analysis. Huang et al. argue that factors such as the frequency and duration of the second generation diaspora tourists' trips and the number of destinations traveled may affect their attachment to the homeland. The article identified three themes related to the homeland travel experience of second-generation diasporic individuals: Alienation vs. sense of belonging, Twofold and complex experiences, and Collective and relative identity (Huang et al., 2013).

The following most cited study is "Diaspora tourists and the Scottish Homecoming 2009" with 23 citations, published in 2013, in Journal of Heritage Tourism (Sim & Leith, 2013). This followed by, "Experiencing "moments of home' through diaspora tourism and travel" with 20 citations published in 2016 in Tourism Geographies (Etemaddar et al., 2016). Li, et al.'s (2020) conceptual article "Towards a conceptual framework for diaspora tourism" published in Annals of Tourism Research, has 15 citations. These studies are followed by three studies with nine citations each.

The Annual Number of WoS Publications by Year

Fig. 3 shows the diaspora tourism studies published between 2000-2021. The first study on diaspora tourism in WoS was published in 2010. Diaspora tourism studies, which have been drawing a graph with ups and downs since 2010, have gained momentum in the last two years (2020-21). Moreover, no study was published in 2012 and the highest number of publications was reached in 2021.

Figure 3 Annual Number of Publications
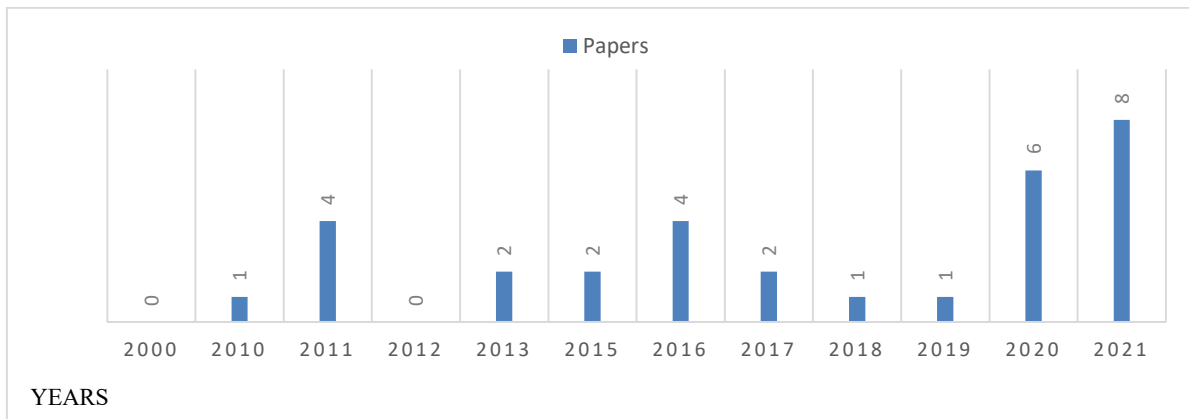
The Most Contributing Institutions

Fig. 4 demonstrates the universities that have published the most studies in the WoS database. In the WoS database, Hong Kong Polytechnic University is the most productive university between 2000-2021 (with 10 studies). The second most productive university is Middlesex University (with 3 articles). Six universities follow the top two universities with two publications each (see Fig. 4).

Figure 4 Most Contributing Organizations
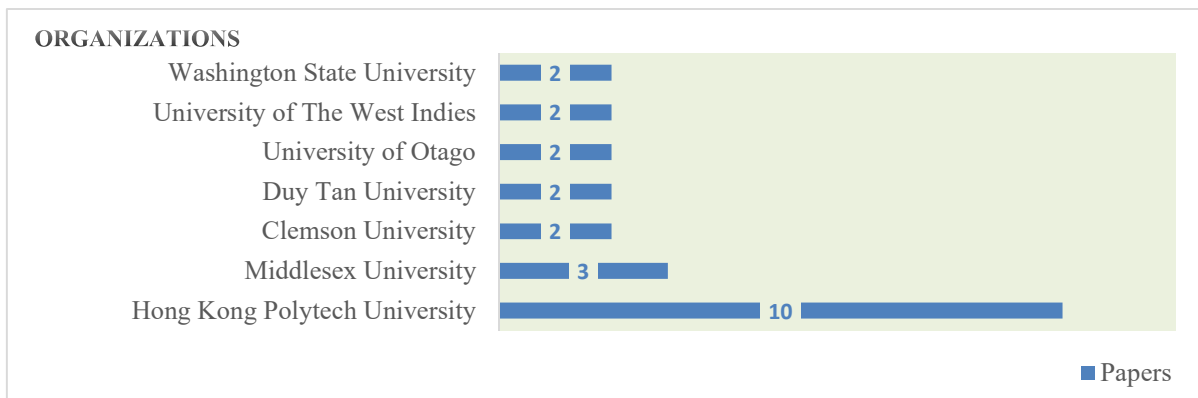
The university that contributed the most to diaspora tourism publications is Hong Kong Polytech University. This university appeared in ten studies on diaspora tourism, the first of

which was in 2013. Huang, Wei-Jue contributed to four studies and Otoo, Felix Elvis contributed to three studies. Between 2000-2021, Hong Kong Polytech University had 60,901 publications in WoS. Considering the period before 2000, this figure reaches 70,183 in total, and more than 86% of all studies were published in and after 2000. Between 2000-2021, 2061 publications focused on tourism-related issues and drew attention to hospitality, leisure, and sport tourism. The least productive year of university is 2000 (WoS, 2022).

The second productive university in diaspora tourism was Middlesex University. All of the studies of the university, which contributed to the literature with three studies, were published in the last two years (2020-21). Li, Tingting Elle contributed to two of the three studies. Middlesex University took part in a total of 8508 publications in WoS between 2000-2021. 202 studies were published in the category of Hospitality, leisure, and sport tourism. Middlesex University's most productive year was 2017 (with 756 studies), and its most unproductive year was 2003 (with 162 studies) (WoS, 2022).

Clemson University contributes to diaspora tourism with 2 publications in WoS. Also, Clemson University appeared in 29,495 publications in WoS from 2000-2021. 367 of these publications were in the category of Hospitality, leisure, and sport tourism. The least productive year in terms of number of publications between 2000-2021 was 2000 (with 819 studies). The most productive year of the university was 2020. Other universities contributing to the diaspora tourism literature with two studies in WoS are Duy Tan University, University of Otago, University of Oxford, University of The West Indies and Washington State University (WoS, 2022).

Duy Tan University, a research university located in Vietnam, has two studies on diaspora tourism and these studies were published in 2021. In the period from 2000 to December 2021, Duy Tan University appeared in 7032 publications on WoS. The most productive year of the university is 2020 with 2982 publications and it has 32 publications in the category of Hospitality, leisure, and sport tourism (WoS, 2022).

Founded in 1869, the University of Otago contributed to 40,336 publications in WoS between 2000 and 2021. The most productive year of the University of Otago is 2020 (with 3815 studies), and the most unproductive year is 2001 (with 1086 studies). The institution has 658 publications in the category of Hospitality, leisure, and sport tourism. The first study on diaspora tourism was published in 2016, and the other study was published in 2021 (WoS, 2022).

Washington State University, which has been teaching for over 100 years, appeared in 41,172 publications on WoS between 2000-2021. Washington State University's most

productive year is 2019 with 3648 studies. The year 2000 was the most unproductive year with 1335 studies. 438 studies were published in the category of Hospitality, leisure, and sport tourism. Chen, Chun-Chu has contributed to two publications on diaspora tourism, and one of these publications is one of the most cited (26) diaspora tourism studies in WoS (bkz tablo 1) (WoS, 2022).

University of The West Indies, one of the institutions that contributed to the diaspora tourism literature with two publications (Mortley Natasha Kay), is the institution that contributed the least in WoS with 4319 studies between 2000-2021. With 167 publications, the most inefficient year was 2000 and the most productive year was 2010 (with 323 studies). The institution has 35 publications in the hospitality, leisure, and sport tourism category (WoS, 2022).

The Most Productive Journals

Fig. 5 shows the most productive journals in diaspora tourism from 2000 to 2021. Tourism Geographies and Current Issues in Tourism (each with a total of 3 articles) are the most productive journals in WoS. Canadian Foreign Policy, Journal of Heritage Tourism, Journal of Travel Research and Tourism Management have two publications each.

Figure 5 Most Productive Journals
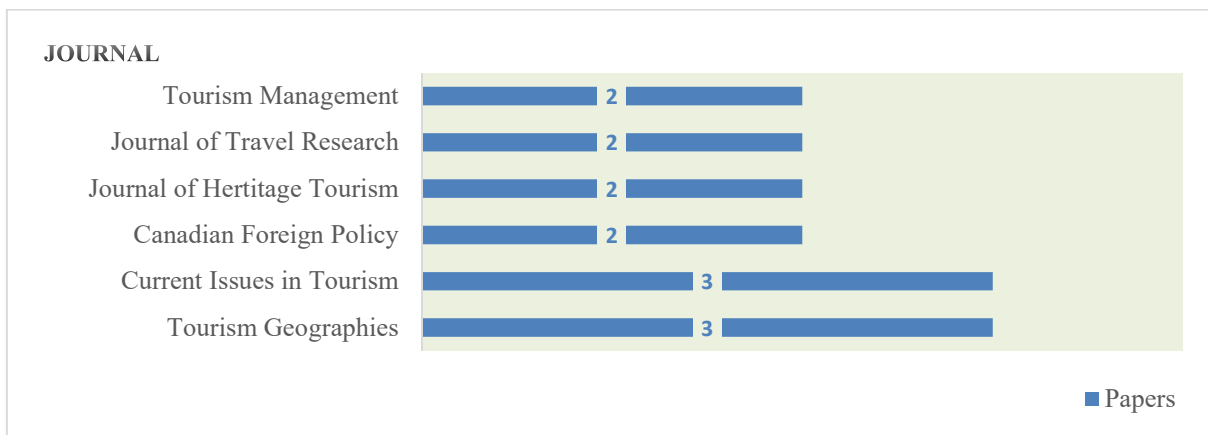
Tourism Geographies is an international research journal established for the presentation and discussion of geographical perspectives in the fields of tourism and tourism-related recreation and leisure studies (Tourism Geographies, 2022). The journal has a total of 836 publications in the period from 2000 to December 2021. The most productive year of the journal, which publishes studies in the category of Hospitality, leisure, and sport tourism, is 2019 (with 121 studies). The categories with the most publications in WoS are articles (598) and book reviews (148). Just over half (51%) of the journal's total of 836 studies were published between 2016 and 2021 (WoS, 2022).

Another journal that has 3 publications on diaspora tourism together with Tourism Geographies in WoS is Current Issues in Tourism. The journal, which publishes studies in the category of hospitality, leisure, and sport tourism, has a total of 1660 publications from 2000 to December 2021. The most productive year for the journal was 2020 with 336 studies. The category with the most publications is articles (1464) (WoS, 2022).

Canadian Foreign Policy, one of the second most productive journals, has a total of 476 publications in WoS. Founded in 1992, the journal is published by the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs (NPSIA) at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. The most productive year of the journal, which publishes studies in the International Relations category in WoS, is 2019 (with 45 studies). Looking at the WoS database, the categories with the most publications are articles (337) and book reviews (69). The year with the least number of publications was 2009 (WoS, 2022).

The Journal of Heritage Tourism has a total of 476 publications in WoS between the years 2000-2021. The category with the most publications is articles (449). In addition, when the WoS database is examined, it is seen that the most productive year is 2019 (with 94 studies). The year with the least number of publications was 2006, and there was a more than 50% decrease in the number of publications in 2021 compared to the previous two years (WoS, 2022).

Journal of Travel Research is the premier research journal focusing on travel and tourism behavior, management and development. Journal of Travel Research has a total of 1064 publications from 2000 to December 2021. Most of these publications are in the category of articles (1005). The most productive year of the journal, which publishes studies in the category of Hospitality, leisure, and sport tourism, is 2020 with 177 publications (WoS, 2022).

Tourism Management is an international journal focusing on the management of travel and tourism, including planning and policy (Elsevier, 2022). Tourism Management journal publishes studies in 3 different categories in the WoS database: Environmental studies, hospitality, leisure, and sport tourism and management. Tourism Management, one of the most productive journals in WoS about diaspora tourism, has a total of 3629 publications between the years 2000-2021. The most productive year of the journal was 2019 with 254 studies, and the most unproductive year was 2000 with 79 studies. In addition, the categories that the journal publishes the most in WoS are articles (2813) and book reviews (691) (WoS, 2022).

The Most Productive Countries/Regions

Fig. 6 shows the countries that contribute the most to diaspora tourism in WoS. In terms of continents, Asia ranks first with 14 studies. The continent of Asia is followed by America (11 documents), Europe (6 documents), Oceania (4 documents) and Africa (2 documents) respectively. While preparing the map, countries that contributed more than 2 times were taken into account. China is the country that has the most publications on diaspora tourism in WoS. (12 documents). In terms of productivity, China is followed by the USA (9), England (6), Jamaica (2), Ghana (2), New Zealand (2), Vietnam (2), Australia (2).

Figure 6 List of Top Contributing Countries

It is normal for two countries with large populations to be at the top of the list. China has a large diaspora population with 60 million citizens living abroad (Zhou, 2017). The USA is home to millions of diasporic individuals from various countries. However, the lack of India, which has another large diaspora population on the list, draws attention. In addition, it is seen that Israel and Turkey do not contribute to the list prepared according to WoS publications.

To describe the collaboration relationship of publications in WoS from 2000 to 2021, author made a co-authorship analysis by VOS viewer at the level of country/region. The countries with at least 2 studies were included in the analysis. For each of the 8 countries, the total strength of the co-authorship links with other countries were calculated. The countries with the greatest total link strength were selected (see Fig. 7).

Figure 7 Co-authorship Network of Countries

The Most Popular Keywords in Papers

In this part of the research, a science mapping analysis of diaspora tourism studies in WoS was made via VOSviewer. VOSviewer can be used to construct a map based on a co-occurrence matrix (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). A node represents a keyword. The bigger the node, the more citations the keyword has, and each color represents a cluster. (Wang et al., 2020). Between 2000-2021, 103 different keywords were used in studies published in WoS on diaspora tourism. While the minimum number of repeats of a keyword is determined as 3, 7 keywords meet this threshold. In addition, Fig. 8 shows the total link strengths.

Keywords that meet the threshold to be used 3 times or more in WoS studies are diaspora tourism (16), diaspora (7), motivation (3), place attachment (3), slavery (3), cultural heritage (3), Chinese diaspora (3) can be listed as. Three clusters emerged as a result of the analysis. In the red cluster (1), 'diaspora', 'motivation', 'slavery', are highlighted. The keywords 'diaspora tourism', and 'cultural heritage', are in the green cluster (2). Blue cluster (3) occurs 'place attachment', 'Chinese diaspora'.

Figure 8 Co-occurrence of Author Keywords of Studies published in WoS
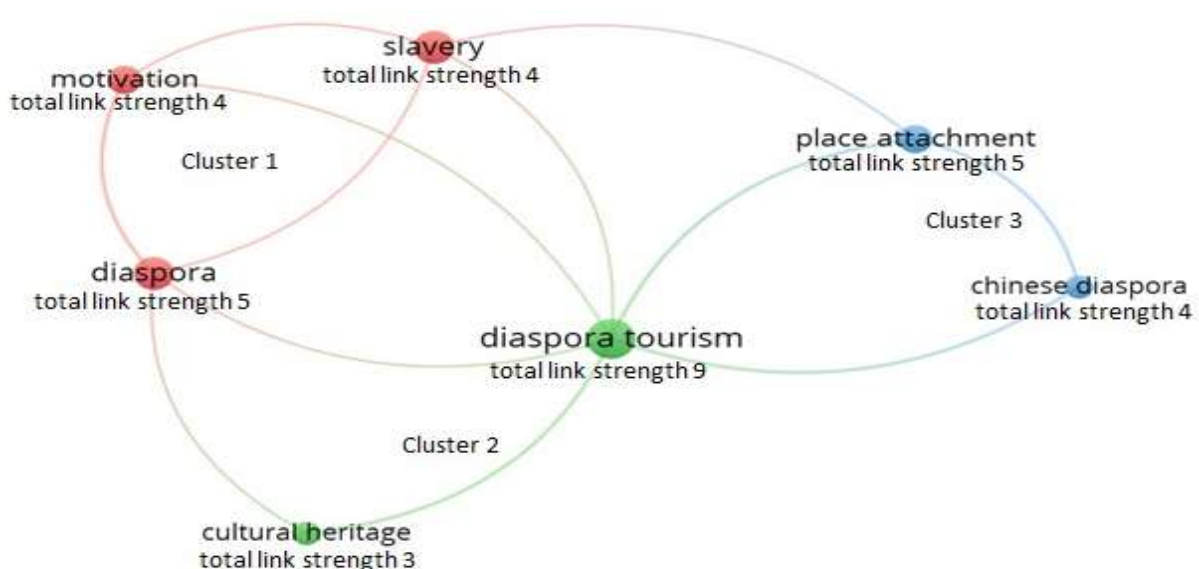
CONCLUSIONS

This article presents a bibliometric analysis of the topic of diaspora tourism between 2000-2021 based on WoS. Although the current paper considers the post-2000 period, it was seen that the first study on diaspora tourism in the WoS database was made in 2010 and it has started to attract the attention of researchers since this year. According to the research findings, the most productive years of studies on diaspora tourism are 2020 and 2021. In the current research, many authors, institutions and journals that contribute the most to diaspora tourism have been identified. In addition, despite the increasing interest, there is no study in which diaspora tourism publications are examined by bibliometric analysis. Therefore, the originality of this study is that it is one of the first studies to focus on diaspora tourism using bibliometric analysis. In addition, studies with bibliometric analysis are important in revealing the hot topics of a research topic and understanding the literature (Wang, et al., 2020).

Contributing to the diaspora tourism literature with 12 documents, China is the most productive country, followed by the USA and the UK. In terms of the most productive organisations, Hong Kong Polytechnic University is by far the first. It is not surprising, with the contribution of Hong Kong Polytechnic University, that Asia ranks among the most productive continents with 14 studies. The continent of Asia is followed by the continent of America and Europe. The most cited paper was " Homecoming or tourism? Diaspora tourism experience of second-generation immigrants" which explored the diasporic travels of second-generation Chinese immigrants and was cited 38 times by December 2021. In addition, studies focusing on the Chinese diaspora are in the top three of the list of the most cited articles (see table 1). The most productive journals are Tourism Geographies and Current Issues in Tourism with three articles each, while the most productive authors are Huang, Wei-Jue and Li, Tingting Elle with four articles each.

In the current research, a visual analysis of keywords was created using VOSviewer (see Fig. 8). When keywords are analyzed, it is not surprising that the most common keywords are 'diaspora tourism' and 'diaspora'. In addition, as a result of the visual analysis of the keywords, it was seen that three clusters were formed. The keywords that appear in the clusters are related to each other: 1) diaspora, motivation and slavery; 2) diaspora tourism and cultural heritage; 3) place attachment and Chinese diaspora.

The data obtained from bibliometric analysis provide important clues for future studies and researchers should consider these studies before examining a subject. Current article enables researchers to recognize gaps in the literature and new research agendas. In addition, it offers

clues to tourism practitioners in revealing the deficiencies in the practice of diaspora tourism. It has been mentioned above that the Chinese diaspora is the most studied community in the context of touristic trips to the homeland. This is not surprising given that it has a large diaspora population. However, it is clear that there is a lack of research on diasporic travels in other countries with large diaspora populations such as India, Israel and Turkey. In addition, it can be said that future generations should not be ignored in order to obtain long-term benefits from diaspora tourism. Being aware of this situation, scientists are increasingly interested in the travels of second and next generation immigrants to their homeland.

Limitations and Future Research Lines

This study has some limitations. First, the results of the current study considered articles published in journals indexed in WoS. This sampling preference does not represent the entire field of diaspora tourism. Therefore, future studies can take into account different databases and compare them with current study results. In addition, bibliometric studies are not only applied to articles published in leading journals (Koseoglu et al., 2016). Future bibliometric studies on the subject may also focus on other publications (conference proceedings, book chapter, book, thesis, etc.). Homeland travels of immigrants are examined under various headings. Secondly, this study focuses on studies that examine immigrants' homeland travels under the title of diaspora tourism. Therefore, future researches can focus on studies that examine immigrants' homeland travels under various headings such as visiting friends and relatives, roots tourism, ethnic tourism. Finally, while VOSviewer software is preferred in the current article, different software programs can be used in future research (CiteSpace etc.).

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ONLINE CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: A MIXED METHOD RESEARCH

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Abstract

Focusing on accommodation establishments, such as hotels, this study examines the factors that lead customers to engage in social media platforms and determines whether the importance of these factors differs according to the customers' demography. We used exploratory sequential mixed method research (MMR) design. Customer reviews on the Facebook page of a 5-star hotel in Alanya, Turkey analyzed for the qualitative part of the study. Subsequently, in the quantitative part, a questionnaire was created based on the results of the qualitative study and the relevant literature. The quantitative part employed the convenience sampling method using an online survey filled out by 602 social media users. Based on the factor analysis we identified seven customer engagement dimensions: experiential benefit; identity; appreciation; information; advocacy; recommendation; and satisfaction. The appreciation dimension was introduced to the literature as a new dimension that had not been used in previous empirical studies. One of the most striking results obtained from the study was that there were significant differences between all demographic variables (gender, marital status, education, and age) and customers' perceptions of the information dimension.

Keywords: online customer engagement, social media, demographic variables, hospitality industry

INTRODUCTION

Social media provides an ideal channel for customers to adopt, identify and interact with brands (Harrigan, Evers, Miles, & Daly, 2017) by making it easier than ever for people to share their opinions through millions of posts every day (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). Built on Web 2.0 technologies that enable user participation these platforms have become active brand partners through which customers produce content beyond the classical patterns and share their information and ideas with both other customers and company itself. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2012), Web 2.0 provides a way to interact, collaborate, and share information. Using the internet as a new business platform, all stakeholders—potential customers, current customers, salespeople, and marketers—can now connect, learn, plan, analyze, interact, and collaborate in business matters. If this interaction is managed successfully, a strong sense of loyalty can be established between customers and companies and the company's strategies can be effectively directed. In case of mismanagement, the same

communication system can cause brands to rapidly lose value, and thus followers. Making correct and strategic decisions in social media studies requires systematic and detailed measurement of customer interactions.

Customers often share their experiences on social media such as a dish they enjoy at a restaurant or a natural wonder they visit. Studies carried out in the field of tourism have reported that social media platforms contribute to the experiences of customers (Cuomo et al., 2021; Kim & Fesenmaier, 2017; Li, Meng, & Zhang, 2022; Mhlanga & Tichaawa, 2017).

Customer engagement is defined as a psychological process that supports customer loyalty (Bowden, 2009). Customers who engage in brand pages on social media platforms are in constant interaction with establishments. Companies can promote their products and services through active use of social media and can follow the comments and evaluations made about their brands (Kesgin & Murthy, 2019). Customer engagement has been discussed in the literature, especially regarding marketing. That notion has also begun attracting attention in the field of tourism in recent years. In addition, there are studies conducted on systematic reviews for customer engagement in hospitality and tourism (Chen, Han, Bilgihan, & Okumus, 2021; So, Li, & Kim, 2020). In 2020, a special issue titled "Customer Engagement in Hospitality and Tourism Services" was published in a leading hospitality and tourism journal (So & Li, 2020).

Despite the increasing interest in the current literature about customer engagement on social media platforms, which offer important opportunities for customer reviews about the brand, the concept has not been sufficiently examined in the field of tourism. As a result, the need for empirical research on tourism businesses has arisen (Harrigan et al., 2017). The present study examines the factors that cause customers to engage in social media platforms of accommodation establishments and seeks to determine whether these factors differ in significance based on the customer's demography. In this study, customer engagement is examined in detail using the mixed method design, and a new set of dimensions are introduced to the literature. In addition, based on the new results obtained by considering demographic variables, suggestions are made for future studies, especially for marketing managers in the sector.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Customer Engagement

The first use of the *engagement* term to describe issues including moral or legal obligation, duty bond, military conflict, and employment, for instance, dates to the 17th century

(Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014). The concept of engagement, which attracts attention in many academic disciplines such as psychology, sociology, political science, and organizational behavior, has been increasingly used in the marketing literature since 2005 (Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, & Ilic, 2011). A literature review shows that engagement represents a multidimensional concept that includes cognitive, behavioral, and emotional dimensions (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013).

