12TH INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

CURRENT TRENDS IN SPA, HOTEL AND TOURISM

„ Searching for a future direction in tourism "

Hotel the Grand Vígľaš 2024

The author of the paper is responsible for the factual and linguistic correctness of the paper, the quality of the picture and graphs.

All papers were selected through a blind peer review process.

Proceedings Editors:

Prof. Ing. Vanda Maráková, PhD.
Prof. Ing. Kristína Pompurová, PhD.
Prof. Ing. Marian Gúčik, PhD.

Reviewers:

Prof. Ing. Kristína Pompurová, PhD.
Assoc. prof. Ing. Pavlína Pellešová, Ph.D
Assoc. prof. Ing. Jan Han, Ph.D.
Assoc. prof. Ing. Andrej Malachovský, PhD.
dr hab. Piotr Gryszel, prof. UEW
Ing. Petr Studnička, Ph.D.

The scientific conference and conference proceedings were supported by the Scientific Grant Agency of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of Slovak Republic VEGA, grant number 1/0360/23 "Tourism of the New generation – responsible and competitive development of tourism destinations in Slovakia in the post-COVID era" and VEGA 1/0136/23 "From resilience to sustainability. The impact of data on sustainable and competitive development of tourism."

Publisher: Belianum. Publishing house of the Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica

ISBN 978-80-557-2166-8
EAN 9788055721668

12th International Scientific Conference

CURRENT TRENDS IN SPA, HOTEL AND TOURISM

„ Searching for a future direction in tourism “

INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Assoc. prof. Ing. Vladimír Hiadlovský, PhD., Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica

Prof. Ing. Peter Krištofík, Ph.D., Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Faculty of Economics

Prof. Ing. Vanda Maráková, PhD., Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Faculty of Economics

Prof. Ing. Kristína Pompurová, PhD., Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Faculty of Economics

Prof. Ing. Marian Gúčik PhD., Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Faculty of Economics

Prof. dr hab. Andrzej Rapacz, Wroclaw University of Economics and Business, Faculty of Business and Management

Assoc. prof. Ing. Pavlína Pellešová, Ph.D., Silesian University in Opava, School of Business Administration in Karvina

Assoc. prof. Ing. Jan Han, Ph.D., University College Prague in Prague

Prof. PhDr. Irena Korbelářová, Dr., Silesian University in Opava, Faculty of Philosophy and Science in Opava

Dr. h. c. Prof. Dr. Harald Pechlaner, Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Faculty of Mathematics and Geography, School of Transformation and Sustainability

Prof. Giacomo del Chiappa, PhD., University of Sassari

dr hab. Izabela Michalska-Dudek, Prof. UEW, Wroclaw University of Economics and Business, Faculty of Business and Management

dr hab. Piotr Gryszel, Prof. UEW, Wroclaw University of Economics and Business, Faculty of Business and Management

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Assoc. prof. Ing. Tomáš Gajdošík, PhD.

Assoc. prof. Ing. Andrej Malachovský, PhD.

Assoc. prof. Ing. Radka Marčeková, PhD.

Ing. Zuzana Gajdošíková, PhD.

Ing. Diana Kvasnová, PhD.

Ing. Matúš Marčiš, PhD.

Mgr. Ivana Šimočková, PhD.

CONTENT

THE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM OF THE MATEJ BEL UNIVERISTY IN BANSKA BYSTRICA IS COMMEMORATING 60 YEARS SINCE ITS FOUNDATION

Vanda Maráková
Matej Bel University in Banska Bystrica
Faculty of Economics, Department of Tourism, Slovakia
e-mail: vanda.marakova@umb.sk
ORCID: 0000-0002-1148-8393

Abstract: *The scientific council of the University of Economics in Bratislava decided on the establishment of the department in January 1964, starting on February 1, 1964. In the academic year 1973/74, the management of the University of Economics decided to transfer the Department to Banska Bystrica, where there were conditions for the creation of a new faculty, which was inaugurated on February 17, 1977 as the Faculty of Service Economics and Tourism with federal jurisdiction. After the political and social change in Czechoslovakia, the faculty, together with the Faculty of Education, became a co-founder of the Matej Bel University in Banska Bystrica. Thus, the goal for which the Department was transferred from Bratislava to Banska Bystrica in 1973 was fulfilled. The paper presents the activities of the Department of Tourism in the years 2010-2023 in the field of education, research, publicity, international relations and cooperation with the practice.*

Key words*: Tourism. Department of tourism Matej Bel University in Banska Bystrica.*

The conditions for the establishment of the Department of Tourism were formed gradually from the second half of the 1950s. After fulfilling the personnel prerequisites and the appropriate qualification structure of the teaching staff, the scientific council of the University of Economics in Bratislava (Bratislava School of Economics - VSE) decided to establish the department in January 1964, with the start of operations on February 1, 1964. The new department was named the Department of Economics of Tourism and Public Catering (from 1966 it was modified the name of the Department of Tourism and Hospitality) and was established at the Faculty of Cross-Sectorial Economies in Bratislava. After the establishment of the Business Faculty of the VSE in 1969, the department became part of it. In the academic year 1973/74, the management of the VSE decided to transfer the Department to Banska Bystrica, where it became the detached workplace of the Business Faculty of the VSE. The conditions for the creation of a new faculty were created. The new Faculty in Banska Bystrica was inaugurated on February 17,1977 as the Faculty of Economics of Services and Tourism VSE with federal scope.

After the political and social change in Czechoslovakia, the faculty (at that time the University of Services and Tourism) was co-founder together with the Pedagogical Faculty of the Matej Bel University in Banska Bystrica. Thus, the goal for which the Department was transferred from Bratislava to Banska Bystrica in 1973 was fulfilled. During the period of its existence, a scientific school of tourism was formed on the grounds of the Department, which was also appreciated by the Accreditation Commission of the Government of the Slovak Republic, and the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic granted the faculty the right to the third level of study in the field of tourism in 2006. In May 2019, after the Department's activity was evaluated by the Scientific Council of the Faculty of Economics, its name was changed to the Department of Tourism.

The Department of Tourism entered the jubilee academic year 2023/24 as a scientific and pedagogical workplace with 11 colleagues who participate in providing education in three study programs and levels of university education. In the first degree (Bachelor's degree), the Department guarantees the study program Tourism, in the second degree (Master´s degree) the study program Economics and Tourism Management and in the third degree (PhD.) the study program Tourism in the field of Economics and Management. Since 2010, the Department has achieved remarkable results in educational and scientific research activities, as well as in international cooperation and work for practice.

After comprehensive accreditation in 2005, the Faculty of Economics of Matej Bel University (MBU) received accreditation for the field of tourism in three degrees of study since 2006, as well as the right to habilitations and appointment procedures for professors. A team of domestic and foreign lecturers and colleagues from practice participates in the provision of study programs in all three levels of study. In 2006, a re-audit of the quality system was also carried out and the faculty defended the fulfilment of quality requirements for the provision of university education, scientific activities and tourism research according to ISO 9001:2000 standards.

In 2012, Matej Bel University in Banska Bystrica and the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (Germany) concluded an agreement that allows students to study in a joint study programme in the 2nd degree of studies "Tourism and Sustainable Regional Development – Management and Geography/Economics and Tourism Management", which is taught in English with the possibility of obtaining a double diploma. The study is at partner universities and ends with the defence of the diploma thesis before the joint commission for final state exams. So far, 41 students from Slovakia and Germany have completed the study program.

University education is undergoing significant changes, which are reflected in the need to increase its attractiveness and quality. Every institution that provides university education is responsible for preparing high-quality graduates for practice, and at the same time, it must also strive for international recognition of studies. The department applied for an internationally recognized education quality system provided by the UNWTO World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism from 2024). Based on the accreditation of the quality of tourism education, UNWTO noted the high quality of education and in May 2019 awarded the study program "Economics and Tourism Management" in the 2nd degree of study with the TedQual quality certificate, which represents an exceptional success in the geographical space of the Visegrad Group countries. The awarding of the certificate was conditional on the fulfilment of educational quality standards, while the focus was on the student and the results of his studies in accordance with the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism. In addition, the connecting of the study program with the needs of practice, infrastructure, and support for education, as well as management policy and tools were evaluated. After re-accreditation of the quality of education in August 2022, UNWTO again awarded the TedQual certificate to the study program for the next three years.

On the basis of the Decree of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic No. 244/2019 Coll., changes were made to the fields of study with effect from 1 September 2019. Based on this, the field of study of tourism was included as a study program into the newly created field of economics and management.

With the aim of improving education, in the years 2010 - 2018, the department organized a periodic survey of students' motivation in choosing a course of study and satisfaction with the study of tourism, as well as students' preferences in finding a job. A similarly focused survey is organized annually by the faculty, in which students comment on their studies and, at the end of their studies, on the completed study program.

In accordance with the standards of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education Institutions (SAAVS), from 2023, the Department guarantees tourism study programs in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd degree of study at the Faculty of Economics of MBU. In 60 years, 3,550 graduates have completed engineering studies in tourism and catering in full-time and part-time studies. Since 2010/2011, 785 graduates have completed tourism studies in the 2nd degree of study.

The basic mission of each department is education supported by its own scientific research activities and cooperation with practice. After 2010, 24 basic research projects (VEGA projects, foreign projects, Visegrad Fund projects) and 22 applied research projects for practice were solved at the Department. Projects of the VEGA Agency, for which grants are awarded, have the greatest weight, as well as international projects, which are usually solved for three years. After 2010, the VEGA Grant Agency supported projects aimed at the use of the Slovak natural and cultural heritage of UNESCO in tourism; innovation policy and innovation in tourism. In 2011 and 2021, projects focused on socially responsible behaviour in tourism; development of voluntary tourism; reengineering of destination management organizations; smart and sustainable tourism development; sharing economy as an opportunity for the competitive development of destination cities. For the years 2023 - 2025, grants were obtained for project solutions, namely the project New Generation Tourism – Responsible and Competitive Development of Destination Cities in the Post-Covid Era and the project from Resilience to Sustainable Tourism.

Foreign grant projects are solved in cooperation with several foreign partners. Thematically, the projects were focused on the development and support of the creation of tourism products for the needs of 55+ in terms of safety and lifestyle; revival of cultural heritage - social and economic strengthening of rural areas; entrepreneurial skills of university tourism students applicable to the international labour market; Service Learning to promote inclusion, diversity and digital support; smart tourism initiatives; hoteliers in the EU.

In connection with domestic and foreign research projects, thematic tasks in the form of dissertations and habilitation theses were also addressed. In the years 2010 - 2023, 48 doctoral students completed doctoral studies in tourism, 10 associate professors were habilitated in the field of tourism and 3 appointment procedures for professors in the field of tourism were held. Thematically, the theses were focused on the issues of tourism economics and policy, tourism management and marketing, tourism services, tourism destinations, geographical aspects of tourism, sustainable regional development.

Since 2005, a scientific conference of doctoral students and young scientists Scientia Iuventa has been organized at the Faculty of Economics of MBU, with the participation of domestic doctoral students from Slovak and foreign partner universities.

Students who were involved in solving tourism problems in their final theses, especially in the field survey for data collection, were not left out either. Several of them also participated in the presentation of their works at the annual conferences of the Student Scientific Activity (SVA). In order to support the involvement of students in scientific research activities at the faculty, as well as the use of new scientific knowledge in studies and in research activities, the establishment of a start-up with innovative activities or public-beneficial activities associated with spreading the good name of the department and the study program at home and abroad, since 2016 Professor Gucik Prize has been awarded.

In applied research, 22 projects were solved with a focus on regional assumptions and strategies of tourism with an emphasis on the limits and sustainable development of tourism destinations.

The results of scientific research have been published as scientific monographs (15), university textbooks (13) and book works (17). There is an extensive number of published articles in domestic and foreign scientific and professional journals with the aim of using their own know-how for the benefit of the development of tourism theory and practice, in which the education and qualifications of people are a determining production factor.

Scientific conferences are also used to transfer scientific knowledge and popularize the results of scientific research. In the monitored period, 12 scientific conferences were organized, 5 of which were also with the participation of domestic and foreign partners. In this context, 11 collections of scientific papers (Folia Turistica and scientific proceedings from conferences) were published.

One of the other achievements in 2021 was the creation of a consortium of four institutions (Faculty of Commerce and Business of the Silesian University in Karvina, Faculty of Philosophy and Science of the Silesian University in Opava, Wroclaw University of Economics and Business, University College Prague in Prague, Faculty of Economics of the MBU Banska Bystrica) on the alternating organization of international scientific conferences "Current Trends in the Spa, Hotel and Tourism Industry" on a current topic in accordance with the focus of scientific research activities.