Comparatively, the concept of customer engagement continues to evolve in the marketing literature. Brands, products, organizations, and brand communities are key engagement elements stated in the literature. Although there are many marketing studies that discuss the concept of engagement, the definition, dimensions, and operationalization of customer engagement are inconsistent and complex (Cheung, Lee, & Jin, 2011).

Bowden (2009), described customer engagement as a psychological process that supports customer loyalty and primarily examined the formation and development of customer relationships. According to Brodie et al. (2011), customer engagement is a psychological state characterized by levels of intensity that occur in dynamic, repetitive processes of engagement. Customer engagement on virtual brand pages includes private interactive experiences between customers and other members of the brand or community. Customer engagement is related to contexts where customers can create value, develop a competitive strategy, collaborate in the firm's innovation process, and internalize the company (Harmeling, Moffett, Arnold, & Carlson, 2017).

The concept of customer engagement is also mentioned as brand engagement and customer brand engagement in the literature (Baldus, Voorhees, & Calantone, 2015; Dwivedi, 2015; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Karjaluoto, Munnukka, & Tiensuu, 2015). Today, customers can interact directly with a brand, discuss, evaluate, and publicly establish personal connections with it without making any purchases. These capabilities that customers acquire by means of today's technology form the structure of the concept of customer brand engagement (Bijmolt et al., 2010). van Doorn et al. (2010) define brand engagement as a brand- or company-oriented behavioral manifestation that results from motivational factors beyond purchasing. Wide network elements including other current and potential customers, suppliers, the general public, and company employees are also targeted.

The notion of interactive experience underlies the concept of brand engagement. The focal point is the customer: it is the level of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral interactions of customers directly with the brand or with other users of the brand on a brand's online platform (Brodie et al., 2011). Customer brand engagement is discussed in three dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. The *cognitive dimension* is defined as the level of

reflection and elaboration of the customer's thoughts about the brand in brand interaction. The *emotional dimension* is the customer's love for the brand and positive interaction with the brand or other customers. Finally, the *behavioral dimension* is the level of energy, effort, and time that the customer spends for a brand in customer/brand interaction (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

Literature Review on Dimensions of Customer Engagement

The factors that caused customer engagement in social media platforms in recent years are discussed in a range of conceptual and empirical studies (Baldus et al., 2015; Harrigan et al., 2017; Karjaluoto et al., 2015; Potdar, Joshi, Harish, Baskerville, & Wongthongtham, 2018; So, King, & Sparks, 2014; So, King, Sparks, & Wang, 2016; VanMeter, Grisaffe, & Chonko, 2015). Dimensions of customer engagement that are most frequently discussed in the literature are as follows:

- *Identity*: Identity, from the perspective of the customer, refers to the individual's sense of belonging to a brand (So et al., 2016). Customers may identify themselves with a particular brand. They express this through the posts they share on the brand's social media page. The user group, who perceive the brand's social media community as 'us' rather than 'them', may interpret a negative critique of the brand as a personal criticism, or may perceive a praise of the brand as a personal compliment (Harrigan et al., 2017).

- *Information*: The information dimension can be expressed as the fact that brand pages inform their followers about the brand and product through the posts they share and help them to stay up to date **(**Baldus et al., 2015). The need for information is one of the main factors that ensures engagement in online brand communities (Karjaluoto et al., 2015). According to another definition, the information dimension is the exchange of ideas that occurs among visitors, and in this context, the gain of members of the online community who look for information. Therefore, information is a communication model that emerges from the interaction of the individual with other customers and that has a positive contribution to the individual (Kesgin & Murthy, 2019; VanMeter et al., 2015).

- *Recommendation*: Potdar et al. (2018), define recommendation as the way customers direct other users to purchase the services of the business using comments, shares, and likes that can activate the behavioral component through social media. In their study, VanMeter et al. (2015) describe recommendation as the brand user's ability to gather advice from the brand community using social media.

- *Advocacy:* Advocacy is a visitor's willingness to spread their positive thoughts and their active effort supports the brand with which they are affiliated and promotes its positive qualities (Kesgin & Murthy, 2019). If a customer shares positive posts about a brand on social media, that means they accept that they have adopted the brand and send strong signals about the value of the brand. On the other hand, the customer puts in an active effort in advocacy. For example, a customer reaches out to friends and acquaintances and recommends certain brands to them. These brand-focused orientations can significantly shape customers' ideas about the brand (Lobschat, Zinnbauer, Pallas, & Joachimsthaler, 2013).

- *Affiliation:* Kesgin and Murthy (2019), define the affiliation dimension as belonging to the brand's community or being in interaction with members of this community who share the same values. From the psychological point of view, affiliation is a person's positive feelings about other brand users and the sense of community that these feelings create among them. According to Vivek, Beatty and Morgan (2012), affiliation is a psychological bond based on the sense of belonging that emerges between people who interact in brand communities.

- *Benefit*: The benefit dimension is the gains resulting from being a part of a brand community that motivate them to increase their involvement in the community. The benefit dimension focuses on the individual. It is essentially a feeling of self-esteem and general happiness that community members gain by interacting with other members (Kesgin & Murthy, 2019). According to another approach, the benefit is the degree to which a community member gains utilitarian rewards, such as monetary rewards or time savings, through their participation in the community (Baldus et al., 2015). The economic benefits obtained make being a part of the brand community attractive (Karjaluato et al., 2015).

- *Experience*: Experience is the perception that remains in the mind of the customer after brand use: the customer remembers the brand through this perception. Experience is subjective because it is built on the individual's perceptions and thoughts. During the interaction with the brand that triggers the senses and arouses emotion, the customer creates the perception of experience by comparing their expectations with their experiences. The way that brand use occurs causes the resulting experience to be positive or negative. Giving feedback to user complaints arising from negative comments and behavior by responding quickly and in a timely manner has a strong impact on the customers' experience. Positive experiences make customers feel that the brand page is specially made for them and strengthen their loyalty to the brand (Potdar et al., 2018).

- *Satisfaction*: Satisfaction is that sense when a customer thinks that a decision to purchase a product or a service from a brand is correct and that the brand meets their expectations (Dwivedi, 2015). Satisfaction, which is the result of an examination in the mind of the customer over the brand experiences, is the situation in which the customer's expectations and brand performance match. Brand interaction increases customer engagement when it leads to customer satisfaction. The brand supports customer satisfaction with the positive experiences it provides through social media. (Potdar et al., 2018).

Literature review shows that studies on customer engagement are limited and that such studies have only begun to be carried out in recent years. In general, there are studies in areas such as health, banking, automotive, and tourism. The conceptual and empirical studies on customer engagement that were found are shown in Tab. 1.

Table 1 Dimensions of customer engagement

Author(s)	Method/Study Area	Customer Engagement Dimensions
Bowden (2009)	Conceptual	1. Involvement 2. Commitment
Calder, Malthouse, & Schaedel, (2009)	Quantitative / News Websites	1. Stimulation and Inspiration 2. Self-esteem and Civic Mindedness 3. Participation and Socializing 4. Intrinsic Enjoyment 5. Social Facilitation 6. Utilitarian 7. Temporal 8. Community
Brodie et al., (2011)	Conceptual	1. Cognitive 2. Emotional 3. Behavioral
Cheung et al., (2011)	Scale Development / Social media platforms (Facebook)	1. Vigor 2. Dedication 3. Absorption
Vivek et al., (2012)	Managers in Qualitative/ Marketing, cosmetics, logistics, hospitality and retail	1. Value 2. Affective Commitment 3. Loyalty 4. Trust 5. Word of Mouth 6. Brand Community Involvement
Brodie et al., (2013)	Panel with Qualitative / Academic Experts	1. Sharing 2. Learning 3. Advocating 4. Co-developing 5. Socializing
Lobschat et al., (2013)	Quantitative / Automotive brands	1. Conversation 2. Utility 3. Information 4. Identity 5 Affiliation. 6. Advocacy
So et al., (2014); So et al., (2016)	Quantitative / Tourism and hospitality sector	1. Identification 2 Absorption. 3. Attention 4. Interaction 5. Enthusiasm
Hollebeek et al., (2014)	Qualitative / Social media users	1. Cognitive processing 2. Affection 3. Activation
Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, (2015)	Quantitative / Facebook pages	1. Enjoyment 2. Enthusiasm 3. Attention 4. Absorption 5. Learning 6. Endorsing 7. Sharing
Dwivedi (2015)	Quantitative / Business students using mobile phones in India	1. Vigor 2. Dedication 3. Absorption

Table 1 (continued)

Karjaluoto et al., (2015)	Conceptual	1.Community 2. Economic Benefits 3. Enjoyment 4. Identify 5. Information
Baldus et al., (2015)	Mixed Method / Social media users	1. Brand Influence 2. Connection 3. Validation 4. Helping 5. Up-to-date information 6. Rewards (Hedonic) 7. Rewards (Utilitarian) 8. Brand passion 9. Self-expression 10 Like-minded discussion 11. Seeking assistance
Pansari & Kumar, (2017)	Conceptual	1. Direct 2. Indirect 3. Referring 4. Influencing 5. Feedback
Harrigan et al., (2017)	Quantitative / Tourism-related social media	1. Enthusiasm 2. Attention 3. Absorption 4. Interaction 5. Identification
Potdar et al., (2018)	Qualitative/ User comments of Australian banks on Facebook pages	1. Communication 2. Interaction 3. Experience 4. Satisfaction 5. Continued involvement 6. Bonding 7. Recommendation
Kumar, Rajan, Gupta, & Pozza, (2019)	Qualitative/ Service managers	1. Direct contribution 2. Indirect contribution
Kesgin & Murthy, (2019)	Qualitative/ User comments of tourism attractions in New York on Facebook pages	1.Information 2. Utility 3. Identity 4. Advocacy 5. Conversation 6. Affiliation
Yoong & Lian, (2019)	Quantitative/ Social media users who experience 4- and 5- star hotels in Malaysia	1. Surveillance 2. Social Interaction 3. Sharing of Information 4. Attraction
Rasoolimanesh, Noor, Schuberth, & Jaafar, (2019); Rasoolimanesh, Khoo-Lattimore, Noor, Jaafar, & Konar, (2021)	Quantitative / Visitors of Kinabalu National Park in Malaysia	1.Enthusiasm 2. Absorption 3. Interaction 4. Attention 5. Identification
Naumann, Bowden, & Gabbott, (2020)	Quantitative/ Service business customers	1. Affective 2. Cognitive 3. Behavior
So, Wei, & Martin (2021)	Quantitative / Hotel and airline customers	1. Identification 2. Enthusiasm 3. Attention 4. Absorption 5. Interaction

Source: Authors' own editing

The Role of Demographic Variables in Customer Engagement

Demographic variables have an important place in studies that examine social media users (Chang, Choi, Bazarova, & Löckenhoff, 2015) and consumer behavior (Kim & Kim, 2021; Rasoolimanesh et.al, 2021) in the field of marketing. Age and gender come to the forefront most frequently referred among these variables (Rather & Hollebeek, 2021; Schirmer, Ringle, Gudergan, & Feistel, 2018). However, there are few studies that discuss demographic variables in the context of online customer engagement (Yay, 2021; Gupta, 2021; Msallati, 2021; Islam & Rahman, 2017; Osei-Frimpong, 2019).

Yay (2021) examined the effect of experienscape components on the engagement in online brand communities for restaurant establishments and found that there was a significant difference between customer engagement dimensions by gender, age, and education level. Gupta (2021), in examining the effect of customer engagement in mobile travel applications on customer value, reported significant differences in engagement levels in travel mobile applications by gender, age, occupation, and time spent in the application. In another study, Msallati (2021) determined a moderating effect of generations (X, Y, Z) in the relationship between the types of advertising messages and customer engagement. Islam and Rahman (2017) found no moderating effect of gender in their study that examined the effect of online brand community features on customer engagement. Osei-Frimpong (2019) investigated the effect of consumer motivation on online social brand engagement and found that gender and age had partial moderating effects. It is seen in the abovementioned studies examining online customer engagement that age and gender factors come to the fore and are used as study variables.

METHOD AND RESULTS

The exploratory sequential mixed method research (MMR) design was used in this study. The purpose of the two-stage exploratory design is that the data obtained from the first stage, the qualitative stage, helps to develop and provide data for the second, the quantitative stage (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2017).

In the qualitative phase of the study, netnography, which is an adaptation form of ethnography, a qualitative research method, to the virtual environment, was used. This method was preferred because of the widespread use of the internet in tourism. It also simplifies data collection and allows companies to observe customers' interactions (Tavakoli &Wijesinghe, 2019). Content analysis was applied to the data collected using this method. The quantitative stage was planned based on the qualitative results in the second stage of the study. Firstly, a questionnaire was prepared for the purpose of measuring the engagement of customers in social media platforms of hospitality establishments and the reasons why they share posts on these platforms. The themes obtained from the analysis of the qualitative data and the literature review were taken as the basis for the preparation of the questionnaire.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

Qualitative research, the first stage of the study, was carried out based on user reviews from the corporate Facebook page of a 5-star hotel in Alanya, Turkey. At the quantitative stage of the study, social media users who interacted with the social media platforms of the accommodation establishment and engaged formed the scope of the study. The questionnaire

was prepared only in Turkish and was limited to the participants using this language. The validity and reliability of the data obtained are limited to the candid responses of the people who answered the online questionnaire.

Sample of Qualitative Study and Data Collection

In this stage of the study, visitors of the corporate Facebook page of a 5-star hotel located in Alanya, Turkey were chosen as the sample. This hotel business was chosen because of the professional management of the Facebook page, the high number of followers, interactions and customer comments, and the regular content sharing by the business.

A total of 383 customers have expressed their opinions on the social media platform of the hotel. Customer comments on the Facebook page of the hotel were collected manually by the researcher without using any software. Data were collected in September 2018. Customer comments on the social media platform of the relevant hotel after September were excluded from the scope of the study.

Reliability of the Qualitative Research

The reliability and validity model developed by Guba (1981), which includes the stages of credibility, consistency, transferability, and verifiability, was used to measure the reliability of the qualitative part of the study. Starting from this point of view, the stages related to reliability were applied in this study as follows.

- *Credibility (Internal validity)*: To increase internal validity in the study, screenshots of customer comments made on the social media platform of the hotel were used. Direct quotations from customer comments were included in the presentation of the data to increase credibility.

- *Consistency (Internal reliability)*: To increase the internal reliability of the study, the coding processes were carried out separately by two researchers at different times, the issues of consensus and disagreement were determined, and necessary corrections were made. The reliability formula proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) [p = consensus / (consensus + disagreement)] was calculated and a consensus of 95% (p = 0.95) was obtained between the two researchers.

- *Transferability (External validity)*: Each stage of the data collection and analysis process was described in detail so that readers could better understand and visualize each process of the study. The current picture was shown by giving as much detailed information as possible in the results and comments section. The aim was that different readers could understand the same meaning using a clear and simple language in the writing of the study.

- *Verifiability (External reliability)*: To ensure external reliability (verifiability) in the study, all raw data (customer comments, site screenshots) obtained were kept by the researcher for the relevant persons and institutions to examine. Information about the hotel was deleted in the quotations sent so that the hotel within the scope of the study would not be understood by the readers. The personal information of the customers within the scope of the study was hidden and each customer was assigned a sequential number (C1, C2, …).

Qualitative Results

The themes in Tab. 2 were created as a result of the analysis of the data on the engagement of the customers in the social media platform of the hotel.

Table 2 Examples of themes and participants' opinions

Satisfaction (f:303)	**Service (f:112)** "Food options were great. Hotel rooms were always clean. The waiters/waitresses were welcoming. Beach bar was amazing." (C45)
	Structural Problems (f:14) "There is a lot of noise coming from the road. The hotel is very far from the airport." (C40)
	Disappointment (f:16) "I got disappointed. Bed linens and bathroom were dirty. The shower was broken. The staff speak only Turkish. The hotel does not deserve 5 stars." (C7)
	Excellence (f:51) "A great hotel, we enjoyed everything…" (C22)
	Staff (f:110) "We really liked that the staff called us by our name." (C32)
Experience (f:55)	**Positive Experience (f:51)** "We really enjoyed it with my family. We had a great time." (C4)
	Negative Experience (f:4) "Bad, very bad; I will never even go past it again…" (C250)
Advocacy (f:30)	".... Don't be fooled by the comments; most of them are smear campaigns. It is impossible to stay in such a hotel at this price. I think it was fine. Thanks for everything." (C15)
Affiliation (f:56)	"…I am very happy to have a vacation here every year." (C99)
Appreciation (f:37)	"We had a vacation that we will never forget for the rest of our lives. We thank everyone very much." (C9)
Identity (f:56)	"…I felt myself very peaceful in the comfort of home at the hotel." (C52)
Benefit (f:24)	"If you catch up with the early reservation time and book a room, you will have the chance to stay at a very affordable price." (C177)

Table 2 (continued)

Information (f:147)	"It's wonderful that the hotel is very close to the beach. While you have fun in the big pool, your children can also enjoy the small pool. There is also a restaurant, pool bar, lobby bar and stage for animation shows. The children enjoyed the mini disco built for them. Rooms are cleaned every day." (C138)
Recommendation (f:33)	**Those who recommend (f:28)** "Super, a clean hotel. We were satisfied with the service; the employees are kind. I would definitely recommend." (C27)
	Those who do not recommend (f:5) "…I do not recommend anyone to spend money on a vacation here." (C65)
Request-Suggestion (f:42)	"Animation programs were monotonous. You should include activities that appeal to young people." (C24)

f: Frequency of themes C: Customer
Source: Authors' own editing

Sample for the Quantitative Part of the Study

The convenience sampling method was used because the study included a very large population, and the definite number of the participants could not be determined. The sample in the quantitative stage of the study comprised 602 people who filled out the questionnaire form online. The electronic form of the questionnaire was shared on the social media account of the accommodation establishment where the qualitative study was conducted and on other social media channels; the customers who interacted with the accommodation establishment in question were contacted as much as possible. We contacted administrators of highly rated pages on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram on topics covering accommodation and vacation topics. We sent a questionnaire form to the followers and members of these pages. Individual messages were sent to the followers on the LinkedIn platform and feedback was obtained.

Data Collection Tools and Data Collection Process

It was planned that the questionnaire form would be completed as an online questionnaire and applied to internet users. While preparing the items for customer engagement, the themes and sub-categories obtained from qualitative data were used, and dimensions of similar research were also considered by the authors (Calder et al., 2009; Harrigan et al., 2017; Lobschat et al., 2013; Karjaluoto et al., 2015; Potdar et al., 2018; Kesgin & Murthy, 2019; So et al., 2014). To structure the questionnaire form, an item pool containing 42 questions in total was created for the dimensions of customer engagement; the first form was prepared with a total of 46 questions by adding demographic questions. The items were prepared using a 5-point Likert-type scale, where 1 indicated "completely disagree" and 5, "completely agree."

The items in the item pool were examined by a group of 20 academics and experts. After this review, some items were changed and rewritten. In addition, the number of items was reduced; 31 were selected from the pool that included 42 items. A 35-question original questionnaire form was created by adding demographic questions. A pilot study was conducted with 40 people before the actual implementation. The alpha coefficient was 0.92, which showed very high reliability. Before the survey was administered, the required information was given to the participants. It was emphasized that there were no right or wrong answers in the survey and that each answer completely would reflect personal views and beliefs. Participants were asked to complete the survey on a voluntary basis. Data were collected from December 2018 to March 2019.

Analysis of Quantitative Data and Results

The data were analyzed using SPSS and AMOS 24 software packages. The alpha value was 0.93 based on the reliability analysis of the scale, showing that the scale was highly reliable. First, whether the data were normally distributed was checked to determine the type of tests to be performed. The skewness and kurtosis values of the data were taken as reference in the applied normal distribution test. As a result, the skewness value for the customer engagement scale was found to be -0.530 and the kurtosis value, -0.279. Since these values were regarded acceptable for normal distribution (Hair et al., 2014), then factor analysis and parametric tests—t-test and ANOVA test—were applied.

Factor Analysis Results

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was applied for the construct validity of the measurement tool created. It was seen in the factor analysis carried out after the Varimax rotation that items 2, 15, and 27 were not included in any dimension and that items 9, 14, 16, 26, and 28 had not gathered under the expected factors. Accordingly, 8 items stated were removed from the scale and the analysis was repeated; a structure with 7 factors was obtained (Tab. 3). The KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) value was .892 for the online customer engagement scale, and that the rate of explaining the total variance was 87.30% for the scale. As can be seen in Tab. 3, the factor "appreciation" had not been previously found in the literature. In addition, the dimensions "benefit" and "experience" that were discussed separately in the literature were combined under a single dimension as a result of the analysis. Accordingly, this dimension was named "experiential benefit" because it expresses the items collected under the dimensions of benefit and experience. The factor loads of the scale items varied from 0.673 to 0.930.

Table 3 EFA results

	Factor Loads	Eigen value	Rate of Explaining the Variance (%)	x̄	Alpha (α)
Factor 1: Experiential Benefit		5.490	23.870	3.74	0.95
EB20. I use it* as I know that the price-quality balance of the business is very good.	0.885				
EB21. I use it not to miss the opportunities in the discount campaigns of the accommodation company.	0.883				
EB22. I use it because it offers the opportunity to go on a vacation at the most affordable price.	0.859				
EB23. I use it to share that I have had a nice holiday experience.	0.836				
EB24. I use it to share the joyful moments that I spent at the establishment during the holiday.	0.783				
EB25. I use it to convey the negative experiences that I experienced at the establishment to people.	0.776				
Factor 2: Satisfaction		3.716	16.157	4.25	0.95
S10. I use it to indicate that I am satisfied with the service quality of the accommodation establishment.	0.921				
S11. I use it to indicate that I am satisfied with the service of the staff.	0.898				
S12. I use it to indicate that I am satisfied with every aspect of the establishment.	0.895				
S13. I use it to share my dissatisfaction with the accommodation establishment.	0.856				
Factor 3: Advocacy		3.144	13.672	3.17	0.95
A4. I use it to defend the right of the accommodation establishment against those who conduct smear campaigns.	0.930				
A5. I use it to defend the right of the accommodation establishment against users who send malicious posts.	0.928				
A6. I use it to defend the right of the accommodation establishment against the comments that do not reflect the truth.	0.849				
Factor 4: Appreciation		2.643	11.493	3.60	0.92
G29. I use it to express my appreciation to the accommodation establishment that provided me with a nice holiday.	0.889				
G30. I use it to express my appreciation to the employees who took care of me during my vacation.	0.871				
G31. I use it to express my appreciation to the accommodation establishment for the quality of the service that is provided.	0.815				
Factor 5: Identity		1.911	8.307	3.41	0.92
ID17. I use it to share that I feel comfortable in the accommodation establishment as if I were at home.	0.739				
ID18. I use it to share that the establishment makes me feel a family atmosphere.	0.714				
ID19. I use it to indicate that I consider myself as part of the establishment.	0.673				
Factor 6: Recommendation		1.696	7.373	3.95	0.90
R8. I use it to recommend the establishment that provided me with a nice vacation to my friends.	0.808				
R7. I use it to recommend the good service that I receive to others	0.892				

Table 3 (continued)

Factor 7: Information		1.479	6.429	4.07	0.74
INF1. I use it to reach up-to-date information about the accommodation establishment.	0.900				
INF3. I use it to receive up-to-date information about the price and reservation.	0.722				

Alpha (α):0.93, Rate of Explaining the Total Variance: (%)87.301, KMO Value: 0.892, Bartlett's Test Values:15198.045, df:253, *p*=0.000   *It: social media page of accommodation establishment
Source: Authors' calculations

After performing the EFA, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was employed to assess the obtained factor structures. According to the CFA results in Tab. 4, all standardized regression values for the items are over 0.66. All scale items have high t values and they are statistically significant (p<0.001). To improve the fit indices, the proposed modifications were made between the items EB23-EB24, EB24-EB25, and S12-S13. After performing the modifications, results of the CFA indicated that the goodness-of-fit indices of the conceptual model (χ2 = 870.424 df =206, χ2/df =4.225, RMSEA = 0.073, CFI = 0.956, NFI = 0.944, IFI = 0.956,) were acceptable (Hair et al., 2014; Marsh & Hau, 1996).

Table 4 CFA results

	Standardized Regression (≥0.5)	t values	AVE (≥0.5)	CR (≥0.7)
Factor 1: Experiential Benefit			0.778	0.954
EB20	0.854	Fixed		
EB21	0.909	31.309***		
EB22	0.958	35.012***		
EB23	0.932	33.038***		
EB24	0.858	28.018***		
EB25	0.769	23.272***		
Factor 2: Satisfaction			0.820	0.948
S10	0.930	Fixed		
S11	0.986	52.698***		
S12	0.896	38.139***		
S13	0.801	28.609***		
Factor 3: Advocacy			0.887	0.959
A4	0.932	Fixed		
A5	0.995	57.517***		
A6	0.895	38.577***		
Factor 4: Appreciation			0.810	0.928
G29	0.879	Fixed		
G30	0.933	33.031***		
G31	0.888	30.382***		
Factor 5: Identity			0.820	0.932
ID17	0.930	Fixed		
ID18	0.935	41.023***		
ID19	0850	31,418***		

Table 4 (continued)

Factor 6: Recommendation				0.816	0.898
R8	0.937	Fixed***			
R7	0.869	31.033***			
Factor 7: Information				0.618	0.760
INF1	0.662	Fixed***			
INF3	0.893	12.854***			

Indices	χ2	df	χ2/df	RMSEA	CFI	NFI	IFI
Values	870.424	206	4.225	0.073	0.956	0.944	0.956
Status	Significant	--	Acceptable	Acceptable	Good	Acceptable	Good

*** p< 0.001
Source: Authors' calculations

The CFA results were presented regarding the validity of the online customer engagement scale in Tab. 4. Average variance extracted (AVE) values should be ≥ 0.50, composite reliability (CR) values should be ≥ 0.70, and all standardized factor loads for scale items should be ≥ 0.50 to ensure convergent validity of the scale (Hair et al., 2014). Furthermore, Tab. 4 shows that CR values are greater than AVE values. Thus, the convergent validity of the scale was ensured.

The correlation matrix and the square root of the AVE values were also calculated to test the discriminant validity of the scale (Tab. 5). The square root of the AVE value for each latent variable should be greater than the other correlation values between the latent variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The results in Tab. 5 show that the scale also has discriminant validity.

Table 5 Discriminant validity values

Latent Constructs	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7
Factor 1	**[0.882]**						
Factor 2	0.457***	**[0.906]**					
Factor 3	0.026	-0.131**	**[0.942]**				
Factor 4	0.599***	0.287***	0.022	**[0.900]**			
Factor 5	0.780***	0.526***	0.069	0.534***	**[0.906]**		
Factor 6	0.067	0,019	0.636***	0.029	0.130**	**[0.903]**	
Factor 7	0.017	-0.166***	0.653***	-0.049	0.009	0.353***	**[0.786]**

[in bold]: The square root of the AVE value, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001
Source: Authors' calculations

t-Test and ANOVA Analysis

A t-test for independent samples was administered to determine whether the gender and the marital status of the participants demonstrate a statistically significant impact on the

engagement on social media platforms. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to determine whether there was a significant difference based on age and education levels; the analysis results are shown in Tab. 6 and Tab. 7.

Table 6 t-Test results

Demographic Characteristics		Experiential Benefit		Appreciation		Satisfaction		Advocacy	
	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD
Gender									
Female	306	3.72	1.20	3.63	1.16	4.23	1.10	3.12	1.52
Male	296	3.77	1.09	3.58	1.08	4.27	1.05	3.23	1.47
t-Test		t = -0,44		t = 0,52		t = -0,46		t = -0,83	
Marital status									
Married	242	3.72	1.18	3.62	1.14	4.11	1.23	3.46	1.45
Single	358	3.76	1.13	3.59	1.11	4.35	0.95	2.97	1.50
t-Test		t = -0,49		t = 0,24		**t = -2,63***		**t = 3,97***	
Demographic Characteristics		Identity		Information		Recommendation		Customer Engagement	
	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD
Gender									
Female	306	3.41	1.20	3.77	0.94	3.94	0.94	3.69	0.68
Male	296	3.42	1.17	3.96	0.73	3.94	0.98	3.74	0.66
t-Test		t= -0,11		**t = -2,85***		t = -0,03		t = -0,90	
Marital status									
Married	242	3.36	1.22	4.07	0.80	3.89	0.98	3.75	0.71
Single	358	3.44	1.16	3.72	0.85	3.98	0.95	3.69	0.64
t-Test		t = -0,87		**t = 5,13***		t = -1,08		t = 1,06	

Note: *Significant at the 0.05 level (p< 0.05)
Source: Authors' calculations

Tab. 6 shows that there was no significant gender-related difference in the mean scores of experiential benefit, appreciation, satisfaction, advocacy, identity, recommendation, and customer engagement (p > 0.05). However, there was a significant difference in the information dimension according to gender (p < 0.05). The men's mean information dimension score was higher than the women's score for the same dimension.

According to other results, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of experiential benefit, appreciation, identity, recommendation, and customer engagement by marital status (p > 0.05). However, a significant difference was found between the dimensions of satisfaction, advocacy, information, and marital status (p < 0.05). For married participants, the mean values of the advocacy and information dimensions were higher. On the other hand, for single participants, the mean value of the satisfaction dimension was higher.

According to the ANOVA test results in Tab. 7, there was no significant difference between the mean score of experiential benefit, appreciation, identity, and customer engagement by education level ($p > 0.05$). However, there was a significant difference between satisfaction, recommendation, advocacy and information dimensions, and educational status ($p < 0.05$). Based on the Tukey test results, for primary school graduate participants, the mean values of the satisfaction and recommendation dimensions were higher than those with associate degrees. Regarding the advocacy dimension, the mean scores of the participants with high school and associate degrees were found to be higher than those of the primary school and undergraduate graduates. The mean information dimension scores of the associate degree and high school graduates were higher than those of the undergraduate, postgraduate, and primary school graduates. There was no significant difference by age in the experiential benefit, appreciation, satisfaction, identity, recommendation, and customer engagement dimensions ($p > 0.05$). However, there was a significant difference between the mean scores of advocacy and information dimensions by age ($p < 0.05$). Based on Tukey test results, the mean advocacy dimension scores for the participants in the age group of 46 and older were higher than those of the participants in the age groups 25 and younger and between 31–35. Regarding the information dimension, the mean scores of the participants in the 36–40 and 46 and over age groups were higher than those of the participants in the 26–30 and 25 and below age groups.

Table 7 ANOVA test results

Demographic Characteristics		Experiential Benefit		Appreciation		Satisfaction		Advocacy	
	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD
Educational Status									
Primary school	32	3.52	1.32	3.36	1.25	4.63*	0.36	2.52*	1.47
High school	97	3.86	1.09	3.78	1.06	4.22	1.23	3.75*	1.35
Associate	74	3.62	1.28	3.66	1.22	3.92*	1.39	3.61*	1.57
Undergraduate	267	3.84	1.11	3.61	1.11	4.33	0.95	2.93*	1.48
Postgraduate	132	3.61	1.12	3.51	1.09	4.22	1.08	3.15	1.43
ANOVA		F = 1,67		F = 1,25		**F = 3,20****		**F = 8,91****	
Age									
25 years and below	214	3.73	1.15	3.60	1.13	4.38	0.87	2.89*	1.52
26-30	138	3.85	1.10	3.65	1.13	4.22	1.05	3.15	1.48
31-35	60	3.62	1.17	3.51	1.01	4.19	1.26	3.03*	1.57
36-40	68	3.61	1.31	3.51	1.26	4.23	1.30	3.48	1.49
41-45	64	3.74	1.16	3.65	1.25	4.04	1.32	3.40	1.45
46 and over	58	3.86	1.01	3.68	0.86	4.17	1.05	3.81*	1.16
ANOVA		F = 0,70		F = 0,30		F = 1,28		**F = 4,75****	

Table 7 (continued)

Demographic Characteristics		Identity		Information		Recommendation		Customer Engagement	
	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD
Educational Status									
Primary school	32	3.31	1.22	3.10*	0.84	4.20*	0.75	3.52	0.70
High school	97	3.47	1.21	4.08*	0.79	3.90	0.94	3.86	0.63
Associate	74	3.23	1.30	4.31*	0.70	3.67*	1.17	3.72	0.78
Undergraduate	267	3.49	1.14	3.72*	0.85	4.02	0.93	3.70	0.66
Postgraduate	132	3.35	1.19	3.92*	0.77	3.91	0.93	3.67	0.65
ANOVA		F = 0,89		**F = 16,58****		**F = 2,55****		F= 2,06	
Age									
25 years and below	214	3.40	1.18	3.67*	0.86	3.98	0.97	3.66	0.67
26-30	138	3.46	1.14	3.75*	0.89	4.02	0.82	3.73	0.63
31-35	60	3.39	1.26	4.04	0.79	3.78	1.03	3.65	0.62
36-40	68	3.32	1.28	4.14*	0.64	4.04	1.02	3.76	0.72
41-45	64	3.25	1.25	4.04	0.86	3.67	1.11	3.68	0.78
46 and over	58	3.70	1.08	4.11*	0.74	3.99	0.86	3.90	0.62
ANOVA		F= 1,06		**F= 6,47****		F= 1,79		F= 1,40	

Note: SD: Standard Deviation, * Tukey test results, **Significant at the 0.05 level (p< 0.05)
Source: Authors' calculations

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examines the engagement of customers using social media platforms of accommodation establishments and also evaluated the reasons that led them to their engagement. First, a content analysis was done based on the customer reviews sent via the Facebook page of a 5-star hotel using the exploratory sequential design method; then, the scope was enlarged with quantitative research reaching a larger sample. As a result of the qualitative analysis, the reasons for customers' online engagement were classified under ten dimensions: *satisfaction; advocacy; identity; appreciation; benefit; affiliation; request-suggestion; information; experience; and recommendation*. With the quantitative study, these dimensions were tested with the online survey method to include users who follow the social media pages of the accommodation establishments. Through the quantitative study, the participants' reasons of engagement in the accommodation establishment pages were seen to have gathered under seven dimensions: experiential benefit, satisfaction, advocacy, appreciation, identity, recommendation, and information. The request-suggestion and affiliation dimensions determined in qualitative research were not factored into the quantitative research. The dimensions of benefit and experience, which emerged as two different dimensions in the content analysis, were unified under a single factor as the experiential benefit in the quantitative research. This dimension can be explained as the

benefit obtained as a result of sharing positive or negative experiences. Warning others or sharing positive experiences guides customers in their purchase decisions. In this regard, Calder et al. (2009) explained the concept of benefit and mentioned the experiential benefit and the economic benefit. When the content on a social media platform is interesting, it helps in decision-making, and when it provides people with distance from the stresses of daily life, that shows the benefits of shared experiences.

Another factor, satisfaction, emerged as the dimension with the highest values that led customers to engage in social media platforms of the accommodation establishments in both content and quantitative analyses. Participants used social media platforms extensively to share their satisfaction with accommodation establishments. The results also showed that visitors shared positive emotions more frequently. It was determined that in the information dimension, as in the satisfaction dimension, visitors used social media pages widely to obtain up-to-date information about the accommodation establishments and to inform other users based on their positive or negative experiences with the service.

The recommendation factor also had a high level of engagement on social media platforms. Potdar et al. (2018) stated in their studies in which they discussed customer brand engagement as a process, the recommendation factor is the point to be reached and had a high degree of importance in customer engagement. It was found as a result of the content analysis that the appreciation factor, which was determined by including the expressions of the participants to convey their appreciation to the establishment, had a high level of importance in customer brand engagement. Finally, it can be argued that the identity and advocacy dimensions had a moderate level of importance in the engagement of accommodation establishments on social media platforms.

Unlike in the published literature, in this study, the request-suggestion and appreciation dimensions were also determined. Other dimensions determined in this study were similar to those that were found in previous papers. Kesgin and Murthy's (2019) study in the tourism sector discusses the dimensions of information, benefit, advocacy, affiliation, and identity. In a study that Potdar et al. (2018) conducted on the banking sector, they developed a customer engagement process model that includes experience, satisfaction, affiliation, and recommendation dimensions. Lobschat et al. (2013), in their study on the automotive sector, revealed a multidimensional structure that includes the dimensions of advocacy, information, affiliation, and identity. Karjaluoto et al. (2015) carried out a study reviewing Facebook fans and Twitter followers of an international electronics company and presented a five-dimension customer engagement structure that includes information and identity dimensions.

In the present study, the relationships between the demographic characteristics of the participants and their perceptions of these dimensions were also examined after the dimensions of customer engagement in accommodation establishments had been determined. It was concluded based on that analysis that there was only a significant relationship between gender and the information dimension. Accordingly, it is possible to say that men use social media platforms of accommodation establishments more actively to obtain information about brands and to inform others. Contrary to this study, Yay (2021) found no significant difference between gender and the information dimension in a study in which the researcher examined the engagement of customers in online brand communities in restaurant establishments. There are studies that have examined the relationship between gender and consumer engagement in general, though not directly similar to the above-mentioned studies. Gupta (2021) found a significant difference between the level of engagement in travel mobile applications and gender. Accordingly, women's level of engagement in travel mobile applications was higher than that of men. Osei-Frimpong (2019) determined that gender played a partial moderator role in the effect of consumer motivation on online social brand engagement. In contrast, Islam and Rahman (2017) found that gender did not have a moderator effect on the relationship between brand community characteristics and customer engagement.

A significant difference was found between marital status and the information, satisfaction, and advocacy dimensions. In this study, the advocacy and information dimensions came to the forefront in the married participants' engagement in social media brands; however, the satisfaction dimension was more important for single participants. Contrary to that result, Yay (2021) found no significant difference between the information and satisfaction-recommendation dimension by marital status. There was a significant difference between educational status and the satisfaction, advocacy, information, and recommendation dimensions in this study. Yay (2021), found a significant difference in identity dimension by educational status.

Finally, a significant difference was found between the ages of the participants and the advocacy and information dimensions. It is seen that as age increases, the act of advocating a brand on social media increases. In the Yay (2021) study, there is a significant difference between the age of the participants and the perceptions of satisfaction-recommendation dimensions only; however, there is no significant difference between age and information and identity dimensions. Looking at the studies examining the relationship between age and online customer engagement in general, Msallati (2021) determined that generations (X, Y, Z) have

a moderator effect on the relationship between advertising messages and customer engagement. Gupta (2021) found significant differences in the level of engagement in travel mobile applications by age. Osei-Frimpong (2019) found that age has a partial moderator role in the effect of consumers' motivation on their engagement with brands on social media.

Implications, Limitations, and Future Research

The most important contribution of this study to the literature is that it provides an in-depth analysis of customer engagement dimensions in accommodation establishments using a mixed method approach and allows the determined dimensions to be tested concurrently using a large sample. It also reveals important results in terms of the role of demographic variables. Based on these results, the following points can be recommended to researchers in future studies and practitioners, digital marketing managers, and tourism professionals in the tourism sector:

- Significant differences were found between the information dimension and all demographic variables (gender, marital status, age, and education level) in engagement in social media brand platforms. Marketing managers can create strategies that take these variables into account in the management of online platforms, where customers intensively engage, for the purpose of being informed and informing others.

- This study showed that some dimensions differed significantly with age. Accordingly, the change in customer engagement based on generation should be investigated in new studies. Understanding customer engagement by generation will be beneficial for accommodation establishments in terms of following strategies based on age groups in their target audience.

- It will be beneficial for practitioners to create content by considering the dimensions of consumer engagement while creating the social media calendar to increase their interactions with social media.

- In the qualitative study, coding was done by considering the reviews made by the users on the social media pages. The content shared by the companies should be divided into themes in future studies, determining thereby which content type most encourages customers to engage.

- The request-recommendation dimension, which was obtained with high frequency in the content analysis that constitutes the first part of the study, and which had not been

determined in previous empirical studies in the literature, should be tested in academic studies on the subject in the future.

- Future studies are suggested to be carried out using different accommodation establishments or travel agencies. Moreover, different social media platforms with high popularity should be examined separately.

- Understanding the characteristics of different cultures is very important for the tourism sector. For this reason, it would be useful to conduct new studies that account for cultural differences in customer engagement.

The data obtained in the qualitative part of the study conducted within the scope of online customer engagement are limited to the reviews of the customers of a hotel on the Facebook platform in September 2018. However, considering the limited number of published studies on this issue, it is expected that this study will contribute to future research. In the quantitative research part of the study, seven customer engagement dimensions were determined: experiential benefit, satisfaction, advocacy, appreciation, identity, recommendation, and information. The appreciation dimension is the original contribution of this study to the literature. Future studies will be carried out in the tourism industry focusing on different regions, and customer groups of different nationalities. Furthermore, other future research directions may cover other factors relating to customer engagement on social media, such as customer loyalty, customer trust, and customer perception.

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Original scientific paper

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY REQUIREMENTS AMONG HUNGARIAN ENTERPRISES – CAPITAL VERSUS COUNTRYSIDE

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Abstract

In the spirit of sustainability business organisations have also put the circular approach to the forefront, and are trying to conduct their activities accordingly. They are developing technological improvements, innovative products and services to reduce their environmental footprint. The importance of protecting the environment and the principles of the circular economy have become key competitiveness factors. This study presents the commitment to the circular economy approach at the level of economic organizations. The survey included the 5,000 largest enterprises based on the number of employees established in Hungary in the form of an electronic questionnaire, from which the results from 202 responding enterprises were evaluated. Our research questions focus on what clusters companies can be classified into according to the environmental orientation in accordance with the framework of a circular economy, and whether there is a correlation between the companies' belonging to each cluster and their territorial location. The main methods used to analyze the results were Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, Cronbach's alpha, cluster analysis and cross-tabulation analysis. The results show that enterprises can be divided into three clusters based on the environmental focus, and the difference between the capital and the countryside is also strongly felt. Based on the results, we can state that the nationwide analyzes show that the paradigm shift has really started in the business practice, measurably in favor of rural enterprises. Businesses have recognized that their territorial competitiveness position will be strengthened if they adopt an environmentally sound management approach.

Keywords: sustainability, circular economy, competitiveness, cluster analysis, crosstab analysis

INTRODUCTION

The circular economy approach is not only the subject of scientific works, but also interweaves our everyday lives. In addition to the growing number of domestic and international scientific research, we also recognize the importance of protecting the environment at the community level. In addition to individual responsibility, economic organizations have also put the circular approach at the forefront, and they seek to continue and transform their activities in accordance with this. Numerous research articles have been published examining the positive correlations between the culture of sustainability

(Schönborn et al., 2019), sustainability practices (Alshehhi et al., 2018) and the adaptation of the principles of the circular economy to corporate practice in relation with different elements of corporate performance (Rehman Khan et al., 2021; Moric et al., 2020), including financial performance (Uhrenholt et al., 2022; Fernando et al., 2022; Johl & Toha, 2021). Environmental principles have also been integrated into corporate decision-making (Bedenik et al., 2019). The concepts and solutions of sustainability, resource efficiency and zero-waste production are increasingly becoming part of our thinking, policy guidelines and corporate strategies (Kiss et al, 2019).

In the Energy 2020 document the European Union has set three targets for energy efficiency, the share of renewable energy and greenhouse gas emissions. Szép Sebestyén (2016) found that the share of renewable energy sources shows the fastest convergence. This positive trend is negatively affected by the economic crisis. Convergence is stronger in countries with poor initial energy efficiency (later entrants). The production and use of renewable energy is also essential for mitigating the well-known negative impacts of climate change which is expected to become even more important in the future (Hollósy et al, 2021a). The EU has set a target of achieving a 10% share of energy consumption produced from renewable energy sources in transport, one of the most carbon-intensive sectors, by 2020. While this ratio stood at only 1.5% in 2004, in the following years it became much closer to the target value: 7.5% in 2017, 8.3% in 2018, and 8.9% in 2019 (Kiss et al, 2021). In 2016, the share of renewable energy in electricity generation in the EU28 was nearly 30 percent, while in Hungary it was only 7 percent, the second lowest share among EU Member States. (Csizmásné Tóth, J. et al, 2018).   Installing solar systems in electricity generation can reduce the use of conventional fossil fuels and reduce carbon dioxide emissions (Hollósy et al, 2021b). The conversion of animal by-products used in agricultural biogas plants into energy is also an opportunity for agriculture and rural development, which corresponds to the efforts of the European Union to diversify its energy sources in favor of renewable energy sources (Chodkowska-Miszczuk et al, 2019).

The implementation of the principles of the circular economy supports the achievement of the goals of sustainable development, therefore their application by economic actors is important, and from the researcher's perspective it is important to measure the prevalence of applications, for which purpose a wide range of circularity indicators have been developed by the researchers of this topic.

We can find a lot of good practices, but no survey has yet been conducted that shows a complete picture of the Hungarian situation. The present study examines this issue and analyzes the implementation of the environmental goals of the circular economy among enterprises, also following a territorial approach.

In section 2 of our article, in the context of the literature review, we briefly summarize the definitions of the circular economy, we discuss the framework of the circular economy, with special regard to its measurable requirements, which also forms the basis of the empirical part.

Section 3 presents the test sample and the test methods used. In Section 4 we present the results of our research, and in Section 5 we summarize them.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The current economic system is characterized by a linear approach. The extraction of raw materials from nature ensures the production of goods, some of which generate a large amount of waste after use (Neumanné & Varga-Dani, 2020; 2021). The goal of the circular economy is to change this linear system. The implementation of the principles of the circular economy supports the achievement of the goals of sustainable development (Briem et al., 2019), therefore their application by economic actors is important.

The topic of the circular economy has also become increasingly integrated into scientific thinking and corporate strategies (Lengyel et al., 2021; Fianko et al., 2021). It is a very common topic in the scientific literature, and as a result, we can find a variety of definitions, from which a lack of uniformity derives. Kirchherr et al. (2017) revised 114 definitions of the circular economy, dividing them into 17 dimensions. By definition, the circular economy is an economic system that replaces the concept of end of life (the linear economy) with the reduction, alternative reuse, recycling and recovery of materials in production / distribution and consumption processes. The circular economy operates at the micro level (products, companies, consumers), at the meso level (eco-industrial parks) and at the macro level (city, region, nation and beyond), with the aim of supporting the goals of sustainable development while respecting the quality of the environment, economic prosperity and social equality for the benefit of present and future generations.

Lindgreen el al. (2020) identify companies as key players in the transition to circular economy, where the essence of implementing circular economy strategies is to reduce resource use and associated impacts while increasing economic competitiveness and having a positive social impact. Circular business models can lead to reduced dependence on natural resources (Barbaritano et al., 2019). More efficient resource allocation and use are expected to increase a company's overall competitiveness as well as improve social welfare, reduce environmental damage and economic inequalities (Lu et al., 2008; McGregor & Pouw, 2017). Companies can turn waste streams into profitable ones (Engel et al., 2016), and the cost-reducing effect of an overall increase in material reuse can have a competitiveness-enhancing

effect due to reduced raw material use and less exposure to the effects of price fluctuations (Rizos et al., 2015). In addition to new job opportunities, circular business models can also lead to technological and organizational innovation, thereby improving the overall well-being of society (Sariatli, 2017).

The paradigm of the circular economy introduces a new perspective to economic life where economic growth is decoupled from resource use and pollutant emissions, as end-of-life materials and products are seen as resources rather than waste. The essence of the concept is to close material loops, to reduce the need for raw materials and the need for waste management (Elia et al., 2016). The recycling system can lead to significant improvements in material use efficiency and can be profitable for manufacturers (MacArthur, 2013). The narrower the circle, i.e. the less a product needs to be changed during reuse, refurbishment and remanufacturing, the faster it returns to use, the greater the potential savings. This also applies to materials incorporated into the products, labor, energy and capital, as well as related externalities (greenhouse gas emissions, water, toxicity) (MacArthur, 2013). The framework of a circular economy is described by Elia et al. (2016) (Fig. 1.).