The platform for the presentation of the results of scientific research activities and discussion on scientific and educational issues of tourism at the Department is the scientific Seminar Academica Turistica (SAT), founded in 2010.

A long-term tool for publishing the results of scientific research activities is also the scientific journal Economic Review of Tourism, founded in 1968, whose editorial board is led by the Department. The journal publishes original articles and analytical studies by domestic and foreign authors in Slovak, Czech and English. In the years 2010-2023, 314 scientific papers and 70 reviews and annotations of domestic and foreign publications were published. Despite other, especially electronic media, which do not care much about professional terminology, the journal also has the ambition to fulfil the role of a codifier of the professional terminology of tourism with the aim that we not only speak, but also understand one thing.

In 2019, the Department initiated the membership of Matej Bel University in Banska Bystrica in the Triangle Knowledge Alliance (ACT), which aims to connect educational institutions and businesses from different European countries and enable the exchange of knowledge in the interest of sustainable tourism development.

The department is represented in the European Association for Tourism Education ATLAS. In addition, the staff of the department are individual members of the International Association of Tourism Scientific Experts AIEST, the International Federation for Information Technology and Tourism IFITT and the Triangle knowledge network, EU Eco tandem. For many years of cooperation and initiative in the creation of a joint study program and support for the study of tourism, at the proposal of the Department and the Scientific Council of the Faculty of Economics of MBU, the Scientific Council of Matej Bel University in Banska Bystrica awarded an honorary doctorate in 2021 to Professor Dr. Harald Pechlaner, President of AIEST, working at the Catholic University Eichstätt-Ingolstadt.

Useful cooperation with the practice for which graduates are prepared aims to increase the quality of the educational process and prepare them for the conditions of practice. The department cooperates with public and private sector organisations. It is represented in national tourism organizations, such as the Association of Hotels and Restaurants of the Slovak Republic or the Slovak Association of Touroperators and Travel Agencies, as well as the Ministry of Transport of the Slovak Republic (since 2024 Ministry of Tourism and Sport) and the City of Banska Bystrica. Representatives of practice, often graduates of the faculty, are involved in the educational process, participate in final state examinations as members of examination committees, oppose final bachelor's and master's theses, are helpful in organizing excursions and internships of students, field seminar (Field trip), which has been organized as part of the study program in the 2nd degree of study since 2011. Cooperation with regional tourism organizations such as the Association of Tourism Organizations, KOCR Banska Bystrica Region Tourism, OOCR Saris Bardejov, OOCR Horny Zemplin, OOCR Dolny Zemplin.

The effort of the team of scientific and pedagogical employees of the Department is to achieve high-quality, internationally acceptable results of scientific research and publication activities. By increasing didactic competencies, members want to apply innovative approaches to education in the competitive environment of educational institutions while maintaining quality in accordance with the accreditation standards of SAAVS and TedQual UN Tourism standards and prevent unethical practices induced by artificial intelligence and thus prepare graduates for the needs of employers. The effort is to create conditions for education in English in the 2nd and 1st level of study and to involve domestic and foreign lecturers from partner universities in this process. To popularize the activities of the Department of Educational Activities on social networks with the aim of addressing potential applicants for study at the Faculty of Economics of MBU, to make available the results of basic and applied research and its commercialization, and to popularize international cooperation with partners at home and abroad.

CURRENT TRENDS RELATED TO POSTMODERN CONSUMERS IN TOURISM WITH A FOCUS ON GENERATION Z

Michala Fúsková
Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra
Faculty of Arts, Institute of Culture and Tourism Management
Culture Studies and Ethnology, Slovakia
e-mail: mfuskova@ukf.sk
ORCID: 0000-0001-5388-4426

Abstract: *The paper deals with changes and trends in consumer behaviour of tourists in the postmodern period, with the emphasis on the people born between 1996 and 2012, also known as the Generation Z. The focus is placed on issues such as the redefinition of tourism sector, tourism demand, consumer trends and consumer profile. The paper briefly points out specific aspects related to the purchasing cycle (from an initial input, through motivation, declared or supressed needs, values, preferences, decision making and planning process, in-destination behaviour, satisfaction and post-purchase processes) within the framework of current social and economic trends. The aim of the paper is to point out key aspects of re-defined tourism, describe some characteristics of the generation Z in general as well as within the tourism industry, indicate survey findings related to their consumer´s cycle and outline certain trends and perspectives of their growing influence. The paper is not designed as a strict analysis of the selected phenomenon, but it provides a depiction of a current state of tourism industry in a wider context. The theoretical framework is complemented by the results of two online questionnaire surveys on consumer behaviour of Generation Z, which were conducted in years 2023 and 2024 in the Slovak Republic. The findings briefly point out specific Gen Z consumer´s patterns and phenomena related to pre-consumption, consumption and post-consumption phases. We mention various issues such as solo travel, bleisure trend, travel companionship, sustainability, personalization trend, brand loyalty, favourite activities, social media influence, price sensitivity, in-destination behaviour, etc. Some of the expected outcomes related to Gen Z´s general public image were confirmed, having a high score of approval or intensity, while others were not clearly demonstrated and therefore require further research. The results on the surveyed sample of respondents indicate that the Generation Z is fragmented and declares a very unstable, hybrid consumer behaviour. In the final part of the paper, some implications for tourism providers and problems for further discussion are presented.*

Key words: Consumer. Tourism. Trends.

Introduction

Current trends in the tourism sector are significantly determined by ongoing global processes. Boschetto Doorly (2020, p. 22) defined 5 dominant factors that fundamentally impact today´s social and economic situation - technologies, demographic changes, globalization, de-globalization and the climate crisis. These megatrends also affect the tourism sector. Types and forms of tourism are changing, the market is diversifying into ever smaller segments, consumption models are being modified, a significant fragmentation of the patterns is manifested. The demand is a driving force of this change. Today´s tourism industry is framed by the enduring concept of experientiality, authenticity, personalization and an ever-increasing consumption. But we cannot ignore the fact that the sector slowly becomes more vulnerable, unbalanced and effected by issues such as climate problems, cost of living crisis, limited natural sources, weather damage, mental and physical health issues, demographic disparities or challenges resulting from the exponential growth in power of technologies. An impending warning about reaching a tipping point of hyper-consumption era starts to appear (phenomena such as over-tourism, regulation of visitors, visitor's pledge, banned zones). These factors naturally change all aspects of tourist behaviour, tourist patterns and tourist cycle within the framework of its pre-consumption, consumption and a post-consumption phase (MacLean, 2019, p. 31). We are aware that the research problem is extremely extensive, and it is not possible to fully process it within the scope of the paper. Therefore, we first looked at it from the perspective of the Generation Z since its representatives are the core of current (and a near-future) purchasing power in tourism and are the most sharpened representation of postmodern tourists. Our aim is to point out key aspects of re-defined tourism, describe some characteristics of the Generation Z in general and within the tourism industry, indicate survey findings related to their consumer´s cycle and outline certain trends and perspectives of their growing influence.

1. Re-definition of tourism

Although the very essence of the tourism or hospitality industry remains unaltered, we witness a need for the redefinition of tourism in postmodern times (better in Bauman's liquid modernity, 2000). The postmodern tourism (Dujmović and Vitasović, 2015) is mostly characterized by the shift in following key paradigms:

Table 1 Changes in the fundamental processes of tourism

Traditional tourism	Postmodern tourism
Binary concepts	Non-binary concepts
Diferentiation	De-differentiation
Diachronic perspective	Synchronic perspectives
Permanence	Flux
Being	Doing
Structure	Agency
Social patterns	Processes of emerging
Fixtures	Mobilities

Source: Cohen and Cohen, 2012, p. 4.

These theoretical concepts can be unpacked into specific examples and practices. De-differentiation and a non-binary understanding of reality brings e.g. the erasing and blurring of the original distance between visitors and hosts, production and consumption (the rise of "*prosumers*"), work and free time ("*bleisure*" trend), everyday life and extraordinary experiences. Original forms of tourism are splitting into smaller and smaller niche markets based on very specific postmodern experiences (Zheng, 2016) or points of interest (e.g. sky-watching, doomsday tourism, foreaging, etc.). Linear, diachronic perspective transforms to synchronicity (e.g. simultaneous consumption of multiple services or simultaneous usage of devices). In times where true innovation is replaced by imitation, there is a massive trend of copying products among the competitors or fusing them into different schemes of services (e.g. fine dining in the cable car). The one-size-fits-all product packages are receding as hyper-localized, hyper-individualized and ever-evolving products for customers with hybrid behaviour become the future of travelling. Fluidity, flexibility and adjustability of the product in a real-time (also thanks to AI) is a massive trend, compared to the previous wave of pre-prepared, rigid packages (more in Xiang and Fesenmaier, 2017). To put it briefly - the tourism industry has changed, and it is time to redefine old practices and approaches, as many of them no longer apply in today´s society.

2.Generation Z as a driving factor of changes – general characteristics

It is no surprise that most of these major trends are significantly shaped by an emerging demographic force – the Generation Z also known as Generation C, Zoomers, Generation Snowflakes or iGeneration. Gen Z is defined as people born between 1996 and 2012 (ETC, 2020). Currently, they reach the age of 12 to 28 years. The first comprehensive view of Generation Z was brought by Twenge (2018). Gen Z´s are a very diverse, fragmented group under the leitmotif of the first digital natives. They are accustomed to availability, visual culture, mobility, multitasking, connection, fragmented reception and limited attention span. They easily absorb the transition between reality and virtuality. Their tolerance to race, skin colour or gender fluidity is high. Specific approach to occupation, home, family or education is a significant feature of Gen Z. They threw away the "one career a lifetime" model and are open to job changes, downshifting or gig occupation. Their motivation and spending patterns are very specific – when deciding they are largely influenced by emotions and relationships and they´d rather indulge in experiences (events, fashion, food and beverages, technologies, favourite apps) than save money or invest in households. Gen Z´s approach travel differently than previous generations. In general, they are characterized by hybrid, combined behaviour of a multi-option visitor (Palatková and Zichová, 2014, p. 47), which makes it complicated for tourism providers to satisfy or predict their preferences. Although they desire to be distinctive individualists, they demonstrate significant parallels across the ethnic, gender, age or cultural spectrum and clearly confirm an ongoing customer convergence (Horner and Swarbrooke, 2003, p. 70). This phenomenon is also known as "diversity in homogeneity" and vice versa. In this part of the paper, we try to analyse some of the characteristic regarding Gen Z´s tourist behaviour in a more detail.

3.Methodology and results

The paper is based on a long-term observation (since the Generation Z is author´s enduring area of scientific and pedagogical interest), heuristic methods, in-depth interviews with focus groups, as well as the results of two questionnaire surveys among representatives of the studied generation. The Survey 1 (S1) was run in 2024 on 100 respondents and the Survey 2 (S2) was conducted in 2023 on 143 respondents. Both questionnaires were anonymous and voluntary, distributed electronically via SURVIO platform, tested in preliminary research by an anonymous respondent for possible deviations. The completion rate reached 70% (S1) and 72% (S2). In order to reach the young generation, a less formal language was chosen in the communication. Due to the limited length of the paper, we do not present all the acquired data (they will be available in a new publication of the author).

The S1 questionnaire was implemented in March and April 2024 targeting 100 students of Slovak universities, it was distributed via student´s e-mails and students´ online communities and included 11 questions. We present here 5 out of 11 dimensions that we perceive as the most relevant to the topic of the paper. The research methodology copied the Study on Generation Z Travelers carried out by the European Travel Commission in 2020. Representatives under the age of 18, whose travel and financial decisions were assumed to be dependent on their parents, were excluded - therefore it covers only respondents between 18 to 28 years. The sample consisted of 22 respondents born in the years 1996-1999 (the first wave of Gen Z) and 78 respondents born between the years 2000-2009 (the second wave of Gen Z), 85 were women, 15 were men. We are aware of the methodological limitations of the approach – a) university students are only a subset of the entire the Gen Z segment in Slovakia; b) certain differences may occur due to given circumstances, methods of interviewing, language shifts; c) unequal ratio between male and female respondents. Therefore, we perceive the results only as input data for deeper research.

The Q1 was focused on the favourite activities and interests of Gen Z. Among the most popular activities we can perceive *spending time with family and friends* (81%), *traveling* (78%), *watching movies and series* (66%) and *relaxing at home* (63%).

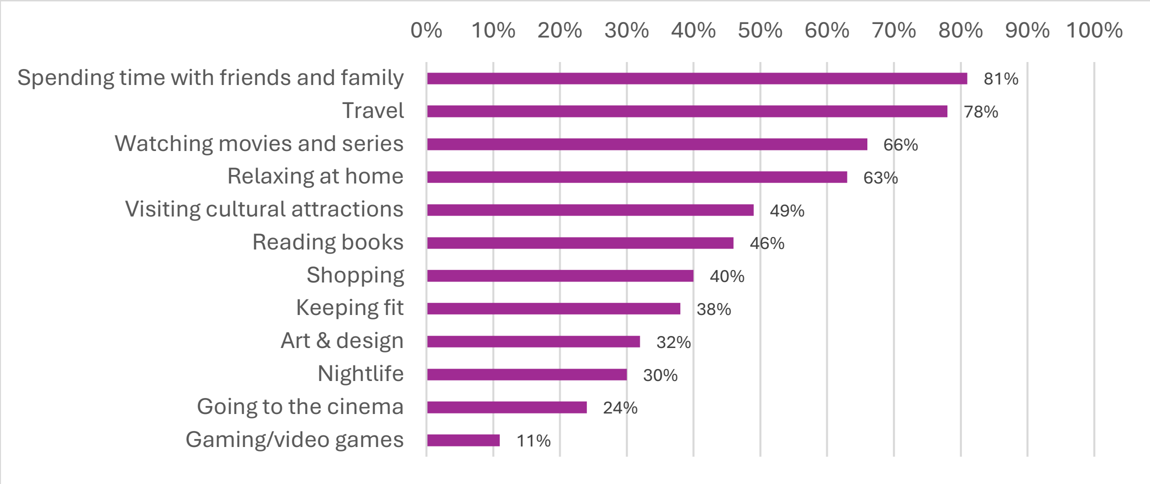


Chart 1 Favourite activities and interests of Generation Z
Source: Author´s research 2024 according to ETC, 2020.

Q2 was targeted at Gen Z´s most frequent travel companions. 50% of respondents travel with *friends*, 24% with *family*, 22% *alone* and only 4% *with an organized group* (*a note: there might be a difference between preferred partners - with whom they would like to travel- and actual partners when travelling; this is a question for a further research).

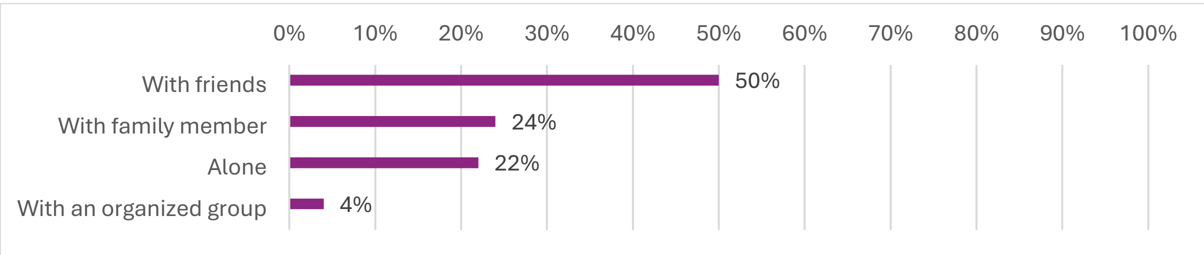


Chart 2 Travel companions of Gen Z
Source: Author´s research 2024 according to ETC, 2020.

Q3 monitored in-destination activities. Top activities of Gen Z included *getting to know and visiting places, learning about history* (71%), *urban culture* (68%), *local cuisine* (63%), *cultural activities* (62%), *spending time in nature* (59%) and *cultural traditions* (57%). We see a somewhat weaker interest in *night life* (27%), *shopping* (31%), *wellness* (20%) and *sports* (12%).

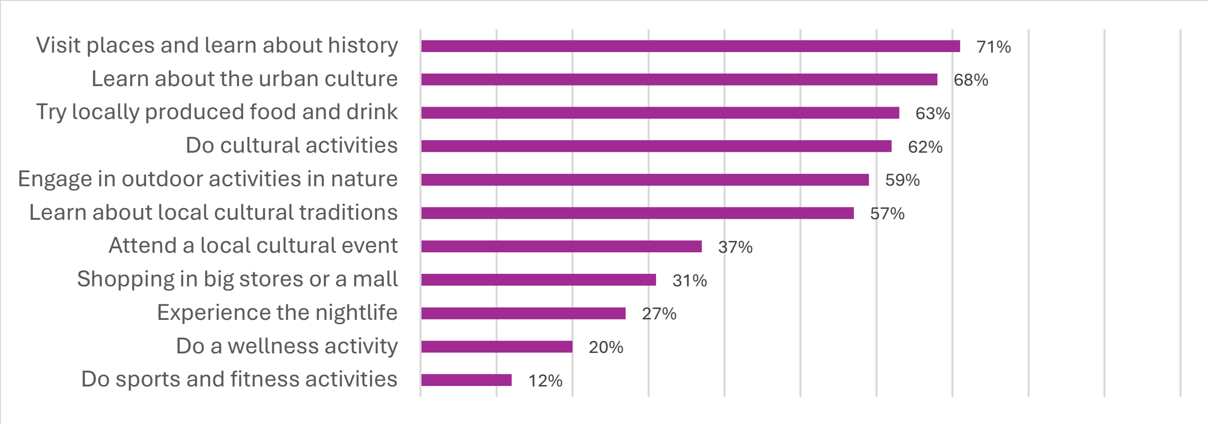


Chart 3 Preferred in-destination activities of Gen Z
Source: Author´s research 2024 according to ETC, 2020.

Q4 emphasized where the respondents draw inspiration from when choosing travel ideas. *Social media* is crucial for 77% of respondents, *word of mouth* is important to 62% of them. *Travel bloggers and vloggers* were also highly ranked (54%), as well as *documentaries, movies and series* (44%). Lower numbers were recorded in relation to *travel review sites* (27%), *official websites* (14%) and *travel books and printed materials* (6%). *Special discounts* would be interesting for 38% of respondents.

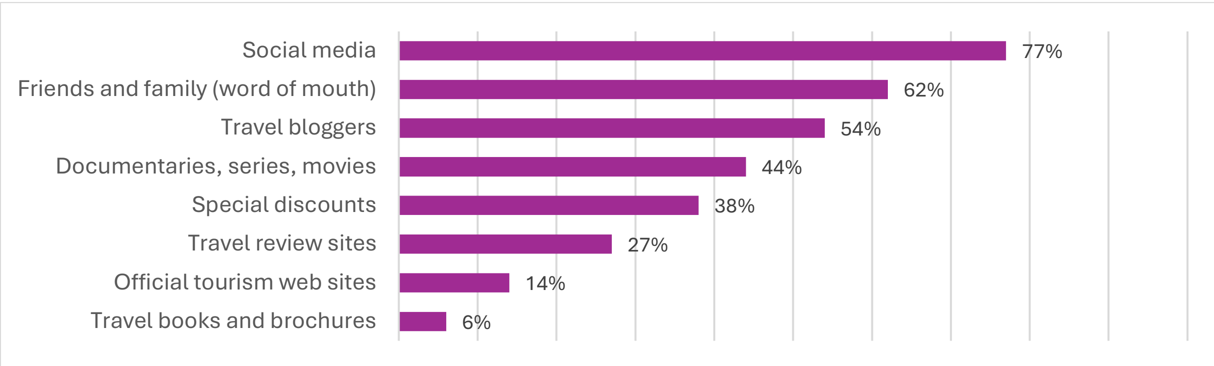


Chart 4 Sources of inspiration concerning travel ideas
Source: Author´s research 2024 according to ETC, 2020.

Q5 analysed the usage of social media while traveling. About half of the respondents use *instant messaging* (48%) and *live content sharing* (48%), but surprisingly almost 30% try to be *offline* as much as possible.

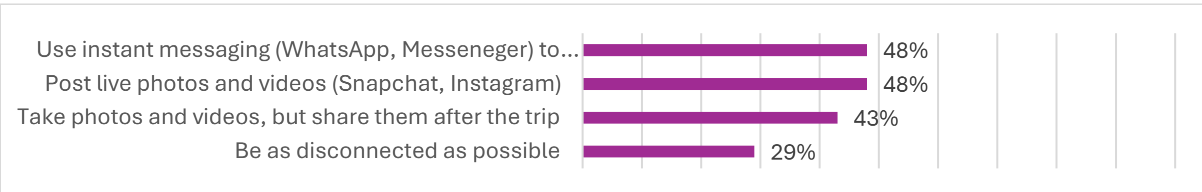


Chart 5 Social media behaviour when travelling
Source: Author´s research 2024 according to ETC, 2020.

Another research on consumers´ preferences was conducted in October 2023 (S2) on the sample of 400 respondents of a non-specified age spectrum. The survey had 24 questions, it was distributed via e-mails, Facebook groups and Instagram to general public in Slovakia and its overall results are summarized in other author´s publication (Fúsková, 2023). To this paper, we have selected answers of 143 respondents belonging to the Gen Z, of which 104 were women and 39 men. We present here answers to 15 selected statements related to consumer´s cycle and tourism products and services (TP&S), based on a 5- point Likert scale of approval, which we perceive as the most relevant to the topic of the paper. Each answer on a scale was allocated with a value (numbered by rating: 1- strongly disagree; 2 – partially disagree; 3 – neutral; 4 – partially agree; 5 – strongly agree) and the total, the arithmetical mean (the score) and the modus was calculated. We are aware of the limitations of the approach: e.g. the imbalance between men and women in the survey; formulation of questions; given circumstances; limited potential generalization of the answers (e.g. respondents may react differently in different situations). We also recognize that Gen Z is not a homogenous group, therefore some answers may be inaccurate or problematic to interpret and would be different in another perspective, time and location.

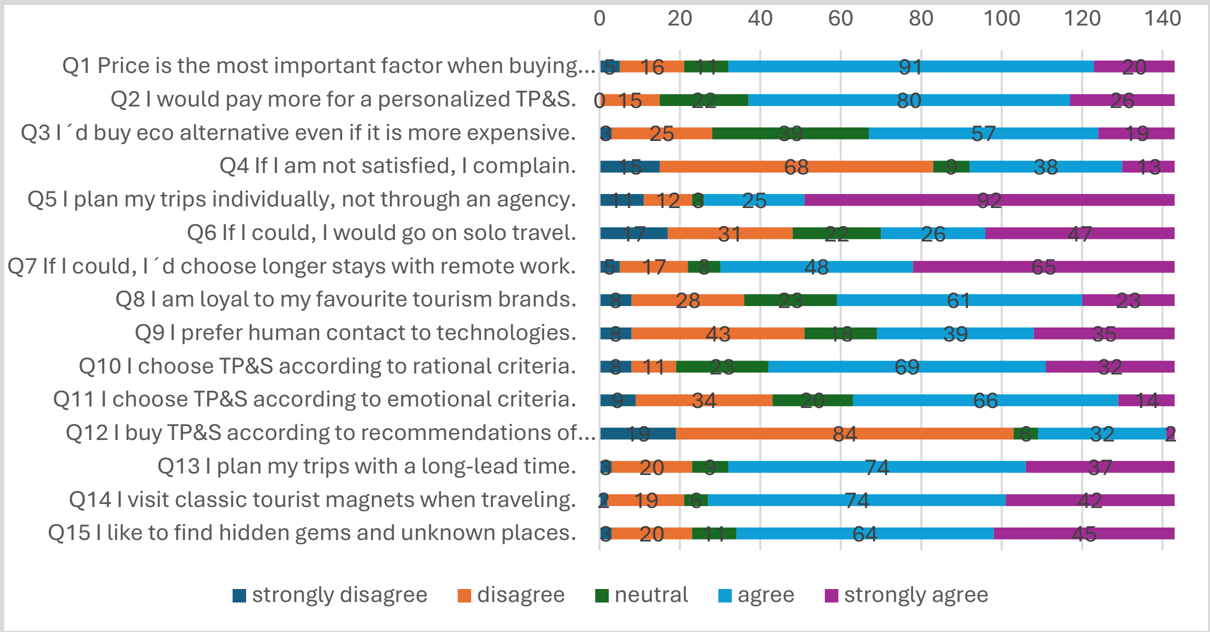


Chart 6 Attitudes of Gen Z towards selected attributes of travelling
Source: Author´s research, 2023.