Figure 1 The circular economy framework
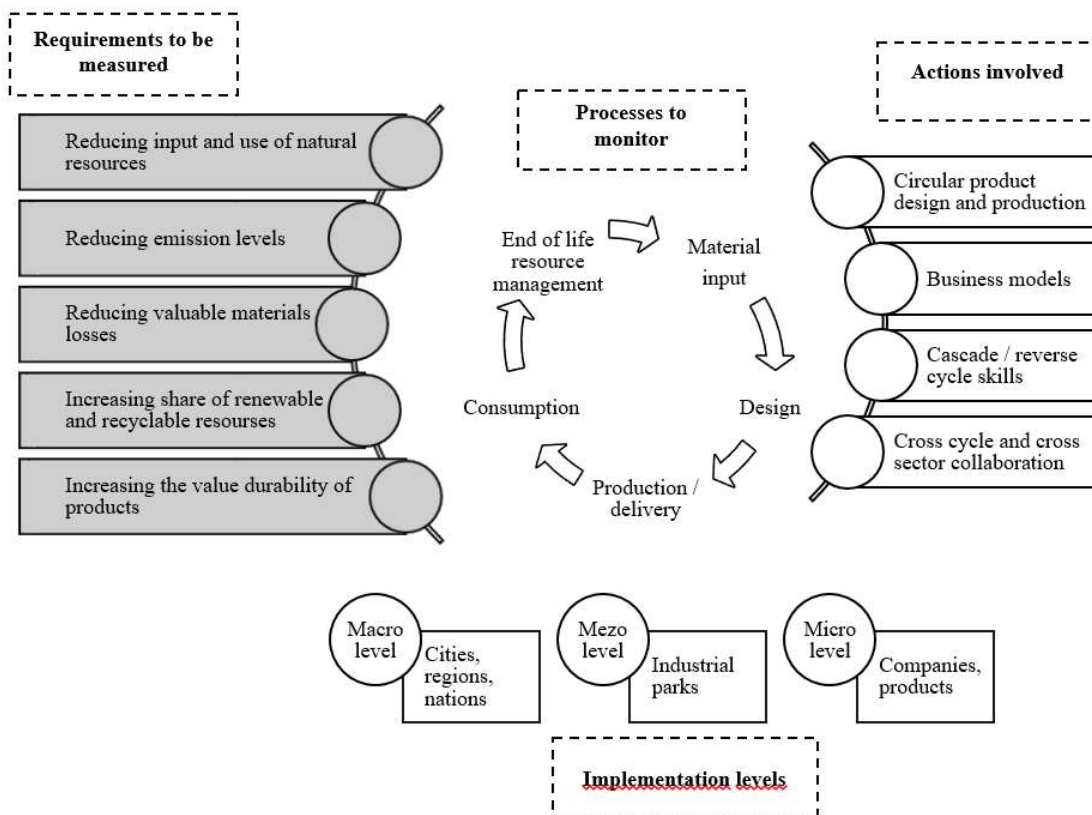
Source: adopted from Elia et al., 2016

In the middle of Fig. 1, there are five main phases of the circular economy paradigm: material input, design, production delivery, consumption, and finally end-of-life resource management, which provides the input to the first phase. These phases represent the processes whose performance measurement is essential to judge the circularity of a system.

Four categories of actions have been identified in the framework on the right-hand side of the figure (MacArthur, 2013; Philp & Winickoff, 2018; Elia et al., 2016; Janik & Ryszko, 2019; Franco-García, 2019):

(1) Circular product design and production: this category covers a wide range of activities, from eco-friendly design to promote the re-use, refurbishment and recycling of products to the design of products and processes containing less dangerous substances.

(2) Business models: the diffusion of new business models, such as product service systems that replace product ownership, or collaborative consumption tools, which are based on a wider spread of channels between consumers.

(3) Cascade / reverse skills: refers to the ability to build reverse or cascading circles. Measures to support closed-loop cycles may include e.g. the use of innovative technologies in recycling or the cascading use of materials and the support of secondary markets.

• The "power of cascading use" refers to the diversification of reuse through the value chain. For example, the cotton clothing used as a second-hand article in clothing, which would then be transferred to the furniture industry as a fiber insert for upholstery, and the fiber insert would later be reused in construction industry as rock wool insulation.

• Reverse circles: in general, closed loops consist of two supply chains (Wells & Seitz, 2005): a forward chain and an inverted chain, where the recovered product re-enters the traditional forward chain (Antikainen & Valkokari, 2016). This requires cost-effective, high-quality collection, transport and handling systems, as without them, materials will continue to leak out of the system, so building capacity and infrastructure to close the loops is critical. Reverse cycles are not limited to one industry, they are also "cascading" in different industries (MacArthur, 2013).

(4) Cross-cycle and cross-sector collaboration: measures focusing on building collaborations through the new value chain, even involving new actors, preventing by-

products from becoming waste through effective industrial symbiosis. A circular economy would shift the economic balance away from energy-intensive materials and primary extraction. Reverse-cycle activities are emerging as a new sector for the reuse, recovery, remanufacturing and recycling of materials (MacArthur, 2013).

The requirements to be measured on the left side of Figure 1 will provide the basis for our empirical research. There are several frameworks and indicator systems for measuring the circular economy in the literature. Kozma et al. (2021) notes that the most comprehensive analyzes for mapping circular economy indicators were performed and described by Elia et al. (2016), Parchomenko et al. (2019) and Saidani et al. (2019). Saidani et al. (2019) identified 55 sets of indicators, based on which a taxonomy of circular economy indicators has been developed in 10 categories. Parchomenko et al. (2019) provides a structured picture of metrics for measuring the circular economy. The authors conducted a structured analysis of 63 metrics and 24 relevant characteristics such as recycling efficiency, longevity, and stock availability. The analysis identified three main clusters of metrics:

(1) the resource efficiency cluster,

(2) a cluster of material stocks and flows,

(3) and the product-centric cluster.

It is noted that the most common aspects focus on waste disposal, primary and secondary use of resources, resource efficiency/productivity, and recycling efficiency.

Among the requirements to be measured (left side of Figure 1), the 5 factors we will use later will be described in detail. These are mentioned and suggested for use by many authors in their works (Elia et al., 2016; Philp & Winickoff, 2018; Janik & Ryszko, 2019; Kristensen, & Mosgaard, 2020; Kwarteng et al., 2021; Kravchenko et al., 2020; Mancini & Raggi, 2021; Moraga et al., 2019).

(1) Reducing input and use of natural resources: The main goal is to reduce the erosion of the natural ecosystem caused by current linear models by creating higher value from less used resources. The direct consequence of this is a more efficient conservation of natural resources through the efficient use of raw materials, water and energy.

(2) Reducing emission levels: Applies to direct and indirect emissions.

(3) Reducing valuable materials losses: Implementing closed-loop models for the recovery and recycling of products and materials. Through reverse flow, it

prevents waste generation, minimizes incineration and landfill, and reduces energy and material losses.

(4) Increasing the share of renewable and recyclable resources: thereby reducing emissions.

(5) Increasing the value of durability of products: This objective can be achieved by extending the life of products and by introducing new business models based on use-oriented services that replace the product ownership already mentioned above. In addition, it is possible to achieve this with a significant recycling of materials and the reuse of finished products as components.

Finally, at the bottom of the figure, three main areas of intervention of the paradigm are outlined: the micro level (the level of individual companies, products, customers), the meso level (i.e., eco-industrial parks), and the macro level (cities, nations) (Ghisellini et al., 2016).

In our present research, we examine the 5 measurable requirements mentioned above at the company level.

DATA AND METHODS

The research aims to examine the appearance of the theory of the circular economy in practice and its extent. The authors hypothesize that larger enterprises are those where the environmental approach appears in a measurable way. This is due to the fact that these companies also form a significant proportion of environmental strategies, the implementation of which they seek to implement through a variety of environmental management tools.

The authors defined as the basic population of the research the 5,000 largest companies with headquarter or site in Hungary, based on the number of employees. The answers to the research questions are based on the analysis of the results of a primary questionnaire sent out electronically. A total of 4,606 questionnaires were received by companies, of which 202 were returned. In terms of size, almost 70% of enterprises have between 50 and 250 employees and 30% have more than 250 employees. The largest responding company has more than 37,000 employees. 22% of the questionnaires came back from companies located in the capital (Budapest). Nearly 40% of the responding enterprises operate in the manufacturing industry, with a very diverse range of main activities. Several companies operate in the field of metalworking and the production of metal structures, as well as in the production of vehicles and vehicle engine parts. In terms of annual net sales, the variance

between companies is very large. All this shows that the sample on which the analyses are based covers a wide range of businesses of different types and sizes.

The research was based on several groups of questions. Companies were asked to rate their environmental performance on a 6-level Likert scale. The authors used the Spearman rank correlation coefficient to measure the closeness of the relationships between the responses and to check their significance level.

Questionnaire testing was performed by the authors with the Cronbach's alpha index, which is the average of the correlation coefficients between items. Based on the values obtained for the indicator, it can be concluded that the statements in the questionnaire really measure what the authors were interested in during the research.

Subsequently, the examined companies were grouped by performing a cluster analysis. The advantage of cluster analysis is that similar observation units are grouped together (Molnár, 2015). This not only allows us to conduct further research using cluster variables, but also provides interesting and illustrative (with a graphical representation of each cluster) information about the proportion of surveyed companies in each cluster. In the course of the analysis, the validity of the cluster analysis was also checked in each case. Based on the significance level of the F-statistics, it can be determined whether the centers of the created clusters differ significantly from each other. It is also necessary to examine the correlation coefficients before performing the cluster analysis, as in case of correlation coefficients higher than 0.9 the strongly correlated variables may play a larger role in the analysis.

To prove the existence of a relationship between the individual cluster variables and the territorial location (Budapest headquarters - rural headquarters), we used the method of widespread cross-tabulation analysis. The method shows how the enterprises located in Budapest and the countryside are distributed within the clusters formed on the basis of an environmental goal and whether there is a significant correlation between the cluster variables and the regional variables. The method examines the relationship between two or more variables in the form of percentage distributions. The significance level of the chi-square statistics and the adjusted standardized residuals were also examined during the cross-tabulation analysis, based on which it can be determined whether there is a significant relationship between the individual clusters and the geographical location of companies.

RESULTS

When completing the questionnaire, companies had to rank their answers on a Likert scale from 1 to 6, in terms of the extent to which their company achieves the following environmental goals:

- Reducing input and use of natural resources;
- Increasing share of renewable and recyclable resources;
- Reducing emission levels;
- Reducing valuable materials losses;
- Increasing the value durability of products.

These issues are the measurable requirements of the circular economy framework already described in the literature section.

The reliability of the questionnaire was examined with the Cronbach's alpha index, the values of which are given in the following table (Tab. 1).

Table 1 - Values of Cronbach-alfa index.

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0,800	,805	5

	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Reducing input and use of natural resources	0,762
Increasing share of renewable and recyclable resources	0,776
Reducing emission levels	0,747
Reducing valuable materials losses	0,747
Increasing the value durability of products	0,778

Source: own research

The value of Cronbach's alpha can be between 0 and 1. Scales with an alpha of at least 0.7 can be considered reliable and stable, but at the same time a very high alpha value of 0.9 can also indicate redundancy. (Takács & Kárász, 2015; Gliem, & Gliem, 2003).

The value of Cronbach's alpha in our case is 0.8, which indicates good internal consistency of the items in the scale.

The Alpha values in the second half of the table show what would happen if that variable were removed. We can see that the value of Alpha would decrease in each case (if the value would be higher for one of the variables, the stability would increase if that variable was omitted).

The frequency of answers to each question is shown in Fig. 2.

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Figure 2 Distribution of responses to environmental objectives on a scale of 1 to 6 (%).
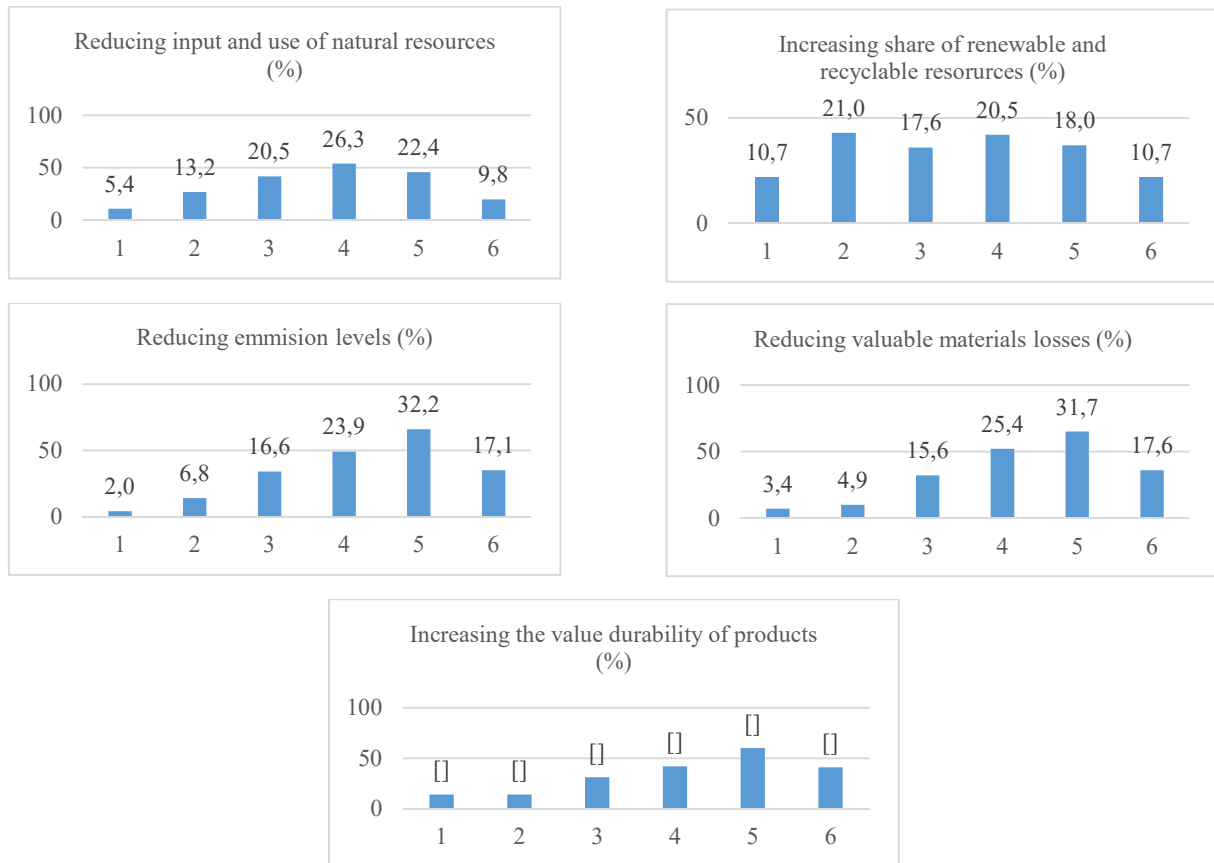
We found significant differences in the ranking of each issue, suggesting that perceptions of the environmental objectives are quite different. Based on the bar charts in Figure 2, our first conclusion was that a certain proportion of companies do not consider the degree of achievement of the environmental goals given in the questionnaire to be high.

In the answers given to each question, the values of 5 occur in the highest proportion (on a scale of 6). There are two exceptions to this:

- the use of renewable and recyclable resources, in case of which the ranking 2 being the most common.
- the other goal, which has a slightly lower value, is the reduction of the acquisition and use of natural resources (ranking mode: 4).

For the other goals given, businesses ranked 5 most often. However, it is striking that a smaller proportion of firms rated these elements of the circular economy as being their primary goal. In the total sample, there were only five companies that rated each of the environmental objectives at the highest level (6), all of which are operating in the manufacturing industry, and there is a big difference between them in terms of headcount and sales revenue (difference in turnover is more than HUF 11 billion ~ EUR 29.3 million and the

difference in headcount of almost 400 people). However, there was only one company in the sample, operating in the construction industry, which does not perceive any of the stated environmental goals among the strongly prevailing goals. Based on all this, it cannot be concluded that the responding companies are oriented towards a circular economy or not based on their environmental practices. Based on the responses, the authors of this article used two assumptions:

- Businesses do not place the same emphasis on each circular economic goal, yet well-identifiable groups with similar attitudes can be defined.
- There is a difference in the affiliation to each group between enterprises located in the capital and in the countryside.

To support the first assumption, we chose to use the method of cluster analysis. Before performing the cluster analysis, we examined Spearman's rank correlation coefficients, during which we did not find any strongly correlating variables that could have biased the result of the cluster analysis. The magnitudes of the coefficients ranged from 0.332 to 0.595, showing a moderate to weak positive relationship at the 1% significance level.

Based on the cluster analysis, the authors' assumptions were confirmed, as three clusters were clearly identified among the enterprises. The clusters were formed with standardized variables, the expected value of which is zero and the variance is 1, so the individual clusters can be characterized by the relative differences. Based on the cluster analysis, companies with similar environmental goals were included in the same cluster.

Table 2 - Cluster centers for clusters based on the achievement of environmental objectives.

	1 – environmentally goal-oriented	2 – resource-oriented	3 – non-environmentally goal-oriented
Reducing input and use of natural resources	0,53207	0,30135	-1,02910
Increasing share of renewable and recyclable resources	0,50962	0,23983	-0,90195
Reducing emission levels	0,72787	-0,07794	-0,91154
Reducing valuable materials losses	0,73781	-0,08443	-0,89072
Increasing the value durability of products	0,83180	-0,38196	-0,75410

Source: own research

Based on the general environmental objectives, three significantly different clusters were formed (the significance level of the F test was 0 for all three clusters):

In the first cluster, which was named environmentally goal-oriented, each of the examined environmental goals appears strongly, which is shown by the positive values in the table. These enterprises are committed to the practical application of the circular economy approach and can be considered at the forefront of other enterprises.

The second cluster can be called resource-oriented, as for the companies belonging to this group the reduction of the acquisition and use of natural resources and the use of renewable and recyclable resources appear as important goals (positive values in the table), the other goals have negative values, their appearance is lower compared to other companies in the sample. In this group, the emphasis on environmental aspects can already be felt, but the economic organizations belonging to this cluster mostly determine their environmental goals based on the resource approach, so they can be considered progressive among other companies.

In the third cluster, called non-environmentally goal-oriented, each goal appears with a negative value, so they gave each goal a lower value on a scale of 1 to 6 than the other companies in the sample in general. These companies have not yet put the environmental approach into practice, as none of the environmental targets received a high ranking when completing the questionnaires. Based on the analyses, they can be considered lagging behind the previous two groups.

Figure 3 Number and distribution of enterprises belonging to clusters based on general environmental objectives. Source: Own editing

A total of 39% of the responding companies belong to the (1) environmentally goal-oriented cluster, i.e. most companies are included here. Their characteristic is that each of the environmental goals plays an important role on a practical level, so they have already transposed the circular economy approach into their activities. Nearly half of the group's businesses are involved in the manufacturing industry, which is not surprising given the over-representation of this sector. However, several businesses operate in transportation, warehousing, trade, vehicle repair, water supply, waste water collection and treatment, waste management and decontamination sectors. In terms of turnover, there is a big difference between companies. There is a difference of almost HUF 205 billion between the largest and the smallest sales revenue (~ EUR 54.7 million). In the case of the number of employees we

find a similar difference, the range here is 37 thousand people. All this means that the companies with the highest turnover and the largest number of employees fall into this category, but there are also a number of companies that are much smaller among the pioneers.

In the group called (2) resource-oriented, we find 31% of the enterprises included in the sample. These companies have identified the reduction in the acquisition and use of natural resources and the use of renewable and recyclable resources as a priority for the business, the other environmental goals not yet being emphasized. The proportion of enterprises operating in the manufacturing industry is also high in this group (35%), but it is already lower than in the case of the pioneers. Companies in sectors that use mainly natural resources, such as agriculture, forestry and fishing, were included in this group in a larger number. In addition, as in the case of the pioneers, in this cluster we can find companies involved in the water supply, wastewater collection and treatment, waste management and decontamination sectors. The range of sales revenues in this group is HUF 117 billion ~ EUR 312 million, which is less than in the case of group 1 and similarly the differences in the number of employees is much smaller (10 thousand people). All this means that this group has a more homogeneous composition and, it appears that smaller enterprises have been included in this group.

In the non-environmentally goal-oriented sector (3), the share of enterprises operating in the manufacturing industry is even lower (32%), and in addition to transport and storage, water supply, wastewater collection and treatment, waste management and decontamination, a larger number of companies performing administrative and service support activities are also appearing. The range of sales revenue realized in the business year is the highest in this group (HUF 342 billion ~ EUR 912 million), and the range of headcount is the same as in the first group (37 thousand people).

Based on the above, it cannot be stated unequivocally that a large enterprise (in terms of turnover, number of employees) clearly belongs to the environmentally goal-oriented cluster. The characterization of the clusters reveals that there are several such companies in the lagging group.

The authors hypothesized that - as in most spatial analyzes in general-, the majority of enterprises based in the capital belong to the cluster of environmentally goal-oriented, front-line pioneers. However, the results did not confirm this assumption, as the largest proportion of companies with headquarters in the capital city (43.18%) belong to the second, resource-oriented group. In contrast, almost half of the enterprises with headquarters outside the capital (43.59%) can be included among the pioneers in the group of environmentally goal-oriented cluster (Fig. 4).

Figure 4 - Clustering of capital-based and countryside-based businesses in environmental clusters. Source: Own editing
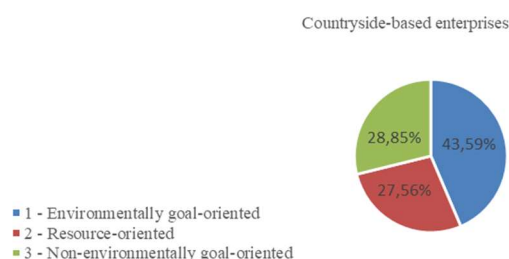
After the cluster analysis, the method of cross-tabulation analysis was applied to examine whether there is a relationship between belonging to environmentally goal-oriented clusters and the capital or rural location. The adjusted standardized residuals of the cross-tabulation analysis show a correlation between the Budapest-based enterprises and the resource-oriented cluster, and between the rural-based enterprises and the cluster called the environmentally goal-oriented cluster. A value of +2 or above for the adjusted standardized residual proves the existence of a significant relationship, and for values below -2 or below, there is certainly no correlation between the two variables. Based on this, we can state the opposite of the previous statement that there is certainly no correlation between the Budapest-based enterprises and the environmentally goal-oriented cluster or between the rural-based enterprises and the resource-oriented cluster. In the cross-tabulation, the correlations are highlighted in green and the absence of correlations is highlighted in red.

Table 3 - Distribution of companies included in different environmental orientation clusters in relation to those based in Budapest and the countryside.

		1 – environmentally goal-oriented	2 – resource-oriented	3 – non-environmentally goal-oriented	Total
Budapest	Companies (pcs)	11	19	14	44
	% distribution	25,00%	43,18%	31,82%	100,00%
	Adjusted standardized residual	-2,2	2,0	0,4	
Countryside	Companies (pcs)	68	43	45	156
	% distribution	43,59%	27,56%	28,85%	100,00%
	Adjusted standardized residual	2,2	-2,0	-0,4	
Total	Companies (pcs)	79	62	59	200
	% of Total	39,50%	31,00%	29,50%	100,00%

Source: own research

At the same time, it cannot be statistically proven that the capital-countryside relationship determines which company belongs to which group. We base this finding on the following:

According to the significance rule, if the significance level (p <0.05) of Pearson's χ2 (chi-square) statistic, we can reject the null hypothesis that there is no correlation between the two variables. In the present research, the significance level of the χ2 (chi-square) statistic in the cross-tabulation study is 0.55. Cramer's "V" showed a low value (0.17) with a significance level of 0.55, i.e., the first type of error, although slightly above 5% (p = 5.5%).