Table2 Attitudes of Gen Z towards selected attributes of travelling sorted by score

		Total Score	Mean	Modus
I plan my trips individually, not through an agency.	Q5	604	4,22	5
If I could, I would choose longer stays with remote work.	Q7	580	4,06	5
I like to find hidden gems and unknown places.	Q15	580	4,06	4
I visit classic tourist magnets when traveling.	Q14	568	3,97	4
I plan my trips with a long-lead time.	Q13	554	3,87	4
I choose TP&S according to rational criteria.	Q10	535	3,74	4
Price is the most important factor when buying TP&S.	Q1	534	3,73	4
I would pay more for a personalized TP&S.	Q2	524	3,66	4
I would buy eco alternative even if it is more expensive.	Q3	493	3,45	4
I am loyal to my favourite tourism brands.	Q8	492	3,44	4
If I could, I would go on solo travel.	Q6	480	3,36	5
I prefer human contact to technologies.	Q9	479	3,35	2
I choose TP&S according to emotional criteria.	Q11	471	3,30	4
If I am not satisfied with TP&S, I complain.	Q4	395	2,76	2
I buy TP&S according to recommendations of sales reps.	Q12	343	2,40	2

Likert scale interval: 1,00 – 1,79 (strong disapproval); 1,80 – 2,59 (disapproval); 2,60 – 3,39 (neutral); 3,40 – 4,19 (approval); 4,20 – 5,00 (strong approval) (Pimentel, 2019, p. 188)

Source: Author´s research, 2023.

Some of the trends related to Gen Z´s general image was confirmed having a high percentage of approval or intensity, while others were not clearly demonstrated and therefore require further research. In neutral interval, we see Q4, Q11, Q5, Q6 (these are not confirmed nor denied); while Q4 and Q12 are in the disapproval interval. All others are in the interval of partial or complete approval, with the highest score related to Q5, Q7 and Q15.

4. Discussion

In this part of the paper, we would like to present key outputs of the surveys sorted according to MacLeans´s phases (2019). Some implications for tourism services providers related to these phenomena are also mentioned here.

Pre-consumption phase: Traveling is one of the most popular leisure activities of Gen Z´s (S1, Q1) and quality time is their most important commodity. The motives for travelling may vary – it can be desire for rest, discovery, adventure, or escapism (also known as approach & avoidance motivation, Iso Ahola, 1982, p. 258). When choosing travel destinations, attention of Gen Z is focused on social media, peer-to-peer recommendation and the growing trend of set-jetting (S1, Q4). They sometimes plan with a long lead-time (Q2, 13), but often opt for spontaneous trips – which is also an important impetus for versatile marketing campaigns. Organized travelling is on the decline – Gen Z will plan a trip individually without a provider (S2, Q5), but we assume they would be willing to try it if the offer is easily accessible online, relevant, safe and adjustable to their needs. When deciding, they subjectively put more emphasis on rational than emotional criteria (S2, Q10, Q11). Since they are mostly students or starting employees with a relatively mature financial literacy, price is still the most important factor (S2, Q1), so the providers should strictly monitor the price range of products and services. Having grown up in an era when almost everything was available, they choose individually tailored offers and are more resistant to mass campaigns or sales rep recommendations (S2, Q12). Considering financial aspects, according to Uysal (2022, p. 79), they are more prudent when consuming resources than previous generations, dynamically responding to benefits and bargains (S1, Q4).

Consumption phase: Friends and family are their most common travel companions, but solo travel is definitely on the rise (S1, Q2; S2, Q6) – but since they often feel alone and isolated, they expect providers to create opportunities for various social interactions and events at the destination. When in destination, they like to wander around the cities and enjoy the local culture, urban atmosphere, food, traditions and authentic features (S1, Q3). These activities do not appear to be very different from “millennials” or “boomers”, but they differ in how, when, with whom and why they are done. Gen Z do not avoid the classic tourist offer, but at the same time, they search for secondary and tertiary destinations, hidden gems, alternative options or immersive experiences (S2, Q15; S2, Q14). Technologies shape every step of their consumer´s journey and although they are massive internet users, they are also more cautious when using it. Gen Z would rely on superior technologies in the destination (S2, Q9), but mostly the second wave of the generation also appreciates the idea of off-grid and off-line travel, digital detox or social media free destinations (S1, Q5) with a human approach and customer centricity. As they are mostly individualists (sometimes narcissists) they are willing to pay more for a personalized product (S2, Q2), premium or a co-created product, which is also a huge potential for tourism services providers (Tomczyk et al., 2022). But at the same time, compared to millennials, and also due to limited financial resources, they are open to using various forms of the collaborative economy, shared services, as well as the cryptocurrencies. Sustainability is becoming an important topic for them and even though the Gen Z´s do not actively look for an eco-option, their willingness to try it is high and/or they would even pay extra for a sustainable alternative (S2, Q3). Daskin and Tumati (2024, p.72) also defined that the ecological aspect together with safety are the two most important principles for Gen Z when traveling. Although they hopped on the trend of experientiality, commodification, gamification and simplification of tourism products, compared to the individualistically oriented millennials, they declare a greater interest in art, collective responsibility, the climate or the society, and show (both latent and open) interest in solving these problems.

Post-consumption phase: At the time of hyper-choice and information overload, when they are not satisfied, they usually do not leave feedback, but immediately choose a new service (S2, Q4), so providers should really care about of the quality, fast and decent communication and active engagement with the customer. But at the same time, if they are satisfied, they declare relatively a high level of tourist inertia (Wen et al., 2022, p. 2), brand loyalty (S2, Q8) and repetitive behaviour. Since they are sensitive to transparency in business, the key to their loyalty also lies in company´s policy, ethic suppliers and adequate employee conditions.

But the biggest change we see (and which is running in the background of all these phenomena) is the change of the paradigm of traveling itself. It is no longer a separate period or time – mobility and accessible traveling is woven into a person´s everyday life and work, which also results in a massive „bleisure“ trend (S2, Q7) and digital nomadism.

In general, we see that these outputs only as a starting point for more rigorous research and a long-time observation. Each of the above-mentioned phenomena represents a specific research area. The results can be analysed at a deeper level, for example put into the context of the respondent´s profile (gender, nationality, marital status, education). A comparison with the attitudes of previous and subsequent generations would also yield interesting findings (Evangelu, 2014). Remarkable contexts may also be reached in relation to four categories of demand according to Boniface et al., 2020, p. 12). We also see a vast possible research area in the obvious contradiction between the officially declared or subjectively “desired” answers, supressed motives and the internal psychological background of the respondents and we would like to focus on them in following research projects.

Conclusion

Authenticity, uniqueness, flexibility, innovation, accessibility, technology, ecology, experience, quality and personalization are the 10 characteristics of a successful tourism product designed for Gen Z. All these attributes will permanently change the travel industry and become its new essence - this will not apply only to Generation Z, but will affect all other segments through a snowball effect. Gen Z is a huge demographic force that is accelerating processes and revolutionizing the future of travel. It is also important to note that they will act not only as demand, but soon also as service providers, content creators, entrepreneurs or employees in the tourism sector. It is very difficult to predict the future with the coming of the Generation Alpha, but what we can confirm today is the unequivocal effect of opening scissors, frequent ambivalent relationships and the tendency to “have the best of both worlds”. Every trend provokes its counter-reaction and sometimes they do not stand as opposites but complement each other and coexist at the same time. They quickly and simultaneously switch from one to another and can even apply to the same customer in various times of his/her journey. The future of tourism and hospitality remains unclear, but we anticipate some stabilization of this “chaos” and a possible return of previous patterns, but in a new form.

References

[1] BAUMAN, Z., 2000. *Globalizace*. *Důsledky pro člověka.* Bratislava: Kalligram. ISBN 80-204-0817-7.

[2] BONIFACE, B., COOPER, R., COOPER, CH., 2020. *Worldwide Destinations*. Oxfordshire: Routledge. ISBN 978-0-429-25930-2. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429259302.

[3] BOSCHETTO DOORLY, V., 2020. Megatrends Defining the Future of Tourism. *A Journey Within the Journey in 12 Universal Truths*. Cham: Springer. ISBN 978-3-030-48626-6. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-48626-6.

[4] COHEN, E., COHEN, S. A., 2012. Current Sociological Theories and Issues in Tourism

[5] *Annals of Tourism Research*, 39 (4), pp. 2177 – 2202. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256987335_Current_Sociological_Theories_and_Issues_in_Tourism

[6] DASKİN, M., TUMATI, R., 2024. Factors Influencing Omani Gen Z Tourists' Destination Choices: Does Gender Make a Difference? *Journal of Yaşar University*, 19 (73), pp. 62-81. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/378579463_Factors_Influencing_Omani_Gen_Z_Tourists'_Destination_Choices_Does_Gender_Make_a_Difference

[7] DUJMOVIĆ, M., VITASOVIĆ, A., 2015. Postmodern Society and Tourism. *Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management*, Vol. 3, No. 9-10, pp. 192-203. [online]. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/82578657/Postmodern_Society_and_Tourism

[8] EVANGELU, J. E., 2014. Generation Y and the Reality of her Motivation in Their Personal and Professional Development. *Czech Hospitality and Tourism Papers*, Vol. 10, No. 22, pp. 59 - 65. Available at: https://www.vsh.cz/file.php?id=341

[9] FÚSKOVÁ, M., 2023. *Turizmus 21. storočia v kontexte zmien dopytu*. Nitra: UKF v Nitre. ISBN 978-80-558-2074-3. Available at: https://kmkt.sk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/1023-umktke-a4-fuskova-online.pdf

[10] HORNER, S., SWARBROOKE, J., 2003. *Cestovný ruch, ubytovanie a stravovanie, využitie voľného času*. Praha: Grada Publishing. ISBN 80-247-0202-9.

[11] ISO-AHOLA, S., 1982. Toward a Social Psychological Theory of Tourism Motivation: A Rejoinder. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 9, 2. pp. 256-262. Available at:

[12] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/248499578_Toward_a_Social_Psychological_Theory_of_Tourism_Motivation_A_Rejoinder

[13] MacLEAN, M. A., 2019. *Consumer Psychology of Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure.* Burlington: Society Publishing. ISBN 978-1773614304.

[14] PALATKOVÁ, M., ZICHOVÁ, J., 2014. *Ekonomika turismu*. Praha: Grada Publishing. ISBN 978-80-247-3643-3.

[15] PIMENTEL, J. L., 2019. Some Biases in Likert Scaling Usage and its Correction**.** *International Journal of Sciences Basic and Applied Research*. 45(1), pp. 183 – 191. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332533000_Some_Biases_in_Likert_Scaling_Usage_and_its_Correction

[16] STUDY ON GEN Z TRAVELLERS, 2020. Brusel: European Travel Commission. Available at: https://etc-corporate.org/uploads/2020/07/2020_ETC-Study-Generation-Z-Travellers.pdf

[17] TOMCZYK, A. T., BUHALIS, D., FAN, D. X. F., WILLIAMS, N., 2022. Price-personalization: Customer typology based on hospitality business. *Journal of Business Research*, 147, pp. 462 - 476. Available at: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0148296322003769

[18] TWENGE, J. M., 2018. *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood*. New York: Atria. ISBN 978-1-5011-5201-6.

[19] UYSAL, D., 2022. Gen-Z's consumption behaviours in post-pandemic tourism sector. *Journal of Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality*, 4 (1), pp. 70 – 82. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360737217_gen-z's_consumption_ behaviours_in_post-pandemic_tourism_sector

[20] WEN, J., NUNKOO, R., KOZAK, M., 2022. Rethinking the Role of Tourism in Modern Society through the Lenses of the Public and General Wellbeing. *Handbook on Tourism, Public Health and Wellbeing*, pp. 1 - 14. Available at: https://ideas.repec.org/h/elg/eechap/2031.html

[21] XIANG, Z., FESENMAIER D. R., 2017. *Analytics in Smart Tourism Design*. Cham: Springer International Publishing. ISBN 978-3-319-44262-4.

[22] ZHENG, X., 2016._Discussion on Tourism Experience Based on Postmodernism Perspectives. *Proceedings of the 2nd International Symposium on Social Science*, pp. 110 – 114. Available at: https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/isss-16/25853958

AN APPROACH TO TACKLING OVERTOURISM IN CROATIA

Marian Gúčik
Matej Bel University in Banska Bystrica Faculty of Economics
Department of Tourism, Slovakia
e-mail marian.gucik@umb.sk
ORCID: 0000-0001-8261-9197

Abstract*: The aim of the paper is to examine the current state of tourism development in Croatia and point out the approach of the Croatian government to its sustainability and resilience. Based on indicators of overtourism, we analyse secondary data on the development of tourism in Croatia in 2019-2023. The analysis focuses on the Sustainable Tourism Act, adopted in December 2023 by the Croatian government, which is in line with the goals of the UN Agenda 2030. Croatia will thus become the first country to implement a sustainable tourism policy not only in selected destinations, but at national level. This achievement was also praised by UN Tourism and decided, together with Croatia, to dilute here the Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism to promote innovation and encourage positive change in the tourism sector.*

Key words: Overtourism. Sustainable tourism. Resilience. Sustainable Tourism Act 156/23. Croatia.

Introduction

The Republic of Croatia covers an area of 56,610 km2 and has a population of 3.9 million (2023). It includes four historical countries, namely Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia and Istria. In terms of tourism, the biggest attraction is the Adriatic coast with its Mediterranean climate, attractive beaches, nearby hills and numerous islands, the largest of which are Krk, Cres, Brač, Hvar, Pag and Korčula. The Dinaric Mountains (1800 - 1900 m above sea level) are dominated by cash formations. In ancient cities with a unique atmosphere, there are attractive architectural monuments from different historical periods. The war associated with the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s caused great damage to the country and for some time also dampened tourism. Before the war, Croatia was the second richest and industrially developed republic of Yugoslavia, visited by the most tourists. In the mid-1990s, the situation in the economy and tourism began to improve. In this paper, we will point out the current state of tourism development in Croatia and the government's approach to its sustainability and resilience.

1. Sustainable tourism versus overtourism

In the European Union tourism is an important economic activity, accounting for about 10% of its GDP and having a significant impact on economic growth, employment and social development. In 2023, Europe recorded 700.4 million visitors in international tourism, of which the EU27 accounted for 74.2%. EU policy aims to maintain Europe's position as a leading tourism sub-region and maximise its contribution to economic growth and employment and to cooperation between EU Member States.

Tourism not only has a positive impact on the economy and society but can also have undesirable effects if developed in an uncoordinated manner. If the development of tourism in destinations exceeds the carrying capacity of visitors, an overtourism begins. Effects of overtourism were already visible in the second half of the 20th century, when there was a devastation of natural and cultural resources, which attracts the visitors, at the same time the level of psychological experience of visitors decreased and caused dissatisfaction and even aversion of residents. At that time, Jost Krippendorf (1975, 1986) pointed out the undesirable effects of tourism and demanded that tourism should grow in a sustainable way with positive effects for the stakeholders, i.e. the state (region), natural and cultural resources of tourism, entrepreneurs and investors, residents, employees and visitors.

Overtourism damages not only natural and cultural heritage, but also local infrastructure. It is associated with the use of sharing economy platforms, non-regulation of accommodation establishments, an increase in the amount of garbage, environmental pollution and increased demands on water supplies at destinations. A characteristic feature is high seasonality of demand, commodification, i.e. adaptation of the culture of demand to the expectations of visitors, standardization of the offer and its adaptation to the taste of visitors, loss of authenticity, disrespect for the interests of residents, etc. The opinions of numerous authors on the causes and consequences of overtourism were summarized by Marciš (2021). The main problem of destination is that they do not sufficiently manage the development and effects of tourism.

The future of tourism must be linked to its sustainable development. The boundary between overtourism and sustainable tourism is most often determined by defining the intensity of tourism and regulating it. The intensity of tourism has not only economic, but also environmental, cultural and social consequences, which must be respected by sustainable development.

The authors' approaches to exploring sustainable tourism development are presented by Gajdošíková (2020). Some theorists and practitioners associate sustainable tourism with green, nature, rural tourism, ecotourism, geotourism, agritourism, in Canada and New Zealand with so-called indigenous tourism. Such an approach to the sustainability of tourism is also supported by various eco-labels that support ecological development. However, tourism development applies to all types and forms of tourism, regardless of where they take place.

Initiatives of the UN, UNWTO and the EU are important for the sustainable development of tourism. In the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (1999), UNWTO has already established a framework for the development of tourism in the world, which should contribute to minimizing negative effects on the environment, cultural heritage and at the same time maximizing benefits for residents and destinations. In 2004, it stated that "sustainable tourism takes into account its current and future economic, environmental and social effects, meets the needs of visitors, industry, the environment and residents" (UNWTO, 2004), and thus also defined the three pillars of its sustainable development: economic, environmental and social, and published 768 indicators to measure the sustainability of tourism development in destinations, that apply to all types of destinations. The problem was the availability of statistical data by type of destination to express the necessary indicators.

The policy of sustainable tourism has also become topical in the conditions of the European Union, and in the document Europe 2020 Strategy (EC, 2010). European commission elaborated this strategy as a New Institutional Framework for European Tourism, which aims to: (1) improve the competitiveness of the tourism sector in Europe, (2) promote sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism, (3) strengthen its image, make Europe more visible as a set of sustainable and high-quality destinations, and (4) achieve, that tourism is integrated into EU policies and financial instruments.

In 2015, the UN adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which followed the 1999 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. UNWTO developed the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Tourism (2017) to raise awareness and inspire representatives of the public and private sectors to take act for its sustainable development by 2030. To highlight the role of tourism on the path to sustainable development, it has declared the year 2017 the International Year of Sustainable Tourism. UNWTO and the United Nations Statistical Commission have launched an initiative to statistically track and monitor the sustainable development of tourism in terms of three dimensions about the fulfilment of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The European Commission (EC, 2016) has published a toolkit for sustainable destinations, where it has chosen target management indicators, economic value indicators, social and cultural impacts and environmental impacts as criteria.

The Council of the EU (2022) has also taken the initiative, and in its conclusions on the European Agenda for Tourism 2030, it emphasizes the promotion of a sustainable, innovative and resilient tourism ecosystem, taking into account the effects of economic, cultural and social, environmental sustainability, and calls for: (1) greater transparency in relations between hosts, online platforms and public authorities, (2) the availability of reliable data on short-term accommodation rentals to achieve a balanced ecosystem (3) and its digital and green transitions must be based on the cooperation of stakeholders in all sectors of the public and private sectors at EU, national, regional and local level, while respecting the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. The Council of the EU also links the sustainability of tourism to resilience, i.e. the ability to respond to crisis phenomena (pandemics, energy crises, social changes, etc.) in order to develop strategies and policies to develop strategies and policies to promote resilience, including diversifying tourism products, improving infrastructure, supporting the local economy and community, protecting and preserving natural and cultural heritage, promoting inclusiveness and accessibility.

In 2022, Eurostat, together with the Member States, started working on a set of tourism sustainability indicators that can be compiled from existing official statistics. In this context, UNWTO (2024) has developed the Statistical Framework for Measuring Tourism Sustainability (SF-MST), which builds on a set of indicators that correspond to the policy and management needs of tourism destinations, published in 2004 and covers all dimensions of sustainable development (Table 1).

Table 1 Indicators for measuring the sustainability of tourism

General indicators	
length of stay	- average length of stay of internal tourism
tourism concentration	- number of visitors per 100 residents - number of visitors per hectare of habitable area
tourism visitor dependency	- number of inbound visitors (total/tourist/same day) relative to total internal visitors (total (tourist/someday)
tourism seasonality	- variations in visitor arrivals (total/inbound/tourist/same day) on regular time horizon and in regular frequencies
Economic indicators	
visitor expenditure	- average internal tourism expenditure pre visitor
tourism economic structure	- share of large and SME tourism establishments - share of resident owned tourism establishments relative to all tourism establishments
tourism economic performance	- tourism direct GDP - tourism share of total output for each tourism industry
distribution of economic benefits	- share of compensation of employees relative to tourism direct value added in the tourism industries
employment in the tourism	- total employment in the tourism industries (jobs/employed persons/employees) - share of employed persons in tourism industries relative to total economy

	- share of women in jobs/employed persons/employers in the tourism industries - labour productivity of different tourism industries
tourism investment	- total gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) in tourism specific fixed assets - total GFCF by tourism industries and relative total economy GFCF
government tourism-related transactions	- total tourism related government final consumption expenditure
Environmental indicators	
greenhouse gas emissions	- internal tourism greenhouse gas emissions per visitor - internal tourism greenhouse gas emissions per unit of tourism direct GDP
solid waste flows	- tourism solid waste generated by tourism industries per visitor/tourist - tourism solid waste generated per unit of tourism direct GDP - share of tourism solid waste generated by tourism industries and relative to total solid waste
water flows	- tourism waste use per visitor per visitor overnight - tourism use per unit of tourism value added
wastewater	- tourism wastewater per visitor overnight
water resources	- annual tourism water use by tourism industries as a proportion of the net change in stock of water resources
energy flows	- total tourism end-use of energy products by tourism industries
ecosystem extent (for tourism areas)	- share of tourism-related ecosystem assets to the total tourism area - percentage of protected areas (marine and terrestrial) to total tourism area
Ecosystem service flows for tourism areas	- total recreation-related services in tourism area
Social indicators	
visitor satisfaction	- share of visitors satisfied with overall experience at destination - number of repeat visitors - extent to which visitors would recommend a destination
host community perception	- overall perception of host communities by visitors
decent work	- share of compensation of employed persons relative to tourism direct value added in the tourism industries - share of employed persons in tourism industries who are informally employed
governance	- implementation of standard accounting tools to monitor the economic and environmental aspects of tourism sustainability

Source: SF-MST, 2024, p. 37.

The adoption of this statistical standard by the UN Statistical Commission, following the International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics and the Tourism Satellite Account, will become the third global statistical standard for tourism with universal applicability for stakeholders in all countries. The effort is to create a unified framework for assessing the sustainability of tourism development on an international scale.

In the most visited regions and destinations, overtourism is developing, which on the one hand is a source of income for the state and entrepreneurs, on the other hand a factor of the devastation of natural and cultural heritage, damages local infrastructure, produces garbage, pollutes the environment and places increased demands on water supply (Gúčik, 2022). In many European destinations with overtourism, e.g. in Italian Tyrol, Venice, where a fee for daily visitors - excursionists of 5 euros has been introduced from April 2024.

2. Objective and methodology

The aim of the article is to examine the current state of tourism development in Croatia on the basis of selected indicators and to point out the government's approach to its strategic sustainable development and resilience. We will use secondary data from the Croatian Statistical Office, the National Bank of Croatia, which we will be processed using selected methods of descriptive statistics. The processed data will be expressed by indicators of the density of accommodation capacity of tourism, tourism function (Defert index), tourism intensity and the burden on the territory, which will be used to evaluate the sustainability of tourism development. We will also use information from the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of the Republic of Croatia and the Tourism Act No. 156/23.

3. Tourism in Croatia from 2019 to 2023

In 2013, Croatia became a member of the European Union, since 2023 it has been a member of the Schengen area and has adopted the euro as its domestic currency. This has allowed visitors from the European Union to travel without restrictions, and payments have also been simplified in the Schengen area. Croatia is also a frequent foreign holiday destination for the inhabitants of Slovakia, of which the wealthier on the Adriatic coast own second apartments and yachts, or many temporarily rent real estate. The development of tourism in the years 2019-2023 is captured in Table 2.

Table 2 Basic indicators of tourism in Croatia in 2019-2023

Pointer/Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Index 2023/2019
Tourists in accommodation estab. in 1000	19 566	7 001	12 775	17 776	19 493	0,996
- domestic	2 213	1 456	2 135	2 451	2 638	1,192
- foreign	17 353	5 545	10 641	15 324	16 855	0,971
Foreign tourists in %	88,7	79,2	83,3	86,2	86,5	0,975
Number overnight stays in 1000	91 243	40 794	70 202	90 041	92 377	1,012
- domestic	7 095	5 415	7 354	7 753	8 113	1,143
- foreign	84 148	35 379	62 848	82 288	84 264	1,001
Overnight stays by foreign tourists in %	92,2	86,7	89,5	91,4	91,2	0,989
Average number of overnight stays	4,66	5,83	5,50	5,07	4,74	1,017
- domestic	3,21	3,72	3,44	3,16	3,08	0,960
- foreign	4,85	6,38	5,91	5,37	5,00	1,031

Source: Recalculated based on data from the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2024.

Despite the period of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-2021, tourism in Croatia recovered quickly. While in 2019 Croatia recorded 19.6 million tourists in accommodation establishments, in 2023 it was 19.5 million, i.e. only 0.4% less than in 2019 and 92.4 million overnight stays, which in 2023 already surpassed 2019 by 1.2%, while the number of overnight stays of domestic tourists grew 14.3% faster. Compared to 2022, the number of tourists increased by 9.7% and the number of overnight stays by 10.3%. The average number of overnight stays in 2023 was 4.74 and is 1.7% higher than in 2019, while 5 is the number of overnight stays of foreign tourists, i.e. 3.1% higher than in 2019. According to the European Tourism Commission (ETC), Croatia is among the five countries that in 2023 reached the level of tourism development from 2019 before the Covid-19 pandemic.