CONCLUSION

Looking at the results, we can see that the practical application of the principles of the circular economy prevails in the case of the enterprises included in the survey. However, the questionnaire survey did not reveal the extent to which they are characteristic and which divisions are affected. It is also questionable whether this practical activity stems from the company's environmental strategy, or whether the importance of operational efficiency and the company's external judgment directs companies towards the application of environmental aspects.

Based on the responses given to the environmental questions, it appears that companies view these issues in a coherent manner, as the calculated rank correlation coefficients generally showed moderately strong (in some cases weak) and positive correlations with reliable significance values.

As a result of our research, we classified the responding enterprises into three clusters based on the application of the principles of the circular economy. The (1) environmentally goal-oriented cluster (pioneers) is the most environmentally conscious and all of the objectives of the circular economy are present. The greatest improvements are in the durability of the products, the reduction of material loss and the reduction of pollutant emissions. In the (2) resource-oriented cluster (progressives), the resource-related objectives prevail: reducing the acquisition and use of natural resources and increasing the use of renewable/recyclable resources. In the (3) non-environmentally goal-oriented cluster (laggards), none of the five goals of the circular economy prevails.

Based on the net sales realized in the business year and the average number of employees, as indicators characterizing the size of the company, the largest enterprises were mostly classified as (1) "pioneers" or (3) "laggards". The authors intend to investigate the reasons for the inclusion of large enterprises in cluster 3 in the framework of further research.

Nearly 50% of companies in the manufacturing industry belong to the first group, which clearly indicates the environmentally oriented strategy of these companies. This is mainly due to the fact that the activities of companies operating in the manufacturing industry are closely linked to and have an impact on the natural environment.

Based on the results of the questionnaire survey, the companies with a rural headquarters are the ones that can be classified in a higher proportion in the group of "pioneers" (1). It is likely that these businesses have realized that their territorial competitiveness position will be strengthened if they carry out environmental management. Although it should be noted that these studies were not statistically verifiable in all cases. In this case, according to the authors, by increasing the number of companies included in the research, a more reliable result is expected.

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MEMORABLE TOURISM EXPERIENCE IN SLOW CITIES: A NETNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS IN THE CASE OF HALFETİ

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Abstract

The study aims to explore the components of foreign tourists' memorable tourism experience about Halfeti which is one of the slow tourism destinations of Türkiye. The study seeks to answer the questions of "In what expressions do tourists describe their Halfeti experiences?", "What are the factors that tourists focus on in their description of Halfeti experiences?" and "How does the title of slow city affect tourists' Halfeti experiences?". The study is qualitative and netnography design was used in the research. To access the experiences of foreign tourists visiting Halfeti, the Tripadvisor platform was chosen. The data used in this study include 42 online narratives and thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The factors that shape Halfeti experiences of foreign tourists were determined as "admiration", "activities", "nature", "history", "local culture", "restaurants" and "location". This study provides practical and future recommendations concerning the importance of the awareness of the title of slow city. The results show that the slow city title of Halfeti is not a determinant on MTE. Although some components that guide tourists' MTEs are a result of the initiatives initiated by the title of slow city, there is no indication that they had an MTE due to the destination being a slow city. This shows that while the district continues its activities related to the slow city, it also needs to increase the awareness of this title.
Keywords: Memorable tourism experience, slow tourism, slow city, netnography, Halfeti

INTRODUCTION

With the rapid changes in the world, while the touristic demand has evolved from mass tourism to niche tourism products, the phenomenon of "slow tourism" has emerged as a significant actor in many aspects. Slow tourism destinations that focus on localness can provide tourists unique experiences with activities that prioritize preserving and sustaining cultural heritage and historical values, revitalizing local and traditional production, and protecting the environment and nature.

To consume tourism is to consume experiences. An understanding of how tourists experience the places and people they visit is therefore significant (Sharpley & Stone, 2011). Slowness is a value that leads to the restructuring of time and quality of experience, an integral element of the journey, and the choice of mode of transport that provides a richer

experience (Lumsdon & McGrath, 2011: 269). Therefore, slowness is an essential value that also plays a role in memorable tourism experiences.

Encouraging tourists to make slower choices when planning and enjoying their holidays has several benefits for the destination's environment, local people and the tourists. During these holidays, which have elements such as relaxation and recreation, both tourists will have more meaningful experiences and the local economy will be revived (Caffyn, 2012). Slow tourism contributes to the development of sustainable tourism by associating the qualitative experiences of slow tourists in the journey and destination with the benefits they provide to local stakeholders (Conway & Timms, 2012).

The greatest role of slow tourism in memorable tourism experiences is its emphasis on localness. As the goal is to discover specific features of a place through its geography, its cultural heritage, or whatever makes it interesting to live in harmony with that place and its inhabitants (Matos, 2004), slow tourists explore more about the natural and built heritage, local cuisine, traditions and some of the special features of the destination (Caffyn, 2012). Slow tourism explicitly links the three E's of sustainable development –environment, economy and equity (Conway & Timms, 2010) and promotes local distinctiveness by understanding the cultures of others and developing common interests between hosts and tourists (Conway & Timms, 2012).

The Cittaslow movement, founded in July 2000, aims to improve the quality of life in the urban environment by promoting slowness (Matos, 2004). There are 287 slow cities in 33 countries and territorial areas all over the world as of June 2022. In Türkiye, there are 21 slow cities by 2022, and Halfeti, which is one of these slow cities and also the subject of the present study, joined the Cittaslow network in 2013 (Cittaslow.org).

The reason why Halfeti was chosen for the study is that Halfeti, with its rich background, story, and natural and cultural values, has a more touristic potential compared to other slow city destinations in Türkiye. Moreover, the fact that it has increased this potential from year to year with the projects initiated after the slow city title sets an outstanding sample in terms of researching memorable tourism experiences in slow cities. Halfeti has a rich background as a place that has hosted different civilizations for thousands of years and where different cultures live together. In addition to its rich natural assets and tangible and intangible cultural heritage elements, its changing fate by being submerged under dam waters has made Halfeti an attractive tourism region. The desire to see and photograph the old settlements underwater, the boat tours organised in Birecik Dam and the expansion of the scope of these tours, the

beginning of regular tours from the Gaziantep coast of the dam, the inclusion of Halfeti in the tour programs by the local and foreign tour operators, participation at international tourism fairs, the opportunity to do water sports such as underwater photography in the dam, canoeing, diving, nature sports such as bird watching, trekking, mountain biking and camping facilities, festivals organised in different areas, endemic plants such as karagül (Yılmaz & Güneş, 2013), movies and TV series shot in the region and reaching large audiences (Çiftçi, 2016) are the reasons that have made Halfeti popular in the touristic sense. Various projects initiated by Halfeti after receiving the title of a slow city also increased the tourism potential of the district and the number of tourists.

Although the main purpose of slow cities is to increase the welfare of local residents and maintain local values and traditions, initiatives in this regard undoubtedly make the slow city stand out as a tourism destination, so that the slow city can offer tourists more authentic and memorable experiences. The main focus of the paper is the memorable tourism experience. As memorable tourism experience dimensions differentiate in touristic areas with different destination attributes, slow cities were chosen as the research area.

Many studies aimed to explore memorable tourism experience components in different fields of tourism such as heritage tourism (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021); cultural tourism (Chen & Rahman, 2018; Seyfi et al., 2020); dark tourism (Ülker Demirel, 2020), winter tourism (Akkuş, 2017), hotel experiences (Sthapit, 2018), local food (Sthapit et al., 2019; Tsai, 2016). The current study will fill the gap in the literature by investigating the components of memorable tourism experiences in the context of slow tourism.

The present study aims to explore the components of memorable tourism experiences of foreign visitors in the case of Halfeti, one of the slow cities in Türkiye. By revealing the determinants of the foreign tourists' Halfeti experience, how the title of slow city affects the memorable tourism experience is discussed.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Memorable Tourism Experience

The tourist experience is a complex combination of particularly subjective factors that shape a tourist's feelings and attitudes regarding the visit. While a part of this combination consists of the needs, wants and motivations of the tourists, the other part consists of destination attributes such as the facilities offered by the destination, the attractions it has, and the image of the destination (Cornelisse, 2014).

Rather than the functionality of the product or service that consumers buy, the feeling created by that experience in their minds may also be important in purchasing decisions (Ülker Demirel, 2020). Tourists tend to make biased choices based on their past experiences (Kim, 2014). The perspectives on past experiences, touristic activities, touristic products and the general structure of the destination are effective in the memorable tourism experience (MTE) of tourists (Keskin et al., 2020). According to Zhang et al. (2018), although MTEs and tourist experiences seem to be related, they are two different concepts in terms of connotation and extension. Tourists selectively construct an MTE based on their own assessment of the experience (Kim et al., 2012).

A positive memorable tourism experience (MTE) is defined as "a tourism experience positively remembered and recalled after the event has occurred" (Kim et al., 2012: 13). Positive memorable experiences are crucial to gaining a competitive advantage for tourism providers (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017). If visitors encounter more favourable and delightful experiences during their visits, the perception in their minds about these destinations will be more positive (Chandralal et al., 2014).

Kim et al. (2012) developed a measurement scale and identified seven dimensions of MTEs. The authors conducted a cross-cultural study to verify these dimensions. These seven dimensions are "hedonism", "refreshment", "local culture", "meaningfulness", "knowledge", "involvement", and "novelty". Table 1 describes the seven dimensions of the memorable tourism experience scale developed by Kim et al. (2012).

Table 1 The Seven Dimensions of MTEs

Hedonism	expressed as pleasure or enjoyment, means that tourists are very impressed by having a new experience, they really enjoy and are excited about this experience
Refreshment	characterizes the effects of the holiday experience such as revitalization and refreshment, it also includes the liberating effect of the experience.
Local Culture	includes the interaction of tourists with the local people in the destination and the good impressions they have about them and experiencing the local culture entirely.
Meaningfulness	emphasizes that tourists have a meaningful and important experience in the destination and reveals that this experience offers important opportunities for tourists to get to know themselves.
Knowledge	highlights that tourists achieve different cognitive gains such as acquiring new information and exploring new things or new cultures.
İnvolvement	describes the experience in a destination that has been wanted to go for a long time or to participate in an activity that has been desired for a long time.
Novelty	portrays the experience as a unique one and emphasizes that it is very different from previous experiences and even the experience of a lifetime

Source: Kim et al. (2012)

These dimensions were later analyzed in many studies (Akkuş, 2017; Chen & Rahman, 2018; Cornelisse, 2014; Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Kim, 2014; Rasoolimanesh et al. 2021; Tsai, 2016; Zhang et al., 2018). In one of these studies, Coudounaris & Sthapit (2017) investigated the antecedent factors of MTE and their relationship to visitors' behavioural intentions. They found that hedonism, local culture, involvement, and knowledge significantly impact tourists' behavioural intentions. Chen and Rahman (2018) examined the interplay of MTE, visitor engagement, cultural contact, revisit intentions, and intention to recommend in the cultural tourism context. They revealed that a higher level of cultural contact results in a higher MTE for the tourists. Cultural contact especially positively influences the dimensions of local culture, novelty, knowledge and meaningfulness. Akkuş (2017) conducted a comparative analysis of the memorable tourism experiences of Polish and Iranian tourists in the context of winter tourism. According to the results of the study, it was revealed that Polish tourists perceive their experience more positively than Iranian tourists in terms of hedonism and meaningfulness. Zhang et al. (2018) developed a causal relationship model among perceived image, MTEs and revisit intention. According to the result of the study, country image and destination image influence revisit intention via the mediating effect of MTEs. Similarly, Rasoolimanesh et al. (2021) developed an integrated model of visitor engagement, authenticity, and destination image in driving revisit and electronic word-of-mouth intentions of heritage tourists through the mediating role of MTE. The study showed that MTE could be a mediator for the effects of visitor engagement, authenticity, and destination image on revisit and eWOM intentions in a heritage tourism context. In another study, Tsai (2016) investigated the relationships among MTE of local cuisine, place attachment and behavioural intention. The results indicate that experiencing local cuisines creates positive MTEs and these memories significantly influence the cognitive place attachment.

Qualitative studies aiming to reveal the memorable tourism experience dimensions were also carried out. In one of these studies, Chandralal et al. (2014) who asserted that the sample of MTEs developed by Kim et al. (2012) is more oriented toward the typical tourists, identified seven themes of MTEs in their study which aimed to reveal memorable tourism experience dimensions by analyzing travel blogs through netnography. These themes are "local people, life and culture", "personally significant experiences", "shared experiences", "perceived novelty", "perceived serendipity", "professional local guides and tour operator services" and "affective emotions". Seyfi et al. (2020) found six dimensions of memorable cultural tourism experiences: "Prior perceived significance", "authenticity", "engagement", "culinary attraction", "cultural exchange", and "the quality of service". While the dimension

of "prior perceived significance" is similar to the findings of Chandralal et al. (2014), the "cultural exchange" dimension is compatible with both Kim et al. (2012) and Chandralal et al. (2014). In another study, Ülker Demirel (2020) identified ten dimensions under emotional and cognitive dimensions: "moving feelings and emotionality", "being affected and admired", "feeling lost and heavy-hearted", "feeling pride", "knowledge", "tour guide", "involvement", "meaningfulness", "novelty", "local culture". As the study is in the context of dark tourism, different dimensions were revealed while at the same time similar dimensions to the results of previous studies also emerged. This confirms that the dimensions of the memorable tourism experience can differ according to distinctive fields of tourism.

Slow Tourism

The terms "slow travel" and "slow tourism" are now considered to refer to forms of vacation different from the mainstream (Guiver & McGrath, 2016). Slow travel is an emerging concept that can be explained as an alternative to air and car travel where people travel to destinations more slowly overland and travel less distance (Dickinson et al., 2010), and defines a form of vacationing different from mainstream contemporary tourism (Lumsdon & McGrath, 2011). Both slow travel and slow tourism ideas arose out of the Italy-born, Slow Food Movement (Conway & Timms, 2012).

Like slow travel, slow tourism is an alternative to mass tourism that is regenerative through meeting the maturing needs of a growing cohort of new tourists. It shares the anti-mass tourism goals of the new tourism model but offers a more sustainable, humanistic, eco-friendly tourism product that is a less alienating experience for hosts and guests alike (Conway & Timms, 2010: 332). Two forces broadly underpin relatively new types of tourism such as ecotourism, cultural tourism, heritage tourism, green tourism, and health tourism: environmental sustainability and personal/social well-being. Slow tourism is an understanding that emerges from these personal and environmental concerns (Oh et al., 2016).

Matos (2004) emphasized that slow tourism should be based on two fundamental principles: Taking time and attachment to a particular place. Taking time means having a different perception of nature, and living in harmony with a place, its inhabitants, and their culture. Attachment to a particular place is to discover the place-specific values of a destination such as topography, local culture, history, and cultural heritage, and to be compatible with these values. Caffyn (2012) outlined the dimensions of slow tourism and the elements in each dimension. These are; Place (locality, distinctiveness, landscape, heritage, environment, produce); People (community, culture, local enterprise, cuisine, hospitality,

authenticity); Time (pace, relaxation, unhurried, more in-depth); Travel (distance, speed, mode, low carbon); and the Personal (well-being, pleasure, recreation, conviviality, learning, meaning, enjoyment, understanding). These dimensions may vary from destination to destination, and some elements may be emphasized more in some destinations. However, the more factors that can be brought to the fore, the greater the contribution of slow tourism to the sustainability of the destination. In another study, Guiver and McGrath (2016), pointed out five themes in slow tourism. The first theme, as Matos (2004) and Caffyn (2012) emphasized, is "time" as opposed to "fast". The second is "conscious decision-making" that the conscious choice of "slow" is an essential attribute of being a slow tourist. The third theme is engaging the sense, which is parallel to that described by Matos (2004). Enjoying local food and drink is an essential aspect of slow tourism. This benefits the destination and offers opportunities to mix with local people. The fourth one is holiday duration and location. As Caffyn (2012) highlighted, one of the best ways of experiencing a place more deeply is to stay longer. The fifth theme was determined by the authors as anti-commercialism, as the slow tourism movement emerged as the opposite of mass tourism.

Oh et al. (2016) determined six general slow tourism motivations as relaxation, self-reflection, escape, novelty-seeking, engagement, and discovery. These suggested slow tourism motivations significantly overlapped with general travel motivations in the literature. The authors remarked that people may not necessarily have a set of motivations unique to slow tourism per se; instead, they may be motivated to travel "slowly" in the same way they are for most other modes of travel. The authors argue that the term "slow" should be defined subjectively by individual travellers, rather than that, for example, all visitors in certain travel genres or to certain destinations are categorized as slow travellers. In another study, Yurtseven and Kaya (2011) pointed out that the consumer's interest is a distinctive point to be considered a slow tourist. They categorized slow tourists as dedicated slow tourists, interested slow tourists, and accidental slow tourists. Dedicated slow tourists are open to slow experiences and discovering new cultures. They are educated and independent tourists. They have good cultural knowledge and slow philosophy. They have high expectations concerning the region they are visiting and also they enjoy eco-gastronomy. Interested slow tourists have moderate to high interest in slowness, Slow Food, and Cittaslow but accidental slow tourists see slowness as a tourist attraction of the town visited and their interest is aroused by general tourism promotion.

Since "place" is a significant element in the slow tourism philosophy, the Cittaslow movement, which includes experiencing all the local elements of a place, attracts increasing attention as an essential pillar of the slowness philosophy. The Cittaslow movement is a

grassroots reaction to globalization and is closely related to the Slow Food movement. Although the goals of these two movements are different, they complement each other. Both are in favour of local, traditional cultures, a relaxed pace of life and conviviality (Knox, 2005). The Cittaslow movement aims to improve the quality of life of local people and to create visitor-friendly destinations. It tries to preserve and develop architectural and traditional elements in cultural heritage-oriented destinations (Nilsson et al., 2011). The Cittaslow movement emphasizes the use of new technologies for collective well-being as well as promoting the quality of the local environment and local production (Miele, 2008). The snail in the logo of slow cities symbolizes the slowness of the city, and its shell the protectionism. Cittaslow is a traditionalist, environmentalist and creative movement against today's globalizing, technological and fast city life (Özhancı et al., 2012).

The Cittaslow movement has set out with the goal of an alternative city where people can interact with each other, be self-sufficient in production, have good infrastructure opportunities, use renewable energy resources, and benefit more from the opportunities of technology. For being a Cittalow member, a city must accept the Slow Food guidelines and strive to conserve the local values (Cittaslow.org). The population must be less than 50,000 and meet the list of criteria set by the association (Heitmann et al., 2011). There are 72 criteria, subdivided into 7 areas. These areas are; "Energy and environmental policies", "infrastructure policies", "quality of urban life policies", "agriculture, touristic and artisan policies", "policies for hospitality, awareness and training", "social cohesion" and "partnerships" (Cittaslow.org).

In the next section, information about the district's history, cultural values, tourism potential and the projects realized after it became a slow city are presented in order to better understand the findings of the study.

Halfeti

Halfeti, a district of Şanlıurfa to the northwest of the city, is approximately 120 km from the city centre and 90 km from Gaziantep (Boyraz and Bostancı, 2015: 54). Economic life in Halfeti is based on farming and tourism activities (Pekdemir, 2018). There are two dams in the region, Atatürk Dam 145 km north of Halfeti and Birecik Dam 55 km south of Halfeti on the Euphrates River (Özüpekçe, 2019). A part of Halfeti has been flooded when water started to accumulate in the Birecik Dam in 2000. Then, the village of Karaotlak, located 8 km east, was determined as the new settlement area (Bakırcı, 2002: 58). Halfeti, which was one of the important cities of the Commagene Kingdom 4000 years ago, came under the rule of many civilizations throughout history (Pekdemir, 2018).

Halfeti is a district that has valuable natural assets with its rich flora and fauna, especially the Euphrates River. There are many endemic plant and animal species in the district. Black rose is in the foreground among the endemic plant species. It is known that the black rose, which grows only in Halfeti in Türkiye, was brought from France. These roses grown at home have become an important economic branch. Making a significant contribution to the family budget of the local people, the black rose also attracts the attention of tourists (Boyraz & Bostancı, 2015). Visiting the breeding farm where black roses are grown is an attractive activity for tourists (Pekdemir, 2018).

Among the main tangible cultural heritage elements of the Halfeti region are Roman Castle, Ulu Mosque, Savaşan Village, Çekem Village, Norhut Church and Kantarma Inn. Roman Castle, which gained importance with its sheltered position as a castle city throughout history, had become an important religious centre from time to time (Bakırcı, 2002). The reason why Roman Castle is important in terms of Christian history is that Johannes (John), one of the apostles of Jesus, settled here and spread Christianity here. It is said that the Apostle John copied and hid the manuscript of the Gospels here while he was in seclusion; later on, the copies were taken to Beirut (Ballice, 2010: 329).

Halfeti became the 9th city from Türkiye to become a Cittaslow member at the Cittaslow International Coordination Committee meeting held in Kristianstad, Finland on 12-13 April 2013 (Boyraz & Bostancı, 2015). After the slow city membership, a series of projects have been developed for tangible cultural heritage to prevent the destruction of the flooded area in Halfeti and for sustainable protection. Some of these are; Ulu Mosque and Landscaping, Halfeti Urban Protected Area Coastal Improvement Project, Savaşan Village Improvement Project, and Old Halfeti (Atatürk and Orta Street) Street Improvement Project (Karatosun & Çakar, 2017).

Many of the projects have been implemented under the headings of infrastructure policies, environmental policies, hospitality and awareness efforts, slow food activities and projects, and projects for the elderly and disabled people, to revive the district in terms of tourism with the Cittaslow membership. Meetings on the slow city philosophy are held especially for tradesmen and employees dealing with tourism, and awareness-raising activities are held for students in schools. In addition, courses and training are organized for local residents in areas such as felt accessories, stone dolls, pumpkin carving and painting, mother-of-pearl inlay, amigurumi, jewellery making and artistic mosaic to protect local values and ensure the sustainability of traditional handicrafts. These handcrafted products produced by the local residents are offered to tourists at the handicraft market established on the pontoons belonging

to the Municipality of Halfeti. As part of Slow Food Activities and Projects, arrangements were made for restaurants in the district. In line with the initiatives in this field, many new activities have also been implemented. In this context, as a result of efforts focused on Halfeti cheese, this cheese took its place in the festival known as Türkiye's first cheese festival. Apart from this, events such as the Fruit Food Festival and the Fragrance Festival, have started to be organized traditionally, are organized (Göker, 2020).

Most tourists prefer the spring and autumn periods for visiting Halfeti, avoiding the scorching heat of summer (Özüpekçe, 2019). As of April, tourist movements in Halfeti begin to revive and reach their peak in May. The number of visitors, which decreased to a certain extent in the summer months, starts to increase again in the autumn months. Halfeti, where tourist movements are intense, especially on weekends, comes between 10,000 and 12,500 on Saturdays and between 15,000 and 18,000 on Sundays, depending on the seasons (Çiftçi, 2016). While Halfeti hosted approximately 600,000 tourists in 2018, with the effect of 2019 being declared the "Year of Göbeklitepe" it attracted nearly one million tourists, both domestic and foreign, before the pandemic (iletisim.gov.tr). Although the tourism activity in the district decreased to 30% of normal due to the effect of Covid-19 in 2020, it started to increase again as the district was in the low-risk category and the bans were lifted (trthaber.com). However, the accommodation period of tourists in Halfeti is quite short. Since it is between two cities with high tourism potential such as Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa, it is usually included in the tour programs as a day trip. In a study, Çiftçi (2016) found that 78.7% of the tourists stayed in Halfeti for 1-2 days.

DATA AND METHODS

The study aims to find out the components of foreign tourists' memorable tourism experience about one of the slow cities of Türkiye, Halfeti. The study tries to answer the questions of "In what expressions do tourists describe their Halfeti experiences?", "What are the factors that tourists focus on in their description of Halfeti experiences?" and "How does the title of slow city affect tourists' Halfeti experiences?".

Netnography design was used in this qualitative paper. Netnography, first introduced by Robert Kozinets, is a research approach within the consumer research framework (Mkono, 2012: 554). Netnography could be called in different terms such as "virtual ethnography", "digital ethnography", "web ethnography", "mobile ethnography", "smartphone ethnography", or "ICT ethnography" (Kozinets, 2015). Kozinets (2015: 2) defines

netnography as "specific sets of research positions and accompanying practices embedded in historical trajectories, webs of theoretical constructs, and networks of scholarship and citation; it is a particular performance of cultural research followed by specific kinds of representation of understanding". In other words, netnography is not simply typing some terms from the narratives on the web, it is searching for a deeper cultural understanding behind the communication of people.

Netnographic research involves searching for and analyzing relevant computer-generated data to address identified research questions (Mkono, 2012: 554). Researchers need to identify specific marketing research questions and select particular online forums appropriate for those question types. Researchers should learn as much as possible about the forums, groups, and individuals they are trying to understand (Kozinets, 2002: 63).

Netnography is also suitable for tourist research due to a growing number of tourism consumers are joining online discussion sites to post messages pertaining to their travel experiences around the world. Besides, the number of sites that are dedicated to travel experience message boards is rising (Mkono, 2012). One of these platforms, Tripadvisor, was chosen in the study following the strategy of Kozinets (2002) to choose online communities which provides detailed and descriptive data on the research topic. Tripadvisor is the world's largest travel guidance platform as of June 2022 (similarweb.com). There are more than 1 billion reviews and opinions of nearly 8 million businesses on the platform and as a travel guide company, it is available in 43 markets and 22 languages (tripadvisor.com).

The second step involves data collection. This phase was conducted during January-March 2021. At this stage, the narratives of foreign tourists on the Halfeti page of the Tripadvisor platform were examined. Halfeti has two main touristic areas, "Old Halfeti" and "Roman Castle". Old Halfeti is the sunken part of the city; Roman Castle is the historical area on the boat trip route. At the same time, as mentioned in the previous section, Roman Castle is one of the old names of Halfeti. Halfeti's Tripadvisor page also includes these two sub-headings under the "things to do" section. Other sub-headings include narratives about businesses such as hotels and restaurants and they are business-specific evaluations. Therefore, the narratives under the sub-headings of "Old Halfeti" and "Roman Castle", which reflect the experience of Halfeti as a touristic destination, were included in the study. At first, 45 narratives were reached on Halfeti experiences of foreign tourists. Although negative reviews are a part of the memorable tourism experience, three negative comments were excluded because they mostly include personal situations related to tourists and do not represent a general situation and are less in percentage. 42 online narratives were included in the dataset. The narratives are from

April 2013, when Halfeti was declared a slow city, to March 2021, when the data collection phase was carried out. All narratives are in the English language. 35 tourists have country information on their Tripadvisor profile. Accordingly, the distribution of tourists by country is as follows: "United Kingdom (8)", "United States of America (5)", "Austria (2)", "Malta (2)", "Sudan (2)", "Australia (1)", "Bahrain (1)", "France (1)", "Germany (1)", "Iraq (1)", "Jordan (1)", "Lebanon (1)", "Lithuania (1)", "New Zealand (1)", "Poland (1)", "Qatar (1)", "Slovenia (1)", "South Africa (1)", "The Netherlands (1)", "Ukraine (1)", "United Arab Emirates (1)".

This study used thematic analysis to analyse online narratives. Braun and Clarke (2006: 79) defined thematic analysis as *"a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data"*. According to Braun and Clarke (2006: 87), there are six phases of the process. Tab. 2 shows the six phases of thematic analysis.

Table 2 Thematic Analysis Process

Phase	Description the process	The process of the current study
Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, and noting down initial ideas.	The data were read from the beginning to have an idea about the experiences of the tourists.
Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.	In the coding phase, 226 codes were found by reading the narratives. After the first coding, it was checked by re-coding starting from the beginning and some codes that have the same meaning were combined and 204 codes were reached.
Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.	The themes were not determined beforehand, they were revealed during the analysis process. By combining the related codes under categories, seven main themes were explored.
Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work concerning the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.	In the reviewing themes phase, the entire data set was reviewed by checking whether the codes were related to themes or not. The thematic map of the study was generated (Figure 1)
Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.	In the study, seven dimensions were found as "admiration", "activities", "nature", "history", "local culture", "restaurants" and "location".
Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, the final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.	In the final part of the analysis, the report was produced.

Source: Braun and Clarke (2006: 87)

Figure 1 Thematic Map of the Study
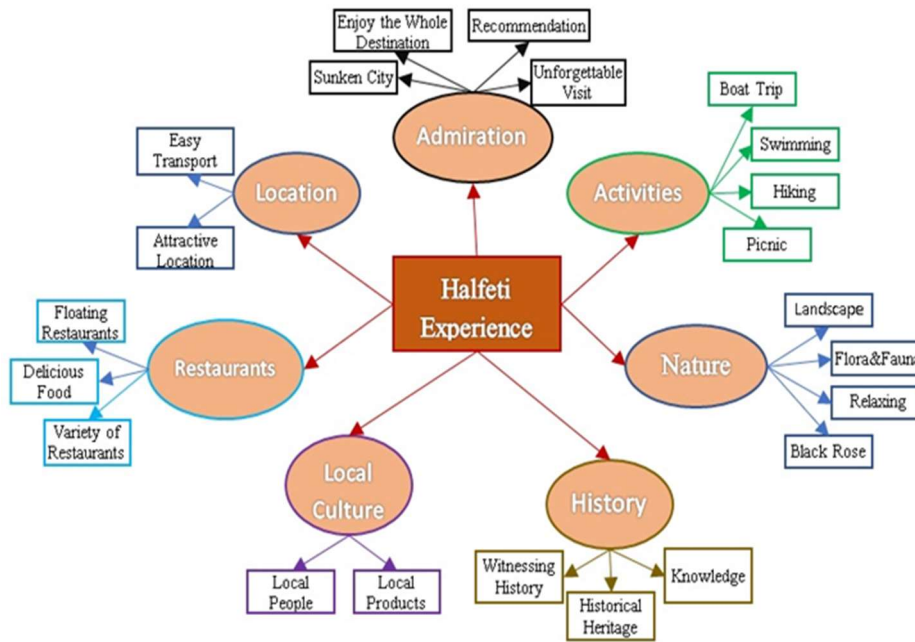
Source: Generated by the authors.

RESULTS

Admiration

Foreign tourists who visited Halfeti expressed admiration while representing their experiences and pointed out that they had distinctive experiences. Sub-themes determined within the scope of this theme; "Enjoying the whole destination", "unforgettable visit", "sunken city", and "recommendation".

Foreign tourists expressed their feelings of admiration, covering the whole of their destination experience. Among the expressions stating that the tourists enjoyed their travel experience in Halfeti and their experiences were exciting; "amazing", "breathtaking", "heavenly", "interesting", "so beautiful", "escape to heaven", "serene", "calm", "hidden gem of Türkiye", "very quiet", "wonderful", "5 stars for its beauty", "worth the time", "sense of peace", "impossible not to enjoy", "The feeling of missing the place forever", "peaceful", "unspoilt", "impressive", "vivid memory", "something different", "a hidden treasure", "well worth the time and money", "unexpected beautiful village".

Foreign tourists stated in their narratives that the Halfeti experience was one of the MTEs in their lives. It is understood that the attractions of the destination offer tourists a new experience and this experience is different from previous experiences.

> *"One of the best places I have been to in Turkey."* (R09)

"I've not seen a place so beautiful in my life." (R02)

"I had heard about Halfeti from a close friend and also read about it on the internet and always wanted to visit and this past week I had the chance to see Halfeti. It is truly a beautiful place to visit and I highly recommend taking the boat tour (one of the main attractions) around the mountains and take in the beautiful scenery!" (R14)

"I have a feeling I'm gonna miss this place forever, really beautiful place for unforgotten evenings on a little ship while sightseeing" (R30)

Tourists impressed by Halfeti, both expressed that they would like to experience this destination again when possible, and also recommended Halfeti and its attractions to potential visitors. The number of narratives that include Halfeti as a "must-see place" is quite high.

"All I can say is do not miss out on visiting here!" (R15)

"Unbelievable experience! Is a definite must-see!" (R13)

The most admirable element of Halfeti is the sunken city part, which was submerged after the construction of the dam, which actually changed the destiny of the district, but made it a tourism destination with the projects. Almost all of the visitors mentioned in their narratives how admirable it was to see the sunken city, the mosque with only its minaret above the water through a boat tour.

"The attraction here is that the minaret of the local mosque can be seen protruding from the water." (R06)

"It's well worth it for a glimpse of the mighty Euphrates and to see the fascinating sunken city." (R22)

"It was stunning! I could say it was the best trip in Turkey. Amazing landscape, the river of Euphrates, sunken mosque and ruins and much more…" (R42)

Activities

Although Halfeti, as a tourism destination and slow city, offers many activities to its visitors, most of the tourists have pointed to the boat tour as the main activity to be held here. Tourists mentioned the coexistence of nature and history by experiencing the submerged part of the area through a boat trip and witnessing its historical places. In addition, the tourists who stated that the boat tour is one of the must-do activities here added that it is definitely worth it.

"Just being able to float along the historic Euphrates is well worth the time and money." (R37)

"It is really a wonderful trip along the river and while experiencing the beauty one also feels a bit sad seeing all the houses underwater." (R39)

Besides the boat trip, there are activities such as hiking, swimming and picnic among other elements that shape the experiences of tourists, although they are less in percentage.

Nature

Natural attractions have been identified as one of the essential themes that shaped the Halfeti experience. Sub-themes developed based on this theme are: "landscape", "flora & fauna", "relaxing" and "black rose". The mountains, hills, and rocks surrounding the Old Halfeti region, especially the Euphrates River, and the landscapes created by these attractions are among the most mentioned natural attractions in the narratives. Visitors commented that the destination deserves a visit to witness these views.

Feelings such as calmness and peace that these landscapes provide to the visitors constitute the "relaxing" sub-theme of this theme and visitors especially remarked that they are relaxed, renewed and revitalized with these feelings offered by natural attractions. The rich flora&fauna, especially the black rose an endemic species that grows only in Halfeti, has taken its place as one of the significant elements that make Halfeti memorable for tourists.

"It is beautiful, the water is crystal clear and one could really be at peace with themselves and the world." (R24)

"Worth a visit, the landscape and setting on this warm, sunny autumn day was strikingly beautiful." (R29)

"I will be back to see the black rose!" (R07)

History

The history of the Halfeti region, and especially as a historical heritage Roman Castle is highly appreciated by tourists. The sub-themes of this theme are "historical heritage", "witnessing the history" and "knowledge". The history theme is mostly explained by the ruins of Roman Castle and its surroundings. Visitors commented that they travel in time due to the attractive castle with its location, magnificence, view as well as historical heritage value. Roman Castle, which dates back to the Roman period and has hosted many civilizations afterwards, has found its place as a heritage that allows visitors to witness history in their comments. Some visitors emphasized that they got detailed information about this historical

heritage and made a very informative visit as they visited this place through a tour guide. Therefore, "knowledge" was determined as a sub-theme of this theme.

> *"It's like travelling in time along shores of Euprat - take a trip with a boat to see ancient architecture, carve up in the steep mountains above your head."* (R08)
>
> *"A beautiful, historic place! Take the boat to see where historians think John the Baptist lived in a cave copying the Bible, and to the submerged mosque."* (R20)
>
> *"You would notice the diversity of history, from prehistoric caves, church caves, mosques. The word "Kale" comes from the Arabic word "Kala'a" and means citadel or fortress, and the area was home to every people who lived in/or nearby this spot."* (R27)

Local Culture

Another factor that shapes the MTEs of some foreign tourists is the local culture. The "local people" and "local products" emerged as sub-themes of this theme. Visitors noted that the local people were friendly and helpful and that this factor played an important role in having a good experience. In addition, various local products were seen positively in the narratives of the visitors.

> *"You can be sure people are friendly and kind, willing to show you their beloved Halfeti!"* (R08)
>
> *"Amazing. I've not seen a place so beautiful in my life. The black rose perfume is also great."* (R02)

Restaurants

Foreign tourists also included positive comments about food and beverage businesses in their evaluations of Halfeti. Floating restaurants are lined up along the river, and the variety of these restaurants and delicious food, especially fish, are among the MTEs of foreign tourists about Halfeti. The sub-themes of this theme are "floating restaurants", "delicious food" and "variety of restaurants". One of the remarkable points of the study is that visitors do not include these foods in their comments, although there are many local flavours unique to Halfeti, except for the fish species that grow in the Euphrates River and are unique to the region.

> *"All very interesting with several cafés and restaurants all along the bank at the remaining part of the city that was covered by the dam waters."* (R38)

"You have to take a boat and see more parts and also if you taste fish from that part you would never forget its taste!" (R40)

"Not to forget to enjoy the delicious fresh fish meal and olive salad in one of the restaurants along the river." (R41)

Location

The favourable location of Halfeti between the two important cities of the Southeastern Anatolia Region of Türkiye, Şanlıurfa and Gaziantep, which stand out with their cultural tourism potential, has also enabled foreign tourists to draw attention to this element in their narratives. Many visitors mentioned that Halfeti has a very attractive location on the banks of the Euphrates River between these two cities and can be easily reached by various means of transportation. "Easy transport" and "attractive location" are determined as sub-themes of this theme.

"This is a fun and easy place to visit providing you have your own transport to get you to Halfeti, where you board a boat to travel up the Euphrates, an experience in itself." (R33)

DISCUSSION

This research aims to reveal what factors affect the MTEs of foreign tourists visiting Halfeti, one of Türkiye's slow city destinations, and to evaluate to what extent the title of slow city affects these factors. As a result of the study, the factors are as follows; "admiration", "activities", "nature", "history", "local culture", "restaurants" and "location". The findings are also in line with the dimensions of the seven-factor MTE developed by Kim et al. (2012). While admiration, activities, nature, history and local culture themes and sub-themes are similar to the study of Kim et al. (2012), restaurants and location are different themes specific to this study. Foreign tourists mentioned the floating restaurants in the destination without specifying the name of any restaurants, and it was revealed that these restaurants are an inseparable part of the destination. Similarly, Halfeti's attractive location, located in the middle of Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa, two cities that have a significant share in Türkiye's cultural tourism, and on the banks of the Euphrates River, emerged as one of the destination attributes that shaped memorable tourism experience.

The main themes of this study apart from admiration, are the themes related to the cognitive dimension of a memorable tourism experience. Among the seven-factor MTE of

Kim et al. (2012); "hedonism", "refreshment", "involvement" and "novelty" are affective dimensions while "local culture", "meaningfulness" and "knowledge" tend to be cognitive (Zhang et al., 2018). In the study carried out by Ülker Demirel (2020) to determine the factors affecting the MTEs of foreign tourists visiting the Gallipoli Peninsula, four themes are affective and six are cognitive of the ten main themes developed. Since Gallipoli Peninsula is a dark tourism destination, affective themes such as "moving feelings and emotionality", "being affected and admired", "feeling lost and heavy-hearted" and "feeling pride" were found. In the case of Halfeti, on the other hand, it was observed that affective evaluations are limited to various expressions of admiration and feelings of renewal brought by nature.

The theme of "admiration" was created as a result of the evaluations highlighting that foreign tourists really like the destination experience, are excited and delighted, and that this experience is different from previous holiday experiences. Similarly, in the study carried out by Ülker Demirel (2020), the theme of "being affected and admired" was created based on the expressions of admiration from tourists. The result of the present study coincides with the "hedonism" and "novelty" dimensions of Kim et al. (2012).

Tourists mentioned the natural attractions and historical elements of Halfeti, and thus the other two main themes, nature and history, emerged. While natural attractions evoke feelings of relaxation, refreshment etc., historical sites offer the opportunity to witness history and gain new knowledge. The point that tourists agree under the theme of "activities" is to witness these historical and natural attractions through a boat trip. Hence, tourists specified boat trips as a must-do activity as the main activity of the destination. The refreshment and knowledge dimensions of the MTE in the study of Kim et al. (2012) coincide with these results. The refreshment dimension covers both "nature" and "activities" themes in the present study; tourists can also experience the feeling of peace, relaxation, revival and renewal provided by Halfeti's natural attractions through a boat trip.

The knowledge dimension in the study of Kim et al. (2012) was determined as a subtheme of the "history" theme in this study. Halfeti's rich historical background greatly affected the experiences of foreign tourists; while tourists had the opportunity to witness history through this rich heritage, they took pleasure in discovering and learning something new if they were interested in history or travelled with a tour guide. This result shows similarities with the results of Chandralal et al. (2014) and Ülker Demirel (2020), and the acquired knowledge and the discovery of some new information can be a part of MTE.

As stated above under the theme of "activities", the boat trip was included in the majority of the narratives as the main activity, and besides, tourists also mentioned activities such as

hiking, swimming and picnic as an unforgettable memory of their holiday experiences. Apart from these, many activities such as underwater photography, canoeing, diving, bird watching, mountain biking, and camping, which are among the significant activities of the district offered for tourists, could not be a part of the memorable tourism experiences of the tourists.

The dimension of local culture, which is one of the dimensions of the scale of Kim et al (2012), was determined as the main theme also in the present study. Although the evaluations of the local culture are less than other dimensions in terms of quantity, regarding this theme foreign tourists commented that they have good impressions of the local people and that they were friendly and nice people. Even if these findings coincide with the local culture dimension in the study of Kim et al. (2012), there was no evidence that foreign tourists experienced Halfeti's local cultural values in practice personally such as local life, customs, traditions, local production areas etc. For example, as a result of the study of Chandralal et al. (2014), a theme named "local people, life and culture" of memorable tourism experience was determined and the authors evidenced that the travellers made evaluations about villages, local lifestyles, markets, farms, cultural activities and rituals in their narratives.

In the Halfeti experience, only a few comments were made about local products. However, Halfeti is very rich in terms of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage elements, and many initiatives and projects have been started to promote these values after the district became a slow city. This result shows that Halfeti should focus on product diversity to bring its local values to tourism and make an effort to transform its cultural values into tourism products without spoiling their originalities. As Chen and Rahman (2018) also remarked that interacting with local culture and residents enable tourists to experience the local life of the tourist destination more closely, which ultimately provides them with an experience to remember.

A similar situation is strikingly observed under the themes of "history" and "restaurants". The evaluations made by foreign tourists regarding the historical values of Halfeti were limited only to Roman Castle and its surroundings, many tangible cultural heritage items in the villages of the district and brought to tourism through improvement projects were not mentioned. Regarding this issue, the data obtained under the theme of "restaurants" show that there is no awareness of Halfeti's local cuisine. Tsai (2018) found that experiencing local cuisines enables tourists to have positive memorable experiences and such positive experiences further enhance their identification with or strong attachment to local attractions. In the Halfeti sample, the floating restaurants on the river, the variety of these restaurants and the offering of delicious food positively affect the MTEs of the tourists, but it does not seem

that any local food stands out, except for the fish species unique to the region. The name of the fish (şabut) which is unique to the region is not mentioned in the narratives. It is revealed that initiatives such as organizing restaurants and training employees within the scope of slow food activities initiated with the district's slow city title are successful, but the findings display that more emphasis should be placed on promoting local dishes and raising awareness about these values.

CONCLUSION

As Halfeti became a slow city, as mentioned in the previous sections, various projects were initiated both to sustain the tangible cultural heritage and in many areas such as infrastructure, environment, slow food, and hospitality. The scope of the initiatives could be counted as increasing the welfare of the local people, improving the touristic infrastructure and creating various touristic activities that could attract visitors. The people of Halfeti transform their traditional values into touristic products and offer them to the visitors so that both the promotion and sustainability of these values are possible and the economic welfare of the people is increased. These projects and initiatives undoubtedly have a very significant role in the district's being a tourist destination. Before the pandemic, the destination was visited by approximately 1 million tourists, both domestic and foreign, in 2019. Therefore, it indicates that Halfeti has turned the slow city title into an advantage in its efforts to develop tourism and has benefited successfully.

The narratives of foreign tourists about their Halfeti experiences show that tourists have unforgettable memories in Halfeti. However, in this study, it has been concluded that the title of slow city does not have a direct determining effect on the MTE. Although some of the main themes and sub-themes that are determined as the components that guide tourists' MTEs are a result of the initiatives initiated by the district with the title of slow city, there is no indication that they had an MTE due to the destination is a slow city. It is assumed from the narratives that the landscaping projects, the coastal improvement projects and the arrangements for the restaurants in the district have a positive effect on the Halfeti experience of the tourists. However, it is another result that local values such as traditional handicrafts products, local food, festivals, and traditions, which are essential components of a slow city, did not make an indelible impression on the memories of tourists. As stated in the previous sections, although many projects were also implemented in these areas after the slow city announcement, it is a remarkable point of the study that these initiatives have not risen yet as

tourism products. From Halfeti experiences, mostly natural beauties, historical elements and boat trips are engraved in the memories of tourists.

In the comment of only 1 visitor, it was stated that Halfeti is a slow city to share information. When this result is evaluated according to the slow tourist typology of Yurtseven and Kaya (2011), it is seen that the foreign tourists visiting Halfeti are mostly in the accidental slow tourist category. Their interest needs to be aroused by general tourism promotion. This shows that while the district continues its activities related to the slow city, it also needs to increase the awareness of this title. Even though there are awareness-raising efforts for local people, it should be ensured that tourists have information about this title, and realize that the services they experience or the products they buy are related to the title of slow city. This result is in parallel with the study results of Kürüm Varolgüneş and Canan (2018). As a result of SWOT analysis, the authors revealed factors such as insufficient promotion and marketing, the lack of awareness of the title of slow city in the district, the stagnation in the winter period and the consequent lack of infrastructure and service quality among the weaknesses of Halfeti. They concluded that the strongest aspect of Halfeti's sustainability as a slow city is its rich cultural and natural assets. Other strengths are listed as having natural resources and an unspoiled environment, geographical location and tourism potential. As the most important opportunity of the slow city title, the attractiveness of the Old Halfeti area, which was flooded with the rise of the Birecik Dam waters, was stated in their study. This result about Halfeti's strengths is also consistent with the results of the present study.

As can be seen from the findings of the study, the factors that shape the memorable tourism experiences of tourists are limited to the natural beauties and historical heritage elements, especially the Roman Castle, boat trip, and sunken city. In the study of Özüpekçe (2019), the reasons for tourists to visit Halfeti were listed as boat trips (37%), seeing sunken villages and mosques (33%), and visiting Roman Castle (21%). These findings coincide with the present study. However, as a tourism destination, Halfeti offers more than these attractions to tourists. For example, under the theme of "history", many more historical heritage items besides Roman Castle; under the "restaurants" theme, much more local food; and under the "activities" theme, many sports and nature activities apart from the boat trip are offered to the tourists.

There is a similar situation in the theme of "local culture". Foreign visitors commented that they were very pleased with the hospitality of local people and to experience a few local products. However, local culture, which is an essential element of Cittaslow philosophy, includes much more than that. Many advantages of the district such as local life, festivals,

traditional handicraft products, traditional production areas, and traditional architectural structure in Halfeti should be transformed into interesting tourism products in a way that will shape the MTEs of tourists. Therefore, one of the managerial implications of this study coincides with the results of Chen and Rahman (2018). Planners and managers of slow tourism destinations should focus on how to promote cultural exchanges and how provide an authentic experience to the tourists through effective host-tourist interactions rather than commodifying cultural products with a mass tourism agenda.

Zhang et al. (2018: 334) asserted that destinations should not only focus on satisfaction management but rather put emphasis on MTEs. It is crucial to create MTEs every time that tourists visit and hence need to manage the experience differently to satisfy every visit and still generate MTEs. It will be possible to further increase the tourism potential and to create MTEs of the slow city Halfeti with new tourism products, new routes, new events and projects that will enable the local people to interact more with tourists in the district.