The tourism seasonality is high, with up to 83% of overnight stays falling between June and September. This is because the main motive for participation in tourism in Croatia is summer recreation and staying by the sea (Table 3).

Table 3 Number of tourists overnight stays in accommodation establishments in 2023

Month	Overnight stays in 1000	Share in %	Month	Overnight stays in 1000	Share in %
1.	602	0,65	7.	25 043	27,11
2.	651	0,71	8.	26 899	29,12
3.	982	1,06	9.	11 574	12,53
4.	3 041	3,30	10.	3 165	3,43
5.	5 571	6,03	11.	823	0,89
6.	13 185	14,27	12.	839	0,90

Source: Recalculated based on data from the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2024.

In 2023, the share of foreign tourists in accommodation establishments was 86.5%, and the number of overnight stays was similarly high, up to 91.2%. Most tourists came in 2023 from Germany (19%), Slovenia and Austria (9.1% each), the Czechia (5.9%), Italy (4.7%) and the United Kingdom (4.1%). From a regional point of view, the most visited in 2023 were Istria County (4.8 million tourists and 28.1 million overnight stays), Split-Dalmatia County (3.6 million tourists and 17.8 million overnight stays), Primorje-Gorski Kotar County (3.1 million tourists and 15.6 million overnight stays). Of the cities, the cities of Rovinj (4.1 million overnight stays), Dubrovnik (3.8 million overnight stays) and Poreč (3.2 million overnight stays) recorded the most tourists.

The number of foreign visitors also have an impact on revenues from foreign tourism. In 2023, the National Bank of Croatia (Balance of Payments, 2024) recorded revenues from foreign tourism of EUR 15.084 million, with expenditures amounting to EUR 1.769 million. The tourism balance was EUR 13.315 million and tourism accounted for 17.6% of the country's GDP (GDP in 2023 was EUR 75.855 million and per resident there were EUR 19,687). Foreign tourism accounts for up to 73.2% of the export of services, which recorded EUR 5.530 million in revenue.

Tourism in Croatia exceeded expectations in 2023 despite rising costs and rising prices. The growth in the number of visitors (not only overnight-stays tourists) was excessive and is accompanied by exceeding the so-called carrying capacities of destinations, which are an indicator of the acceptable number of visitors and overnight stays in the area and guarantee the economic, environmental and socio-cultural environment.

Overtourism can be expressed by several indicators, such as (1) the density of accommodation capacity of tourism (number of beds per 100 km^2), (2) the tourism function (Defert index), which measures the degree of readiness for the development of residential tourism (the number of beds per 100 residents), (3) the intensity of tourism, which is an indicator of the use of accommodation capacities of tourism (the number of overnight stays per 100 residents), (4) the burden on the area, which expresses the number of visitors (tourists) or overnight stays per km^2. These indicators signal the degree of development of tourism, and it is necessary to monitor their development over time, or to compare destinations with each other. A synthesizing picture of the development of tourism in Croatia is shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Excessive development of tourism in Croatia in 2019-2013

Pointer/Years	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Index 2023/2019
Beds in acomm. estab. In 1000	1 319	1 101	1 164	1 191	1 220	0,925
Number of beds per 100 km^2	2 330	1 945	2 056	2 104	2 155	0,925
Number of beds per 100 residen.	33,5	28,3	30,1	30,9	31,7	0,946
Number of residen. in 1000	3 934	3 893	3 862	3 851	3 851*	0,979
Number of tourists per 100 residents	497	180	331	462	506	1,018
Number of overnight stays per 100 residen.	2 317	1 048	1 818	2 338	2 399	1,035
Number of overnight stay per km^2	1 612	720	1 240	1 591	1 632	1,012

Note: * data taken from 2022.

Source: Recalculated based on data from the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2024.

As of 1 September 2023, 133,200 establishments with 1.22 million beds accounted for tourist accommodation in Croatia, of which 118,500 properties accounted for family pensions, i.e. 89% of all establishments offering accommodation in tourism. It is a phenomenon of short-term rental of private buildings. The large supply of accommodation capacities puts pressure on public infrastructure (transport problems, lack of water, waste production, etc.). The extreme increase in apartment rentals results in congestion of public beaches and their degradation. Not only residents but also visitors complain about the high attendance. The density of tourist accommodation capacity is 2,155 beds per 100 km^2 and there are 31.7 beds per 100 residents in accommodation establishments. In 2023, there were 2,399 overnight stays per 100 residents and 1,632 overnight stays per km^2. There were 506 tourists in accommodation facilities per 100 residents. Excluding the number of beds in accommodation establishments, which decreased by 7.5% compared to 2019, the number of tourists increased by 18% and overnight stays by 35%.

Despite the above development, tourism sector investments recorded more than EUR 400 million in 2023. Fourteen new hotels, three campsites and several other facilities were built in the destinations. A serious problem, as in other countries, Croatia is facing a shortage of skilled workers in the tourism industry. In 2023, 42,000 work permits were issued to foreigners for employment in tourism, which was 10,000 more than in 2022. The tourism sector demands more incentives for employment, tax breaks and better promotion of professions and professions, especially in accommodation and catering establishments, where it is mainly seasonal work.

In 2023, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports announced a public call for co-financing projects that will contribute to increasing the competitiveness of the tourism sector. The programme focuses on the green and digital transitions in the tourism sector, the development of sustainable and the development of innovative environmentally friendly products and services, the improvement of processes in catering establishments, the circular economy and the increase in energy efficiency. The programme also supports projects of travel agencies and cruise ships focused on sustainable tourism activities.

4. Tackling overtourism

The Croatian government has decided, despite the significant economic contribution of tourism to the national economy, to address the problem of overtourism in line with the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the UN and elaborated by the UNWTO on tourism conditions, and has decided to move to a sustainable tourism model to find a balance between quantity and quality. Already at the beginning of 2023, the government approved a strategy for the development of sustainable tourism until 2030. Following this, a new marketing plan for the tourism sector was developed.

The overdevelopment of tourism is to be addressed by the new Tourism Act No. 156/23, which was approved by the Croatian Parliament on December 15, 2023, and entered into force on January 1, 2024. The main objective of the Tourism Act is to create a reliable framework for managing the development of tourism, based on accurate data and knowledge, and thus preserve natural and cultural resources, increase the quality of life of residents in the destinations and increase the competitiveness of the Croatian tourism industry on the global market. For the development of sustainable tourism, the law gives local governments (counties, cities and municipalities) the power and responsibility to strategically manage and possibly limit the amount of new accommodation capacities along the Adriatic coast. This is to reduce the so-called "apartmentization", which has multiplied the problems associated with tourism in many settlements.

Destinations (cities and municipalities) will draw up management plans and review them every four years based on the data collected. Tourism associations, local and regional governments, community members will cooperate in the creation of plans, limiting the number of visitors to individual sites based on the maximum number of tourists and the balance between people and the environment, while respecting the quality of life of residents, and thus also influencing the quality of the visitor experience.

In this context, self-governing bodies have gained the right to limit the number and categories of accommodation facilities in their area of competence and to otherwise regulate the number of organized visitors in destination places and other locations and to decide on the introduction of the so-called environmental tourist fee. Some coastal cities, such as Dubrovnik, are already introducing restrictions that imply an active approach to balanced tourism growth with environmental sustainability and well-being of the community.

Municipalities will base the development of tourism on the calculation of the so-called reception capacity for cities or municipalities. According to the law, it is an obligation for a certain area, coast or islands with a tourism development index of the first and second category, which is, for example, most of the coast, and to determine the reception capacity, i.e. the maximum load that the area can handle. This is important, for example, for calculating the need for water, how much it is needed by residents and how much is needed when there are tourists. By calculating the reception capacity for individual destinations, coasts and islands, a comprehensive picture of the district or tourism area is obtained. Thanks to this, local and regional authorities will be able to plan the development of destinations in the long term, i.e. how much and where commercial and non-commercial accommodation, public infrastructure facilities and other facilities are needed, which they want to support or otherwise regulate. In this way, tourism policy can be directly managed. The Ministry of Tourism and Sports will create a public database of projects that are considered crucial for the development of destinations. These projects will guarantee funding in accordance with the goals of the development of sustainable and responsible tourism. This will ensure an efficient and transparent allocation of resources and support projects that make a meaningful contribution to sustainable tourism.

The law is in line with Croatia's ambitious strategy for the development of sustainable tourism, which is to be implemented by 2030. The alignment is supported by massive funding of EUR 1.3 billion, received from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan and complemented by EU resources, the Tourism Fund and the Croatian state budget.

The Croatian government's approach to sustainable tourism development has also been recognized by the UNWTO (UN Tourism from 1 January 2024) and will establish a research centre for sustainable tourism in cooperation with the Croatian government and the University of Zagreb. The Centre will involve stakeholders from the public and private sectors, academia and civil society to address the most critical issues facing tourism, such as reducing the environmental impact of tourism, renewable energy use and energy activity, accelerating climate change adaptation, social sustainability of local communities, evidence-based policymaking, relevant and up-to-date research, exchange of knowledge and good practices for the sustainable development of tourism.

Conclusion

The aim of the paper was to examine the current state of tourism development in Croatia and point out the government's approach to its strategic sustainable development and resilience. Tourism is of paramount importance in the Croatian economy. The overtourism development has caused the need to manage it with an emphasis on sustainability and effective valorisation of existing resources with regard to its economic, environmental and social importance as well as the country's competitiveness in the global tourism market. In 2023, in line with the Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy by 2030, the Croatian Parliament approved the Tourism Act No. 156/23 and its gradual implementation in practice. Croatia will thus become the first country to implement a sustainable tourism policy not only in selected destinations, but at the national level.

References

[1] Balance of payments, 2024. In *Narodny bank Hrvatske.*

[2] COUNCIL OF THE EU, 2022. *Závery Rady o Európskom programe pre cestovný ruch do roku 2030.* Dokument 14683/22+COR l

[3] EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2010. *Europa 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.* Brussels: COM (2010) 2020. 34 pp.

[4] EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2016. *The European Tourism Indicator System*. ETIS toolkit for sustainable destination management. Luxembourg: Publication Office of the EU. 32 pp. ISBN 978-92-55247-2.

[5] GAJDOŠÍKOVÁ, Z., 2020. *Udržateľný rozvoj cestovného ruchu v horských strediskách*. Banská Bystrica: Belianum. Vydavateľstvo Univerzity Mateja Bela v Banskej Bystrici. 170 pp. ISBN 978-80-557-1709-8.

[6] GÚČIK, M., 2022. Udržateľným cestovným ruchom proti klimatickej hrozbe. In *Ekonomická revue cestovného ruchu*, roč. 55, č. 2, pp. 113-119. ISSN 0139-8660.

[7] KRIPPENDORF, J., 1975. *Die Landschaftsfresser. Tourismus und Erholungslandschft – Verderbern oder Segen?* Bern: Hallwag Verlag. 160 pp. ISBN 3-444-10132-5.

[8] KRIPPENDORF, J., MÜLLER, Hr., APEL, H., 1986. *Alpsegen – Alptraum. Für eine Tourismus-Entwicklung im Enklang mit Mensch und Natur.* Bern: Geographiser Verlag. 88 pp. ISBN 3- 259-06201-7.

[9] MARCIŠ, M., 2021. Nadmerný cestovný ruch: Príčiny, dôsledky a manažérske opatrenia. In *Ekonomická revue cestovného ruchu*, roč. 54, č. 3, pp. 147-157. ISBN 0139-8660.
[10] *Pisane vijesti*. nisterstvo turizma i sporta Republike Hrvatske, 30. 12. 2023.
[11] *Tourism statistics*, 2024. Croatian Bureaus of Statistics.
[12] *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2015. Available on the Internet: www.susstainabledevelopment.un.org
[13] *TuRiznica*. 2023. Available on the Internet: https://eturizam.gov.hr/
[14] UNWTO, 2004. *Indicators of sustainable development for tourism destinations. A guidebook*. Madrid: UNWTO. 507 pp. ISBN 92-844-0726-5.
[15] UNWTO, 2017. *Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals – Journey to 2030*. Madrid: UNWTO. 36 pp. ISBN 978-92-844-1940-1.
[16] UNWTO, 2024. *Statistical Framework for the Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (SF-MST)*. Madrid: UN Tourism. February 2024.
[17] UNWTO, 1999. *Global Code of Ethics for Tourism*. Available on the Internet: www.unwto.org
[18] *Zakon o turizme* NN 156/23.

VÝVOJ LÁZEŇSTVÍ V ČESKÉ REPUBLICE V OBDOBÍ 2007 AŽ 2024

Ľubomír Kmeco
Panevropská univerzita Praha, Fakulta Vysoká škola obchodní
Katedra cestovního ruchu, Česká republika
e-mail: lubomir.kmeco@peuni.cz
ORCID: 0000-0003-0622-0605

Monika Klímová
Panevropská univerzita Praha, Fakulta Vysoká škola obchodní
Katedra cestovního ruchu, Česká republika
e-mail: monika.klimova@peuni.cz
ORCID: 0000-0002-1661-1119

Petra Chaloupková Košlíková
Panevropská univerzita Praha, Fakulta Vysoká škola obchodní
Katedra cestovního ruchu, Česká republika
e-mail: petra.chaloupkova@peuni.cz
ORCID: 0009-0008-8975-0647

Jana Buncová
Vysoká škola ekonomická Praha, Fakulta informatiky a statistiky
Katedra matematiky Česká republika
e-mail: jana.buncova@vse.cz
ORCID: 0009-0007-8834-9539

Abstract*: The aim of the papers is to examine the development of the spa industry in the Czech Republic. We focus our research on selected indicators, which include total number of all patients, methods of payment for spa care, most common disease indications for adult patients in the period from 2007 to 2022. The material is data from the Health Statistics of the Czech Republic from 2007 to 2022. We analyse the data using regression analysis (regression line). To characterize the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the development of the spa industry in the Czech Republic we only use data up to 2019 in the regression analysis. We predict the development of the spa industry for the years 2020 to 2024 and compare it with the real data. However, the real official data have been published only up to 2022 as far as now and so the data for 2023 and 2024 represent just predicted data which cannot be compared with the real data. Within our research, we have found out that the development of the spa industry in the Czech Republic generally has a downward trend in almost all investigated indicators, i.e. total number of all patients, complex spa care, subsidized spa care, patients with respiratory system diseases. The only indicators with an increasing trend are the number of domestic and foreign self-payers and the number of patients with musculoskeletal diseases. The Covid-19 pandemic caused change of trends and deviations from the development trend in some indicators. Developments in 2023 and 2024 will be subject to future investigation.*

Key words: Spa industry. Development of spa indicators. Regression analysis.

Úvod

Současná západní civilizace je vystavena různým negativním společenským trendům, jako je stárnutí obyvatel (Loh, 2015; Huang and Xu, 2014), rychlý nezdravý životní styl obyvatel apod. Tyto skutečnosti jsou úzce propojené s rozvojem různých nemocí a zdravotních problémů obyvatel. Péče o zdraví přitom představuje jednu ze základních hodnot civilizace (Gúčik, 2015). Je to jeden z důvodů, proč nabývá na významu zdravotní cestovní ruch, kterého nedílnou součástí je lázeňský cestovní ruch. Zdravotní cestovní ruch je forma cestovního ruchu směřující především do lázní a dalších rekreačních center, u níž hlavní motivací účasti je zlepšování zdravotního stavu návštěvníků (Zelenka a Pásková, 2012). Zdravotní cestovní ruch se člení na zdravotní turismus, wellness turismus a lázeňský turismus (Vaníček a Hilšerová, 2020) nebo na lázeňský léčebný cestovní ruch, wellness cestovní ruch, rekreační cestovní ruch a cestovní ruch za zdravotními výkony (Benešová a Kruisová, 2015).

Lázeňský cestovní ruch v České republice se tradičně těší velké oblibě a celospolečenskému uznání. Mezi hlavní přednosti českého lázeňství patří dlouholetá tradice, vysoká odborná zdravotní péče a kvalita přírodních léčivých zdrojů, v důsledku kterých roste poptávka po lázeňských službách doma i v zahraničí. Uznávanými klíčovými faktory poptávky po zdravotním cestovním ruchu ve světě jsou takové faktory, které jsou v českém prostředí běžnou realitou, jako je např. profesionální úroveň a kvalita zdravotnického zařízení, vztah personálu ke klientům, přírodní prostředí destinace, cena služeb, pověst zdravotnických zařízení a lékařů v nich pracujících (Liu, 2022), vysoká úroveň diagnostiky zdravotního stavu pacientů (Dogan, 2023) apod.

V období let 2020 až 2021 bylo lázeňství zasaženo celosvětovou pandemií Covid-19. Situace v lázeňství se zejména v prvních měsících pandemie dramaticky měnila ze dne na den, z týdne na týden. Vydávala se různá omezení, zákazy přijímání nových pacientů do lázní apod. (Ministerstvo zdravotnictví ČR, 2020, 2021). Všechna tato opatření měla za následek velký úbytek hostů v českých lázních.

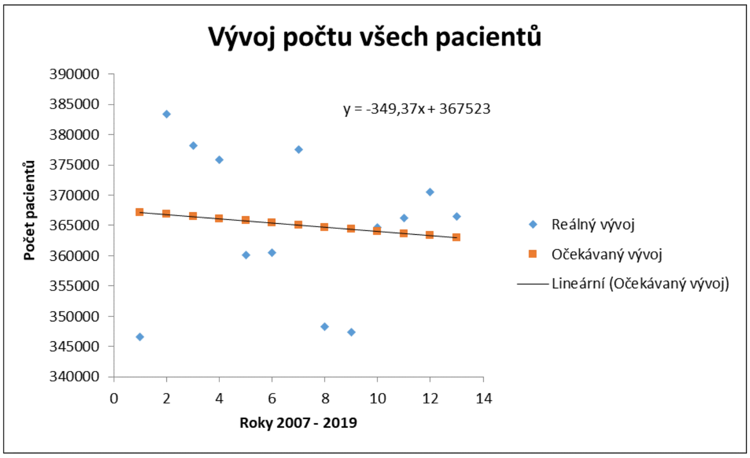
Cílem studie je poukázat na vývoj lázeňské péče v České republice za období let 2007 až 2022 ve vybraných ukazatelích. Je zkoumán i vliv pandemie Covid-19 na trendy vývoje lázeňství. V příspěvku je predikován pomocí regresní analýzy i budoucí vývoj českého lázeňství.

1. Materiál a metodika

Materiálem jsou data, která publikoval Ústav zdravotnických informací a statistiky ČR (ÚZIS) v období 2007 až 2022. Zaměřujeme se na vybrané ukazovatele poptávky po lázeňských službách (celkový počet pacientů, způsob úhrady lázeňské péče, nejčastější indikace u dospělých pacientů – nemoci pohybového ústrojí, a nemoci dýchacího ústrojí, protože pandemie byla primárně respirační onemocnění). Data jsou analyzována a jejich vývoj je zkoumán pomocí modelování s využitím regresní analýzy (regresní přímka) a indexů vývoje. Metoda regresní analýzy umožňuje predikovat vývoj vybraných ukazatelů bez vlivu pandemie Covid-19. Predikovaná data jsou pak komparována s reálnými daty. Při zkoumání vlivu Covid-19 v regresní analýze je abstrahováno od období let 2020 až 2022. Posledním rokem, se kterým je při modelování vývoje lázeňství pracováno, je rok 2019. Metoda regrese umožnila předpovědět očekávaný vývoj vybraných ukazatelů v letech následujících po propuknutí pandemie Covid-19 v prosinci 2019.

2. Výsledky

Vývoj počtu všech pacientů. Regresní přímka vývoje počtu všech pacientů celkem (dospělí, dorost, děti), kteří čerpali všechny typy lázeňské péče (komplexní lázeňské péče, příspěvková lázeňská péče, domácí i zahraniční samoplátci) ve zkoumaném období 2007 až 2019 je uvedena na obrázku 1.



Obrázek 1 Vývoj počtu všech pacientů v období 2007 až 2019
Zdroj: Vlastní zpracování podle ÚZIS Lázeňská péče 2007 až 2019.

Pomocí regresní přímky byl vypočítán očekávaný vývoj pro roky 2020 až 2024. Výsledky byly komparovány s reálným vývojem (tabulka 1). Největší pokles (-45,87 %) byl zaznamenán v pandemickém roce 2020. V následujících letech se situace začala zlepšovat, i když byl pořád zaznamenaný pokles reálného počtu pacientů v porovnání s očekávaným stavem.

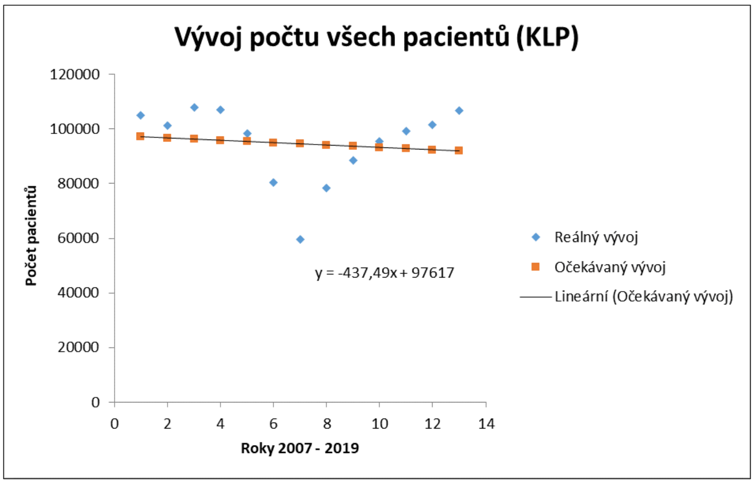
Tabulka 1. Komparace vývoje počtu všech pacientů

Rok	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Očekávaný stav (bez vlivu Covid-19)	362632	362282	361933	361584	361234
Reální stav (s vlivem Covid-19)	196307	219916	261283	-	-
Rozdíl	-166325	-142366	-100650	-	-
Rozdíl v %	-45,87	-39,30	-27,81	-	-

Zdroj: Vlastní zpracování podle ÚZIS Lázeňská péče 2007 až 2022.

Lázeňská péče podle způsobu úhrady. Lázeňská péče byla zkoumána z pohledu všech způsobů úhrady nákladů spojených s pobytem v lázních, tedy komplexní lázeňskou péči, příspěvkovou lázeňskou péči, péči samoplátců tuzemců a péči zahraničních samoplátců. Výsledky zkoumání jsou uvedeny v obrázcích a tabulkách 2 až 5.

Komplexní lázeňská péče (KLP). Trend vývoje počtu všech pacientů KLP je mírně klesající (obrázek 2).



Obrázek 2. Vývoj počtu všech pacientů čerpajících komplexní lázeňskou péči v období 2007 až 2019
Zdroj: Vlastní zpracování podle ÚZIS Lázeňská péče 2007 až 2019.

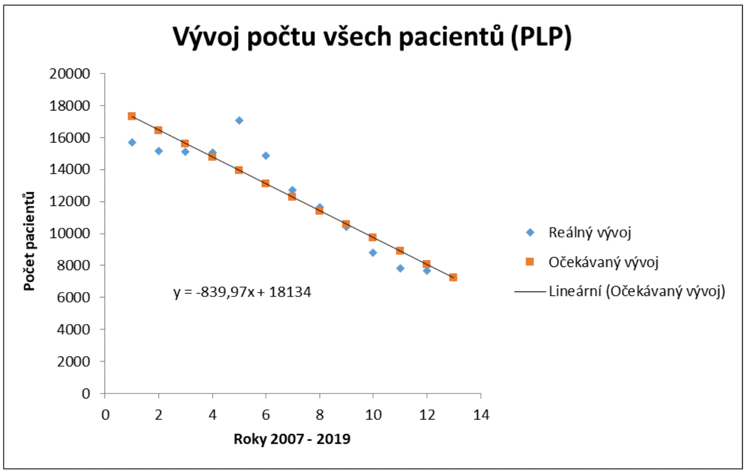
Výsledky komparace očekávaného a reálného stavu vývoje komplexní lázeňské péče obsahuje tabulka 2. V pandemických letech 2020 a 2021 nastal pokles pacientů KLP. Až v roce 2022 došlo k většímu nárůstu počtu pacientů, než jsme předpověděli regresní analýzou.

Tabulka 2 Komparace vývoje počtu všech pacientů čerpajících komplexní lázeňskou péči

Rok	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Očekávaný stav (bez vlivu Covid-19)	91492	91055	90617	90180	89742
Reální stav (s vlivem Covid-19)	78058	79432	106589	-	-
Rozdíl	-13434	-11623	15972	-	-
Rozdíl v %	-14,68	-12,76	17,63	-	-

Zdroj: Vlastní zpracování podle ÚZIS Lázeňská péče 2007 až 2022.