Slow tourism destinations should focus on which factors contribute to tourists' experiences. Knowing the tourism experience and the factors that contribute to MTE is helpful for destination managers as it provides them with guidelines to serve increasingly experienced and sophisticated visitors (Seyfi et al., 2020). Therefore, destination management organizations in Halfeti must first effectively manage the experience and encourage more visits. It should not be forgotten that it is vital to increase the length of stay of the tourists visiting Halfeti. Because, as emphasized by Caffyn (2012), the best way to experience a destination fairly depends on staying there for a long time. This will only be possible by increasing the awareness of the local products unique to Halfeti with the emphasis on the slow city title and creating new tourism products where tourists can interact with the local culture. Local governments and other organizations should make efforts in cooperation with local residents, one of the most significant stakeholders in a destination, so that tourists can ideally experience "slowness" in the local and cultural sense, and leave the destination with meaningful experiences.

In this study, it was aimed to explore the factors affecting the MTEs of foreign tourists visiting Halfeti with the netnography method and it was evaluated to what extent the title of slow city of the district affected these factors. Although the evaluations of all foreign tourists on the platform between April 2013 and March 2021 were included in the study, the fact that Halfeti is a tourism destination that has been developing in recent years has led to a low number of data. The fact that the first comment on Halfeti on the platform belongs to 2012 also confirms this. In this context, the low number of available data can be considered an

important limitation of this study. In future research, more comprehensive research data can be obtained with the data to be collected from different platforms or travel blogs. On the other hand, since the concept of memorable tourism experience leads to different themes in touristic areas with different characteristics, qualitative or quantitative comparative analyzes to be carried out with other slow cities may reveal more concrete findings on the dimensions of memorable tourism experience in slow cities.

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Original scientific paper

FARM PROFITABILITY AND AGRITOURISM IN THE EU – DOES SIZE MATTER?

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Abstract

Agritourism is an activity in which the non-traditional roles of the countryside: food production, environmental richness, the beauty of landscapes, cultural heritage and traditional lifestyles, local food and drinks, and many other aspects make rural regions attractive for recreation and leisure, while contributing to income diversification. Thus agritourism is expected to help improve farm performance in terms of incomes, profitability and efficiency. While extensive empirical research has been done about this issue in the USA, relatively few results are known for Europe. The present paper deals with the impacts of agritourism revenues on the farm profitability and farm performance in the 28 countries of the EU (including Britain), from 2004 to 2020, relying on the standard FADN database, applying descriptive statistics, correlations and panel regression. Our findings show, that farm size matters, and although the smallest and the largest farms benefit, it is the medium size farms that gain the most from agritourism. Farms with smaller land areas, and less farm capital tend to be involved more in agritourism than better equipped ones, while the subsidy policy of the EU also enhances agritourism revenues.

Keywords: Agritourism, farm size, gross farm income, labour, assets

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is one of the major policy areas for the EU. The major roles of agriculture – provide food, provide decent income and livelihood for rural communities, maintain the quality of life, sustain and protect the environment, preserve the associated cultural heritage – explain the strong focus on rural development policy and high levels of subsidies, increasingly decoupled from traditional production.

Agritourism is one area, where the non-traditional roles of the countryside come together: environmental richness, the beauty of landscapes, cultural heritage and traditional lifestyles, local food and drinks, and many other aspects make rural regions attractive for recreation and leisure, while contributing to income diversification. The question is, whether agritourism can successfully contribute to better livelihood, and higher incomes, or better performance of farms - and if yes, where, how and to whom.

The present paper focuses on the impacts of agritourism revenues on the farm profitability and farm performance in the EU-28, from 2004 to 2020, relying on the standard farm data available in the FADN (Farm Accountancy Data Network) public database.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The role of rural areas is basically the production of food and of valuable raw materials, but they are increasingly viewed as a location for leisure and recreation, where the richness of the natural environment with its varied eco-systems, landscapes, and cultural heritage, traditional lifestyle and farming practices coexist. At the same time these areas are, above all, places where people live their lifes, requiring various facilities, endowments, services, part of which are needed not only for inhabitants but for those, who come only for a temporary stay (Pícha & Dvořák, 2009). Rural tourism is an important contributor with multiple benefits for rural spaces to fulfill their multiple roles. Rural tourism revitalises rural areas by attracting people and generating additional incomes besides farming, thus stopping rural depopulation, and providing jobs outside agriculture. At the same time, rural tourism helps to maintain the environmental, natural, cultural-traditional, and historical character of the countryside, adding a sustainable and competitive edge to the tourist market of the European Union (Klufová & Šulista, 2018). Rural tourism is deeply intertwined with farming, which is the traditional basis of rural activity and they can mutually enhance each other's prosperity, while they may also suffer from natural or financial disasters in a similar way (Sharpley & Craven, 2001).

Rural tourism has been analysed from several aspects, focusing on tourist motivation and tourist satisfaction, as well as on service providers, their personal and material endowments, and financial position (see e.g. Klufová & Šulista, 2018; Gajić et al., 2021; Chase et al., 2018; Žibert et al., 2022; Lamie et al., 2021; Stanovčić et al., 2018).

The importance of rural tourism, a.k.a. agritourism, has been acknowledged in the rural development policy of the European Union, and this is represented by the rural development subsidies for agritourism purposes, or related measures (Žibert et al., 2022; Augère- Granier & McEldowney, 2021). This reflects the appreciation of rural tourism as an important contributor for improving rural living conditions and lifestyles, especially in the less favoured areas (LFAs) of the countryside (Arru et al., 2021). However, there are relatively few actual research results to prove the economic benefits of agritourism. Most of the economic impact analyses, or farm business analyses have been done about agritourism in the United States. The reasons for this lack of thorough economic impact analysis are first of all, the lack of a

standard definition of what agritourism really includes, and second, the lack of reliable data (Chase et al., 2018; Lamie et al., 2021).

Farm and ranch stays have been popular in the U.S. and in many European countries. The term "agritourism" is originated from the Italian National Legal Framework for Agritourism passed in 1985, which promoted overnight farms stays, called „agriturismo" as a way for farm diversification in Italy (Chase et al., 2018). Agritourism has been increasingly associated with typical culinary offerings of the countryside, as the examples of protected designation of origin (PDO), protected geographical indication (PGI), and traditional specialities guaranteed (TSG) show in Europe, or California's success in attracting visitors to vineyards in Sonoma and Napa counties (Chase et al., 2018).

In many countries and regions, farm tourism has developed very successfully. In Italy, for example, the number of registered tourist farms in 2015 had increased by 60% compared to the previous decade and in Austria 6% of all farms offer agritourism services. In the Alpine region of Germany 20% of farms are involved in agritourism, and a growing trend of rural tourism accommodation facilities is viewed in Slovenia (Žibert et al., 2022).

In spite of the mentioned difficulties, several research publications have dealt with rural tourism as an example of farm diversification, and attempt to analyse its economic benefits to farms, though with controversial results.

Analysing agritourism farms in the United States, Barbieri and Mshenga (2008) find, that annual income and profitability are positively influenced by larger tangible assets, more employees, longer business experience, and more financial resources - which are usually true for larger farms.

Bagi and Reader (2012) also analysed USA farms, looking at diversification and its impacts on the economic performance, finding that those more involved in farm diversification tend to have significantly different farm characteristics, including net worth, net farm income, farm size, and among them those dealing with agritourism achieve highest farm household net worth, and have typically larger agricultural area.

Khanal and Mishra (2014), still dealing with USA farms in 2008, 2009 and 2010 assess the impacts of agritourism and off-farm work, as two options of diversification strategies, on gross cash farm incomes and farm household incomes, finding that small farms benefit most, if they apply both of these options. Those, however, involved in only agritourism, perform better than those involved only in off-farm work, in many aspects, including gross farm income, debt-to-asset-ratio, government payments, and total value of production, and have typically larger land areas.

Joo et al., (2013), examining farmers' participation in agritourism activities in the USA evaluate its impact on farm household income and return to assets, and find that older, educated, and female operators are more likely to participate in agritourism. However, in contrast to the findings by Khanal and Mishra (2014) they reveal that government subsidies are negatively correlated with agritourism participation. Their results show that small-scale farms being involved in agritourism generated the greatest household incomes and returns to assets, therefore for them agritourism can boost the economic well-being of farm households, although their return is only 0.4% higher than of other farms.

Lucha et al. (2016) did a similar research on Virginia's agritourism industry, finding that greater profitability is associated with greater percentage of income from agritourism. Similar results were established by Schilling et al. (2014) for New Jersey in 2007, revealing that agritourism has statistically positive effects on the net cash income per acre and on farm profitability. The profit impacts were found to be highest for small farms, while positive, but smaller, and statistically not significant impacts were found for large farms.

George et al. (2011) found that in California 75% of farms operate agritourism to enhance farm profitability, though only 21% of them had annual revenues higher than 100 thousand USD. Another research (Wilson et al., 2006) indicate that revenues from farming in this region were only 2% of the nationwide farm revenue level.

Arru et al. (2021) researched the economic performance of agritourism in less favoured areas of Italy, Sardinia. Their results show controversial patterns, and they mention that normative constraints limit agritourism performance, namely, that by regulation, the income generated from, or labour spent on agritourism cannot be higher than those of the main farm activity. However, they find that agritourism increases farm turnover, and on average agritourism can generate 46% of total Gross Farm Revenues in the analysed region, although individual farms vary to a great extent.

Holland et al. (2022) points out, that the lack of resources of small farms cause them to struggle financially, and thus many of them are interested in diversifying their operations, to supersede their financial losses from farming.

However, Hollas et al. (2021) declare that the factors that lead to profitable outcomes from agritourism are still not well understood, but farm size, and years of experience of the host, are probably enhancing its success, and besides financial benefits it has positive social and cultural impacts on the rural community. Kima et al., (2019) found that agritourism experience positively influences food purchase patterns for certain commodities – grain, vegetables, fruit, meat and fish.

Most of these studies refer to relatively short time periods of only a few years, focusing on one country or a particular geographical region. Our paper looks at a 17-year long time span (2004-2020) and 28 countries (the member states of the EU with the UK), using a database derived from an extremely large sample of farms. The same database has been successfully utilised to analyse farm profitability in the EU focusing on sustainability issues (Grzelak, 2022), but not for agritourism. Financial impacts of agritourism in the EU is still a rather underrepresented area, therefore the present study can reveal new features and relationships about it.

DATA AND METHODS

Data

The analysis uses secondary data available from the FADN Public Database (FADN, 2022; EC, 2021), for the time period 2004-2020. The data are available for each year and each member state as mean values for farms belonging to six categories of economic size (see Tab.1). Therefore, we have 17 years of data, for up to 6 size categories, and 28 countries, adding up to 2594 subjects to the analysis (for some countries not all years, or not all size categories are relevant). Variables selected for the analysis are listed in Tab.1.

Table 1. Variables in the analysis

Variable name and SE-code in FADN	Notation in the present analysis	Unit	Explanation
Member State	*ST*	*country*	(AT) Austria; (BE) Belgium; (BG) Bulgaria;(CY) Cyprus; (CZ) Czechia;(DE) Germany; (DK) Denmark; (EE) Estonia; (EL) Greece; (ES) Spain; (FI) Finland; (FR) France; (HR) Croatia; (HU) Hungary; (IE) Ireland; (IT) Italy; (LT) Lithuania;(LU) Luxembourg;(LV) Latvia; (MT) Malta; (NL) Netherlands; (PL) Poland; (PT) Portugal; (RO) Romania; (SE) Sweden; (SI) Slovenia; (SK) Slovakia; (UK) United Kingdom; (E8) EU-28; (E7) EU27 as in 2020
Economic size (SE005)	Size	€ 1000	Economic size of holding expressed in 1000 euro of standard output (on the basis of the Community typology).
Economic size category	SC	codes 1-6	By annual standard output, 1: 2000 - < 8000 EUR; 2: 8000 - < 25000 EUR; 3: 25000 - < 50000 EUR; 4: 50000 - < 100000 EUR; 5: 100000 - < 500000 EUR; 6: >= 500000 EUR, based on the value of Size.
Agritourism (SE725)	ATR	€	Receipts from agritourism includes returns from board and lodging, campsites, cottages, riding facilities, hunting and fishing

Table 1 (continued)

Variable name and SE-code in FADN	Notation in the present analysis	Unit	Explanation
Total labour input (SE010)	LAWU	AWU	Total labour input of holding expressed in annual work units = full-time person equivalents.
Total Utilised Agricultural Area (SE025)	Land	Hectare	Total utilised agricultural area of holding, consisting of land in owner occupation, rented land, land in share-cropping and land temporarily not under cultivation for agricultural reasons or withdrawn from production as part of agricultural policy measures..
Total Output (SE131)	TO	€	Total output =Total value of output of crops and crop products, livestock and livestock products and of other output, including that of other gainful activities (OGA) of the farms.
Gross Farm Income (SE410)	GFI	€	Output - Intermediate consumption + Balance current subsidies & taxes.
Farm Net Value Added (SE415)	FNVA	€	Farm net value added = Remuneration to the fixed factors of production (work, land and capital), whether they be external or family factors.
Farm Net Income (SE420)	FNI	€	Remuneration to fixed factors of production of the family (work, land and capital) and remuneration to the entrepreneur's risks (loss/profit) in the accounting year.
Farm Net Value Added per AWU (SE425)	FNVA_AWU	€/ AWU	Farm Net Value Added per agricultural work unit (AWU).
Family Farm Income per FWU (SE430)	FFI	€/ FWU	Family Farm Income expressed per family labour unit. Takes into account differences in the family labour force to be remunerated per holding.
Total assets closing valuation (SE436)	TA	€	= Fixed assets + current assets. (closing valuation). Only assets in ownership are taken into account. Capital indicators are based on the value of the various assets at closing valuation.
Net Worth (SE501)	NWT	€	Total assets – Liabilities.
Average farm capital (SE510)	FCap	€	Average value (= [opening + closing] / 2) of farm capital except land and quotas = Livestock + Permanent crops + Land improvements + Buildings + Machinery and equipment + Circulating capital.
Total subsidies - excluding on investments (SE605)	TSU	€	Total subsidies - excluding on investments = Subsidies on current operations linked to production (not investments), in €. Payments for cessation of farming activities are therefore not included.
Environmental subsidies (SE621)	ESU	€	Subsidies on environment (caution to avoid double-counting of DP under Art 69 of 1782/2003) + Subsidies on environmental restrictions.
Total support for rural development (SE624)	RDSU	€	= Environmental subsidies+ LFA subsidies + other Rural Development payments including RD national payments.
Agritourism (SE725)	ATR	€	Receipts from agritourism includes returns from board and lodging, campsites, cottages, riding facilities, hunting and fishing
Agritourism revenue as % of GFI	ATRShare	%	Agritourism Receipts as percentage of Gross Farm Income (computed from ATR and GFI).

Source: FADN, 2022.

Methodology

Descriptive statistics are presented to show the size of agritourism revenues in comparison to gross farm income, farm total output, farm profitability and other indicators of farm performance. The dynamic patterns of agritourism revenues are shown in contrast to the dynamics of other farm performance indicators. These results are compared by farm economic size categories. The size categories are defined based on the standard output of the farms, and are used separately to identify relationships within each size category. A similar method was used by Novotná and Volek (2018) in identifying productivity-related patterns in EU country groups defined by categories of annual Gross Value Added.

Correlation analysis is applied to reveal relationships between these variables. Variable distributions were tested for normality, but the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test rejected the normality assumption, and the usual data transformations did not help, either. Therefore nonparametric correlation (Spearman's rho), was applied, together with robust statistical methods to test group differences and relationships between variables.

To analyse the same observed units for several years, i.e. to carry out panel data analysis the Mixed Linear Model (LMM) of the SPSS software package was applied (IBM Corp., 2013; Landau & Everitt, 2004) to identify fixed and random effects of agritourism revenues on other farm preformance indicators, to reveal annual trends and separate relationships by economic size and country. In our models the various farm performance indicators were analysed, and the unit of analysis was the group of farms of a particular size category of a particular country. The economic size category was considered for fixed effects, together with time, and the size of agritourism revenues, as well labour force and subsidies received, etc.

The LMM structure is as follows (Landau & Everitt, 2004):

The dataset contains n observations (n =17 years, 2004,...2020) for N subjects (groups by 28 countries and 6 economic sizes), for which matrix X denotes the set of variables observed. $X(i)$ is the matrix of independent variables for subject i, its rows containing the actual observations for the individual years. Let's assume that we have i=1,...N subjects, e.g. farm groups. We wish to determine the influencing factors of a selected trait (y) of these groups, for which we have n measurements over time (n years). The standard format of LMM is given by (Seltman, 2008; Stroup, 2013):

$$y(i) = X(i) \times B + V(i) \times b(i) + e(i)$$

where

- $y(i) = [y(i,1), \text{-----} y(i,n)]$ denote the vector of n measurements (1, ... , n) over time for subject i (i=1...N), i.e. group i, for the selected trait of this group;

- X(i): n × p matrix of p variables and n observations for group i, representing the variables having a fixed effect on group i;

- V(i): n × q matrix of q variables and n observations for group i, representing variables having a random effect on group i;

- B: a p ×1 vector of regression parameters fixed for all groups;

- b(i): q × 1 vector of subject-specific regression parameters;

- e(i): n × 1 vector representing random effects and errors for group i.

This model was applied to answer the following research questions:

- Does the level of agritourism revenues influence farm profitability and income?

- Does the effect of agritourism on profitability differ by size categories?

- Does the effect of agritourism revenues change by time?

- Does the involvement in agritourism differ by country and economic size, and does it change with time?

- Is there a relationship between agritourism revenues and received subsidies?

The analyses are done using SPSS 22.0 (IBM Corp, 2013), and MS-Excel-2013.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive analysis of the 2004-2020 time period by economic size categories

Tab. 2 lists the mean values of selected indicators, for all years, countries and economic sizes. The mean values, standard deviations, and coefficients of variation (CV%) widely differ by economic size categories, as is shown in Fig. 1.

Table 2 Descriptive indicators for 2004-2020, EU-28

| Variable	Mean	stDev	CV%	Variable	Mean	stDev	CV%
Size	243.82	418.70	171	GFI	130071.41	266494.8	174
ATR	471.54	1743.5	370	FNVA	98442.27	182406.9	185
ATRShare	1.03	3.82	370	FNI	46978.14	10296.0	217
LAWU	4.39	8.89	203	FNVA_AWU	20937.64	17440.4	83
Land	144.62	293.56		FFI	33910.46	65859.2	194
TO	272190.0	203491699.6	182	TSU	42543.12	76135.1	179
TA	854197.9	1186698.6	139	ESU	4958.56	10509.1	212
NWT	627223.72	790218.1	126	RDSU	8587.17	16360.4	191
FCap	509904.09	821586.9	161				

Source: Authors' construction.

Variation is extremely high, the CV values vary between 83% and 370%. Except for agritourism-related variables it is only category 6 – and occassionally category 5 – that

produce higher values than 100% (i.e. the all-sizes average). Category 6 has strikingly high values (300% of the mean or higher) regarding the actual economic size, the total labour force (LAWU), total agricultural land, and total farm output. The same is true for the various income-related indicators and subsidy values. Indicators related to agritourism revenue are highest for category 3. The absolute value of agritourism revenue is nearly as high in category 6 as in category 3, but regarding its share in GFI, the smaller size farms have higher values than the large ones.

Figure 1 Mean values for indicators by size category, as % of all farms' mean
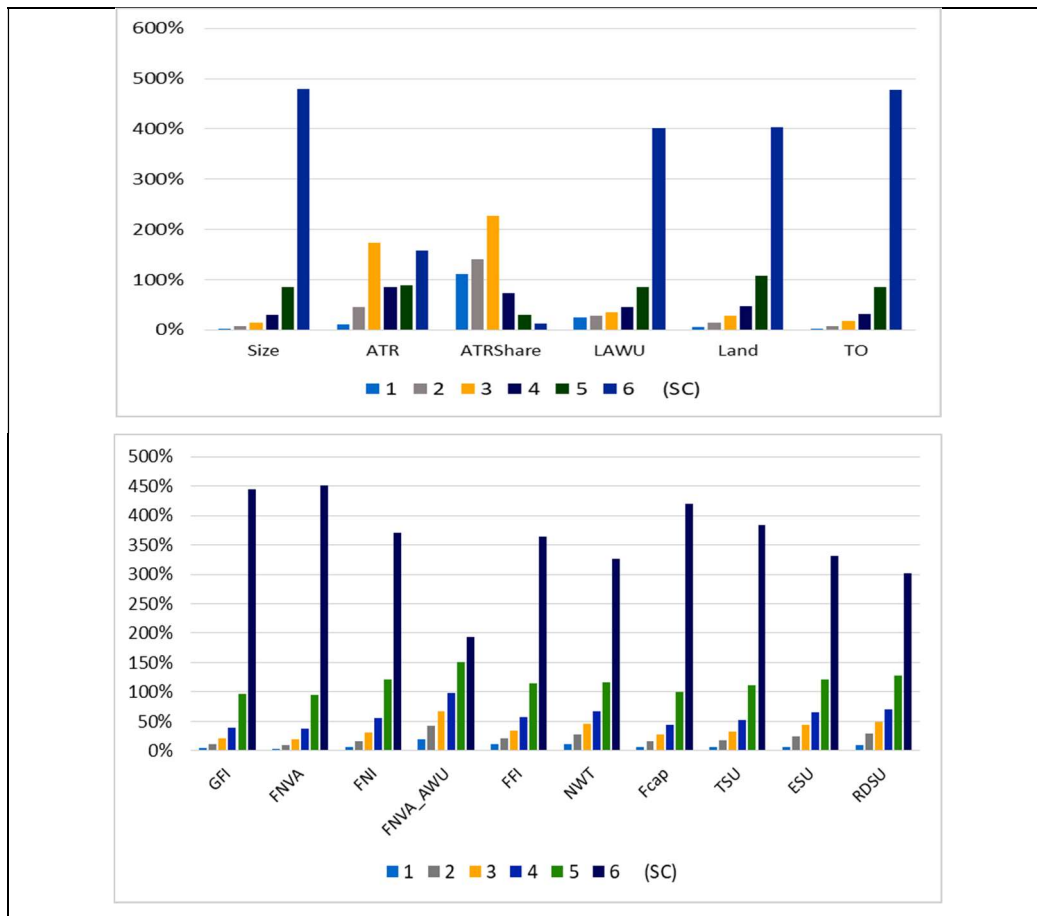
Source: Authors' construction

Comparing the countries (Tab. 3), large differences are found, expressing the indicators in percentages of the EU-28 average. It is especially striking, that in agritourism revenue there are countries with practically no recorded performance in this regard (e.g. BG, CY, MT, RO), while NL has around 10 times as high values as the EU-average, and many other countries achieve more than double of the EU-average (AT, CZ, IT, SK, UK). In subsidy levels also large differences are shown, the smallest rates are around 4-20%, while the largest subsidy levels re more than 200-300% of the EU-average.

Table 3 Country level indicator means as % of EU-28 average

| ST	Size	LAWU	Land	TO	GFI	FNVA_AWU	FFI	NWT	FCap	ATR	ATR Share	TSU
AT	30.2%	36.6%	23.8%	32.4%	45.1%	107.8%	58.5%	68.3%	74.8%	325.6%	400.0%	48.8%
BE	139.4%	54.5%	31.3%	116.1%	106.9%	174.4%	107.1%	88.1%	89.0%	84.8%	44.8%	49.9%
BG	111.3%	213.4%	214.1%	114.0%	140.5%	48.1%	163.8%	71.4%	90.5%	0.9%	1.0%	142.9%
CY	30.1%	42.7%	10.8%	21.5%	20.8%	42.7%	30.0%	37.6%	22.8%	0.2%	2.1%	18.9%
CZ	174.0%	231.3%	233.3%	179.9%	178.8%	71.4%	83.5%	138.0%	204.0%	225.6%	82.5%	285.1%
DE	150.4%	73.9%	92.8%	128.8%	129.3%	147.2%	86.5%	124.7%	102.1%	45.4%	41.4%	124.0%
DK	133.7%	41.2%	66.3%	145.6%	128.4%	257.4%	54.9%	160.5%	192.9%	87.5%	67.4%	84.7%
E7	101.8%	60.1%	52.9%	88.5%	89.4%	104.6%	89.1%	87.1%	82.4%	99.4%	110.7%	63.8%
E8	102.8%	67.4%	58.5%	88.1%	89.8%	100.7%	84.6%	95.3%	82.4%	98.2%	97.0%	66.8%
EE	116.4%	133.5%	234.5%	129.1%	113.7%	66.6%	103.1%	73.8%	121.4%	25.0%	63.3%	143.2%
EL	23.1%	42.0%	12.8%	21.7%	29.7%	73.9%	54.8%	27.1%	19.7%	1.6%	4.0%	27.0%
ES	106.5%	59.7%	38.6%	63.9%	73.8%	124.2%	126.0%	82.2%	62.0%	14.3%	11.4%	33.0%
FI	76.9%	50.5%	46.6%	84.6%	88.7%	116.1%	62.6%	66.3%	92.7%	83.6%	138.3%	163.5%
FR	104.6%	56.7%	52.5%	90.1%	93.9%	133.9%	79.5%	44.6%	85.1%	22.0%	14.6%	64.5%
HR	56.6%	59.5%	36.6%	43.3%	48.4%	65.0%	70.2%	57.3%	58.3%	8.3%	23.2%	61.6%
HU	135.0%	170.3%	168.2%	160.1%	149.5%	82.8%	124.4%	86.0%	128.3%	14.2%	29.9%	190.7%
IE	45.5%	32.0%	44.5%	49.4%	51.6%	137.3%	89.3%	202.3%	67.5%	2.7%	4.4%	59.5%
IT	136.4%	52.9%	26.3%	80.7%	100.7%	154.6%	152.7%	143.0%	75.4%	322.7%	264.1%	43.7%
LT	98.4%	166.7%	204.5%	129.3%	132.1%	65.4%	209.7%	97.8%	123.6%	4.3%	18.5%	113.4%
LU	90.7%	40.1%	57.1%	82.2%	98.8%	154.0%	82.5%	140.8%	142.0%	49.2%	25.2%	110.7%
LV	123.2%	232.7%	219.8%	168.1%	149.6%	48.1%	121.3%	85.5%	150.0%	36.9%	18.4%	167.2%
MT	47.8%	48.1%	2.3%	46.3%	32.1%	61.5%	47.4%	63.3%	62.7%	0.0%	0.0%	20.6%
NL	160.9%	63.1%	21.0%	162.2%	138.8%	183.7%	92.4%	208.2%	156.5%	1032.9%	978.7%	36.0%
PL	93.6%	118.6%	85.7%	100.8%	81.9%	54.3%	84.8%	79.3%	84.7%	18.9%	53.5%	67.2%
PT	77.7%	77.7%	37.3%	55.4%	59.3%	66.1%	107.7%	38.5%	34.9%	3.0%	8.1%	39.3%
RO	108.6%	164.4%	213.8%	135.0%	182.8%	87.2%	309.4%	104.7%	111.0%	0.5%	0.5%	153.6%
SE	104.6%	44.8%	92.4%	106.7%	93.2%	131.6%	38.5%	114.1%	130.0%	32.0%	83.8%	120.6%
SI	23.6%	47.3%	14.3%	23.2%	27.4%	37.3%	26.4%	54.3%	44.6%	72.5%	285.0%	31.5%
SK	174.5%	353.5%	384.8%	206.3%	195.2%	48.6%	84.5%	151.0%	226.0%	231.4%	113.4%	339.3%
UK	116.7%	60.7%	105.6%	113.6%	106.3%	134.2%	105.2%	242.0%	88.2%	295.4%	228.4%	99.1%

Source: Authors' construction

Time dynamics and correlations of agritourism indicators and farm performance indicators

Fig. 2 shows the temporal dynamics of agritourism revenues together with some basic agricultural indicators. As is seen from the figure, farm economic size continuously increased during the analysed period, while the other three indicators show fluctuating patterns.

Agritourism revenues move somewhat similarly to the total farm output and gross farm income tendencies. The global financial crisis of 2008-2009 shows a marked decrease in output and income, while agritourism revenues follow this trend (of 39% decrease) with a year delay. The impacts of the 2019-2020 Covid-crisis are not noticeable on farm output and GFI, but very visible on agritourism (35% decrease), which reflects the different character of this crisis from the global financial crisis of 2008.

Figure 2 The time trends of farm size, output, income and agritourism revenues
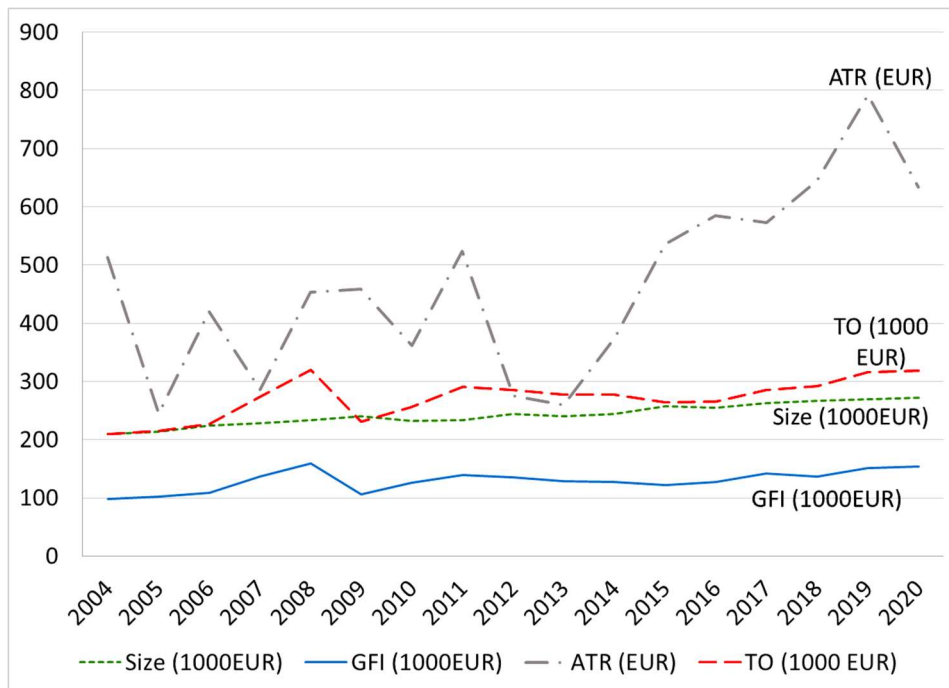
Note: ATR is in EUR (mean per farm), the other indicators in 1000 EUR (mean per farm).
Source: Authors' construction

The role of agritourism in farm incomes is reflected by the bivariate correlation coefficients (Tab. 4).

Table 4 Correlations of agritourism indicators and farm performance indicators

Spearman's correlation coefficients	Size	ATR	ATRShare	LAWU	Land
Size	1.000	.268**	-.023	.796**	.805**
LAWU	.796**	.021	-.234**	1.000	.695**
Land	.805**	.201**	-.039	.695**	1.000
TO	.978**	.253**	-.042*	.795**	.802**
GFI	.971**	.247**	-.052*	.812**	.811**
FNVA	.950**	.205**	-.091**	.826**	.782**
FNI	.823**	.131**	-.123**	.754**	.658**

Table 4 (continued)

Spearman's correlation coefficients	Size	ATR	ATRShare	LAWU	Land
FNVA_AWU	.778**	.306**	.064**	.446**	.571**
FFI	.828**	.165**	-.095**	.696**	.688**
TA	.872**	.329**	.055**	.553**	.679**
NTW	.847**	.321**	.056**	.533**	.639**
TSU	.888**	.234**	-.032	.703**	.914**
ESU	.573**	.340**	.174**	.360**	.652**
RDSU	.573**	.256**	.085**	.434**	.689**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Source: Authors' construction

Significant, medium level positive correlations (of at least 0.25) of agritourism revenues were found with economic size, total farm output, gross farm income, farm value added per AWU, total assets, net worth, and subsidies. This suggests that agritourism revenues are higher in larger farms (of more land or assets and standard output), and higher farm outputs and gross farm incomes are experienced when agritourism revenues are higher. Labour productivity (measured by FNVA_AWU), and net worth also increase with increasing agritourism revenues.

Higher ATR is associated with higher subsidies, too. It is worth noting that these relationships do not exist in connection with ATRShare. Rising proportions of agritourism revenue seem to be unrelated to GFI, TO or FNVA_AWU, i.e. ATRShare may rise as ATR rises with GFI unchanged, decreaseing or increasing. Looking at other correlations, a few relationships are worth mentioning. Size is strongly and positively associated with al asset- and income-related variables and subsidy levels, and the same is true for LAWU and Land, too. ATR is not related to LAWU, but ATRShare has a negative correlation, meaning that more labour goes together wit smaller share of agritourism in gross farm income.

However, these correlations are measured for all data of 2004-2020 pooled, all countries, and all farm sizes, and as such, may hide important differences between various locations, sizes and times. For example, the correlation between pooled economic size values and agritourism receipts indicate that larger farms gain more agritourism revenues, while former research and Fig. 1 suggest, that small farms may benefit more from agritourism and other farm diversification activities, and therefore their income levels, and performance indicators

improve more than that of large farms. To distinguish between farm sizes, and to evaluate the patterns in time, more sophisticated statistical methods are needed.

Relationship between agritourism revenue and farm performance – panel analysis

Our key question is to what extent agritourism contributes to the economic performance of farms of various economic sizes. The various farm categories are involved in agritourism to a different extent, as is illustrated by Fig. 3 – showing the mean share of agritourism revenues in gross farm income. Size categories 1-2-3 and 4 (this latter especially from about 2015) are more involved in agritourism (having 1.0-3.5% share in GFI after 2015), while for categories 5 and 6 its share in GFI is less than 0.5%. This makes it reasonable to analyse the importance of agritourism separately for size categories.

Figure 3 The share of agritourism revenues in gross farm income, by size categories
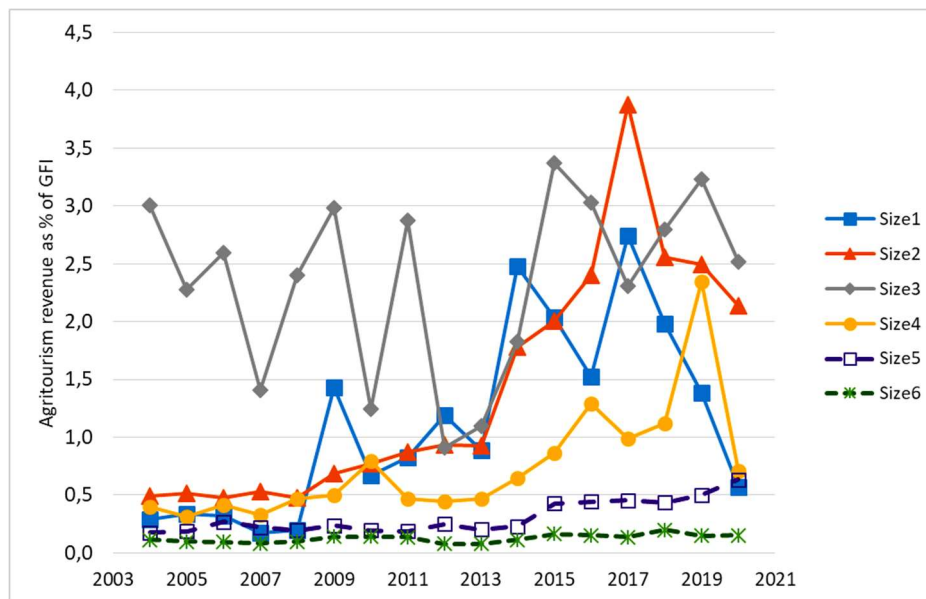
Source: Authors' construction

Two approaches are applied for the rest of the analysis:

− To analyse the impact of agritourism on the economic performance indicators of farms;
− To assess the factors that influence the size of agritourism revenues.

The impact of agritourism on the economic performance of farms

To facilitate LMM analysis, the variables were transformed to their standardised scores (z-scores), each transformed value computed by subtracting the series mean from the original value, then dividing the result by the standard deviation of the original series. These z-score

variables were then used for the LMM analysis. In this analysis agritourism variables are among the independent variables in the LMM setup, while dependent variables are GFI, FNVA, FFI, TO, and NTW (their standardised, z-score values). The panel analysis resulted in the parameter estimates shown in Tab. 5.

As the LMM parameters and significance levels show, the economic size and the year have positive fixed effects on all the farm performance indicators, while the interaction of size with year showed significant negative fixed effects. The model uses the largest farm size category as the baseline, and the fixed effects can be interpreted as is described by the following equation for the example of (z-scored) GFI as dependent variable:

$$z\text{-}GFI_{(SC=6)} = -52.5622 + 0.0270 \times Year + 0.1361 \times z\text{-}ATR$$

For other size categories the given fixed effect estimate values modify the coefficients (when significant), as for example the equation for Size 4 is:

$$z\text{-}GFI_{(SC=4)} = -52.5622 + 53.3251 + (0.0270 - 0.0276) \times Year + (0.1361 - 0,1351) \times z\text{-}ATR$$

This gives us for z-GFI (size6) in *Year=2004* an equation with intercept 1.585, meaning, that its value in 2004 is 1.585, and similarly, in 2020 it is 2.017 with zero z-ATR, as each year the z-GFI increases by 0.0270 (i.e. GFI increases by 2.7% of its standard deviation), and with 1 unit increase in z-ATR (i.e. 1 unit standard-deviation increase in ATR), z-GFI increases by 0.1361.units (i.e. GFI grows by 13.61 % standard deviation.).

For the smaller economic sizes the starting value at year 0 is defined by higher intercepts (*-52.5622* plus the estimated value for the relevant size,) but the relevant slopes with year are much smaller (*0.0270* plus the negative estimate for the relevant *size × year* interaction), which means that for size 5 and 6 the slope remains positive, for size 1 zero, and for sizes 2-3-4 it is negative. The impact of agritourism revenue is significant and positive for size 6, while size 1 and 2 do not differ from it significantly (i.e. they experience the same impact as size 6). The impact is significantly different for sizes 3, 4 and 5, but smaller, size 4 having the smallest (but still positive) impact, followed by size 3, then size 5. These results seem somewhat contradictory to the message from Fig. 3, but Fig. 3 does not measure the absolute impact of agritourism revenue, but its proportion to GFI, with decreasing importance for sizes 3-2-1-4 -5-6; the different order reflecting the different levels of GFI, which is much higher for higher sizes that for smaller ones.

Table 5 Agritourism impacts on farm performance indicators – LMM estimates

Fixed Effect Parameter Estimates	z-GFI	z-FNVA	z-FFI	z-TO	z-NWT	z-TA
Intercept	-52.5622**	-52.016**	-137.041**	-58.073**	-84.973**	-94.656**
Year	0.0270**	0.0267**	0.069**	0.030**	0.043**	0.048**
[SC=1]	51.9872**	51.552**	134.180**	57.444**	82.795**	92.917**
[SC=2]	52.7712**	52.181**	134.567**	57.416**	79.050**	89.945**
[SC=3]	53.3422**	52.997**	135.376**	57.785**	73.368**	86.284**
[SC=4]	53.3251**	52.965**	132.990**	57.618**	72.909**	85.574**
SC=5]	47.9797**	48.687**	117.293**	52.403**	67.028**	76.774**
[SC=6]	0^b	0^b	0^b	0^b	0^b	0^b
[SC=1] * Year	-0.0270**	-0.0267**	-0.068**	-0.030**	-0.042**	-0.047**
[SC=2] * Year	-0.0274**	-0.0270**	-0.068**	-0.030**	-0.040**	-0.046**
[SC=3] * Year	-0.0276**	-0.0274**	-0.068**	-0.030**	-0.038**	-0.044**
[SC=4] * Year	-0.0276**	-0.0274**	-0.067**	-0.030**	-0.037**	-0.044**
[SC=5] * Year	-0.0248**	-0.0251**	-0.059**	-0.027**	-0.034**	-0.039**
SC=6] * Year	0^b	0^b	0^b	0^b	0^b	0^b
z-ATR	0.1361**	0.1311**	-0.118**	0.059**	-0.155**	-0.077**
[SC=1] * z-ATR	-0.1402	-0.144	0.055	-0.056	0.168	0.088
[SC=2] * z-ATR	-0.1336	-0.136	0.080	-0.049	0.203+	0.108
[SC=3] * z-ATR	-0.1291**	-0.124*	0.123*	-0.052*	0.140**	0.071**
[SC=4] * z-ATR	-0.1351**	-0.1315*	0.119+	-0.054+	0.208**	0.112**
[SC=5] * z-ATR	-0.1139*	-0.109+	0.118	-0.034	0.310**	0.195**
[SC=6] * z-ATR	0^b	0^b	0^b	0^b	0^b	0^b
Random effect variances						
Residual	0.1146**	.172339**	.2939**	.0555**	.08542**	.052769**
Intercept + Year	4.35E-08**	4.34E-08**	8.57E-08**	4.00E-08**	7.64E-08**	6.28E-08**
R^2	0.9761**	0.9584**	.8299**	.9841**	.9702**	.9761

b. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant (baseline)
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed);
+. Correlation is significant at the 0.1 level (2-tailed).
Source: Authors' construction

The random effect of year is significant for all sizes meaning that there is considerable individual variance around the modelled mean fixed effects by time. Similar results were found with dependent variables Farm net value added, Family farm income, and Total farm output, Net worth, and Total Assets. However, the sign of the agritourism impact varies:

- – it is positive for Total farm output, and Farm net value added;
- – it is negative for family farm income, net worth and total assets;
- – its size-interaction effects are just the opposite, i.e, compared with size 6, the other significant sizes are impacted somewhat less that size 6;
- – for FFI and TO the sizes significantly differing from size 6 are 3 and 4, while for FNVA, NWT and TA these are 3-4-5 (and for NWT, size 2 at 0.1 level).

Factors influencing agritourism revenues

As the panel regression revealed (Tab. 6, Model1), Agritourism revenues significantly differ by economic size, compared to size 6, the differences are significant and positive (i.e. reaching above average revenues) for size 1 and 3 (the highest value), and significantly

increase with time. However, compared to size 6 farms the annual growth is significantly slower for size 1, and actually turns to the negative for size 3. The total subsidy level is positively related to ATR.

With a different model structure (Tab. 6, Model 2), however, agritourism revenues are significantly, and positively related to not only year, but to total assets, and total subsidy level, while negatively related to average farm capital, and the size of agricultural land. Labour and the actual economic size do not have additional impacts besides the other listed variables. Again, random effects are significant for both model structures, and goodness of fit is much weaker, (0.48 – 0.49 respectively).

Table 6 Fixed and random effects influencing Agritourism revenues

Model1		Model2	
Fixed Effects estimates (dependent: z-ATR			
Intercept	-56.9670**	Intercept	-22.0442904751**
Year	0.0281**	Year	0.0108953925**
[SC=1]	50.3653*	TA	0.0000001907**
[SC=2]	30.2843	Fcap	-0.0000003992**
[SC=3]	72.8359**	TSU	0.0000048677**
[SC=4]	12.3390	LAWU	0.0067258597
[SC=5]	15.3620	Land	-0.0007582498*
[SC=6]	0[b]	Size	0.0002114070
[SC=1] * Year	-0.0249*		
[SC=2] * Year	-0.0149		
[SC=3] * Year	-0.0359**		
[SC=4] * Year	-0.0060		
[SC=5] * Year	-0.0075		
[SC=6] * Year	0[b]		
TSU	3.2105E-06**		
Random effects variance			
Residual	.49100**	Residual	.49076**
Intercept + Year	1.1054E-07**	Intercept + Year	1.0733E-07**
R^2	0.4789**	R^2	0.4914**

b. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant (baseline)
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed);
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed);
Source: Authors' construction.

CONCLUSION

Our results show, that farm economic size matters with regard to the importance of agritourism in farm economic performance.

As we proved, for 28 EU-countries and 6 farm size categories, smaller farms rely to more extent on agritourism revenues, the share of agritourism in GFI ranges from 1.0% to 3.5 - 4% for sizes 1, 2 and 3, while for sizes 5 and 6 it remains under 0.5% The results show, that the highest share is, however, not in the smallest size category, but for category 3 (25000-50000 EUR annual standard output). Probably, this size category possesses sufficient assets, labour, amenities to provide for better services to tourists, therefore it is capable of gaining higher revenues compared to other components of GFI.

Impacts of total agritourism revenues on farm incomes, output and assets also differ by size. Agritourism revenues impacted similarly the incomes and outputs of farms belonging to size 6, and sizes 1-2 − i.e. the largest category and the two smallest one. They experienced the highest positive impacts on GFI, while sizes 3-4-5 differed from these, and from each other, too, with the smallest benefits in absolute values experienced by size 4 and 3. Net worth, Total assets experienced negative impacts, i.e. smaller values for those having higher agritourism revenues (sizes 6 and 1-2). At the same time, sizes 4 and 5 reacted positively to higher agritourism revenues. Size 3 was also negatively impacted, but to a lesser extent than 6, 1 and 2. It is interesting to see, that while their income gains were lower, their gains in net worth and assets were higher – it may be related to spending more on farm improvements, and having different investment strategies.

Generally, all farm size categories differ by their temporal dynamics, the fastest growth in revenues and other performance indicators is experienced by size 6 (the largest category), followed by size 5, then size 1, size 4, and finally sizes 3 and 4 showing the slowest growth with time. This means, that small farms grow faster than medium size farms, which gives them possibility for catching up, and develop, while the two largest categories keep their advantage, probably due to different management and organisation strategies, better access to markets and external resources, while possessing more internal resources and abilities, as well.

Regarding the factors influencing the level of agritourism performance, i.e. the size of revenues arising from agritourism, farm size categories differed again. Belonging to size categories 6, 5, 4 and 2 meant actually smaller agritourism revenues than size 1, but all these categories produced negative z-ATR, i.e. below average agritourism revenues, and size 3

produced the highest z-scored agritourism revenue, being the only one reaching above average revenue levels. Time dynamics of agritourism revenues also differed by size, the fastest growth being in sizes 6-5-4-2 categories followed by size 1, and changing into a small decreasing pattern for size 3, i.e. faster growth is experienced by those having less revenues initially. With higher total assets, and higher total subsidies received, agritourism revenues increased, while higher average farm capital and total agricultural land indicated smaller revenues from agriculture – probably having the main focus on traditional agricultural production, instead of this diversifying activity.

Our findings are partly similar to former research results, but they also contradict some of them. The present findings support the general view that farm size matters in the involvement of agritourism activities. However, while most of the American studies indicate that small farms profit the most (Joo et al., 2013; Hollas, 2021), our findings about the EU show, that while small farms also benefit, it is most often the medium size farms that can reach the highest revenue levels. This is true not only for income levels, but for the net worth and total assets of farms, too. Our results show, that larger net worth and larger total assets are associated with smaller agritourism revenues, and the medium size farms gain the most in net worth and total assets from having high agritourism revenues. Our results agree with the conclusions about Italy by Arru et al. (2021), that the relationship between agritourism and farm performance is somewhat controversial, but overall, the medium size farms seem to be most involved in, and benefiting from agritourism activities. The novelty of the present study is its long time span, and its wide geographical focus, compared to former studies, that dealt with shorter time spans and smaller areas. Another novelty is the methodology of panel regression, that allows for differentiation of country, farm size and temporal effects. The results also underline that the EU support policy positively influence agritourism activity, which reflects the multifunctionality of rural regions, contributing to environmental sustainability, economic viability and preservation of rural heritage at the same time.

The present results point to further research directions. One such research question is to do a similar analysis not only with country averages, but at the level of NUTS2 regions. As countries are not homogeneous regarding their natural environment, regions different in their tourism appeal and agricultural suitability, possibly having on impact on the relationship of agritourism, farm sizes and farm profitability. Another research focus can be the comparison of the EU member states by their business environment. Factors of the business environment can have a considerable impact on the performance of the agricultural sector, typical farm sizes, profitability, labour use, and involvement in agritourism. Control factors, such as

average GDP per capita, agricultural and overall tax rates, labour and income share of agriculture in the national economy, or the share of less favoured areas in the total agricultural area could be incorporated to the statistical models to reveal more specific relationships between agritourism and farm profitability.

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