Příspěvková lázeňská péče (PLP). Trend vývoje příspěvkové lázeňské péče vykazuje větší pokles, než je tomu u komplexní lázeňské péče. Tento trend je znázorněn na obrázku 3.



Obrázek 3 Vývoj počtu všech pacientů čerpajících příspěvkovou lázeňskou péči v období 2007 až 2019
Zdroj: Vlastní zpracování podle ÚZIS Lázeňská péče 2007 až 2019.

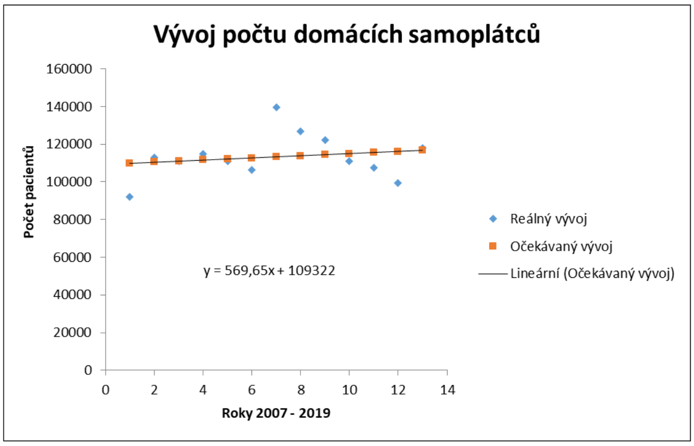
Výsledky komparace počtu všech pacientů čerpajících příspěvkovou lázeňskou péči získané metodou regresní analýzy uvádí tabulka 3. Největší pokles počtu pacientů nastal v pandemickém roce 2020 (-33,95 %). Až v roce 2022 přijelo do lázní o 3,24 % více pacientů, než se předpokládalo.

Tabulka 3 Komparace vývoje počtu všech pacientů čerpajících příspěvkovou lázeňskou péči.

Rok	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Očekávaný stav (bez vlivu Covid-19)	6374	5534	4694	3855	3015
Reální stav (s vlivem Covid-19)	4210	4072	4846	-	-
Rozdíl	-2164	-1462	152	-	-
Rozdíl v %	-33,95	-26,42	3,24	-	-

Zdroj: Vlastní zpracování podle ÚZIS Lázeňská péče 2007 až 2022.

Domácí samoplátci. Zjistili jsme, že trend vývoje počtu všech domácích samoplátců v období let 2007 až 2019 byl mírně rostoucí. Tento trend je znázorněn na obrázku 4.



Obrázek 4 Vývoj počtu všech domácích samoplátců v období 2007 až 2019
Zdroj: Vlastní zpracování podle ÚZIS Lázeňská péče 2007 až 2019.

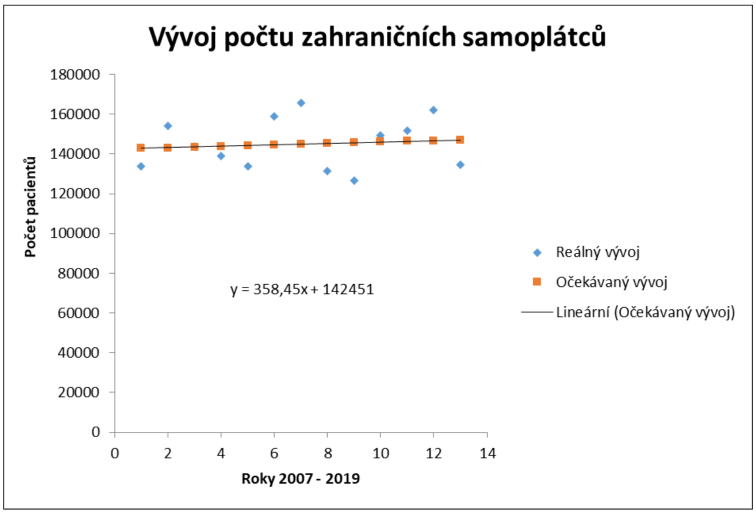
Výsledky regresní analýzy a jejich komparaci s reálným stavem tohoto ukazovatele jsou prezentovány v tabulce 4. Ve všech po-pandemických letech do lázní přijelo méně samoplátců, než se očekávalo. Největší pokles byl zaznamenán v roce 2020 (-35,89 %).

Tabulka 4. Komparace vývoje počtu všech domácích samoplátců

Rok	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Očekávaný stav (bez vlivu Covid-19)	117297	117867	118436	119006	119576
Reální stav (s vlivem Covid-19)	75204	105676	83589	-	-
Rozdíl	-42093	-12191	-34847	-	-
Rozdíl v %	-35,89	-10,34	-29,42	-	-

Zdroj: Vlastní zpracování podle ÚZIS Lázeňská péče 2007 až 2022.

Zahraniční samoplátci. Trend vývoje počtu zahraničních samoplátců je podobný trendu vývoje domácích samoplátců. I v tomto případě je zaznamenán mírný trend růstu (obrázek 5).



Obrázek 5 Vývoj počtu všech zahraničních samoplátců v období 2007 až 2019
Zdroj: Vlastní zpracování podle ÚZIS Lázeňská péče 2007 až 2019.

Výsledky komparace očekávaného a reálného vývoje jsou uvedeny v tabulce 5. U tohoto ukazovatele došlo k největšímu poklesu ze všech sledovaných ukazovatelů. Největší pokles jsme zjistili v roce 2021 (-79,21 %).

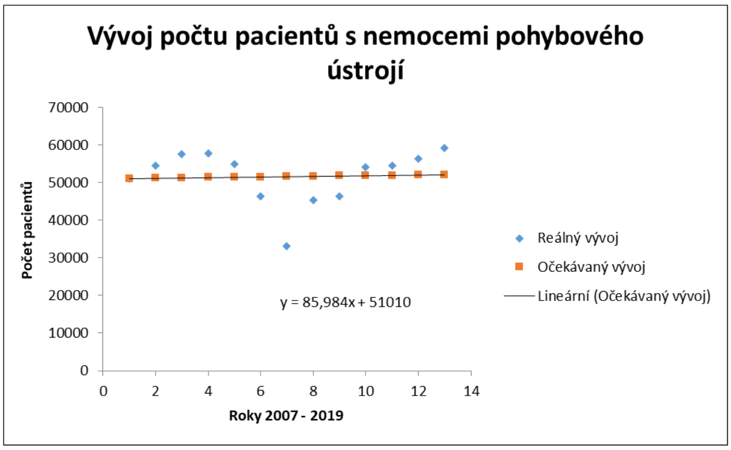
Tabulka 5 Komparace vývoje počtu všech zahraničních samoplátců

Rok	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Očekávaný stav (bez vlivu Covid-19)	147483	147828	148186	148545	148903
Reální stav (vliv Covid-19)	38835	30736	66259	-	-
Rozdíl	-108648	-117092	-81927	-	-
Rozdíl v %	-73,67	-79,21	-55,29	-	-

Zdroj: Vlastní zpracování podle ÚZIS Lázeňská péče 2007 až 2022.

Nejčastěji léčené indikace u dospělých pacientů. K nejčastěji léčeným indikacím nemocí u dospělých pacientů patří nemoci pohybového ústrojí, nemoci nervové, nemoci oběhového ústrojí a nemoci dýchacího ústrojí. Z těchto nemocí jsme se zaměřili na nemoci pohybového ústrojí, které si v lázních každým rokem léčí nejvíce dospělých pacientů a nemoci dýchacího ústrojí, protože pandemie Covid-19 zasáhla právě dýchací ústrojí. U těchto indikací byla využita metoda regresní analýzy pro odhalení vlivu Covid-19 na jejich vývojový trend. Výsledky výzkumu jsou uvedeny v obrázcích a tabulkách 6 a 7.

Nemoci pohybového ústrojí. Trend vývoje počtu pacientů s nemocemi pohybového ústrojí vykazuje velice mírný růst. Tento trend je znázorněn na obrázku 6.



Obrázek 6 Vývoj počtu pacientů s nemocemi pohybového ústrojí v období 2007 až 2019
Zdroj: Vlastní zpracování podle ÚZIS Lázeňská péče 2007 až 2019.

Výsledky získané regresní analýzou pro roky 2020 až 2024 jsou komparovány s reálnými výsledky z let 2020 až 2022 (tabulka 6). Největší pokles byl v roce 2021 (-23,05 %). Až v roce 2022 přijelo do lázní o 14,17 % pacientů více, než se očekávalo.

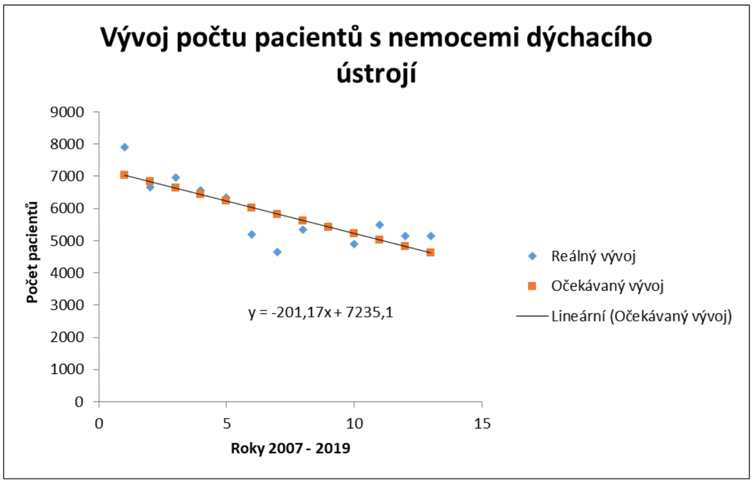
Tabulka 6 Komparace vývoje počtu pacientů s nemocemi pohybového ústrojí

Rok	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Očekávaný stav (bez vlivu Covid-19)	52214	52300	52386	52472	52558
Reální stav (s vlivem Covid-19)	42949	40247	59811	-	-
Rozdíl	-9265	-12053	7425	-	-
Rozdíl v %	-17,74	-23,05	14,17	-	-

Zdroj: Vlastní zpracování podle ÚZIS Lázeňská péče 2007 až 2022.

Nemoci dýchacího ústrojí. Trend vývoje počtu pacientů trpících nemocemi dýchacího ústrojí je, na rozdíl od nemocí pohybového ústrojí, klesající. Tento trend je znázorněn na obrázku 7.

Komparaci očekávaného a reálného stavu vývoje počtu pacientů s nemocemi dýchacího ústrojí jsou uvedeny v tabulce 7. Pandemie Covid-19 způsobila nárůst počtu pacientů s těmito nemocemi v roce 2021 o 103,51 % a v roce 2022 o 54,17 % ve srovnání s očekávaným stavem, který jsme vypočetli pomocí regresní analýzy. V prvním pandemickém roce (2020) byl pokles reálného počtu pacientů ve srovnání s očekávaným stavem o 26,45 %.



Obrázek 7 Vývoj počtu pacientů s nemocemi dýchacího ústrojí v období 2007 až 2019
Zdroj: Vlastní zpracování podle ÚZIS Lázeňská péče 2007 až 2019.

Tabulka7 Komparace vývoje počtu pacientů s nemocemi dýchacího ústrojí

Rok	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Očekávaný stav (bez vlivu Covid-19)	4419	4218	4016	3815	3614
Reální stav (s vlivem Covid-19)	3250	8583	6192	-	-
Rozdíl	-1169	4365	2176	-	-
Rozdíl v %	-26,45	103,51	54,17	-	-

Zdroj: Vlastní zpracování podle ÚZIS Lázeňská péče 2007 až 2022.

3. Diskuse

Počet všech pacientů čerpajících lázeňskou péči. Regresní analýzou bylo zjištěno, že pandemie ovlivnila významným způsobem počty všech pacientů. Oproti očekávaným počtům pacientů, v roce 2020 to bylo 362 632, ve skutečnosti přijelo do českých lázní jenom 196 307 pacientů (-45,87 %) (ÚZIS, 2021), v roce 2021 místo 362 282 se v lázních léčilo jenom 219 916 pacientů (-39,30 %) (ÚZIS, 2022) a v roce 2022 místo 361 933 se v lázních léčilo jenom 261 283 pacientů (-27,81 %) (ÚZIS, 2023).

Lázeňská péče z hlediska úhrady nákladů. Na základě zpracování dat regresní analýzou jsme zjistili, že v důsledku pandemie komplexní lázeňská péče klesla v roce 2020 o 14,68 %, protože místo očekávaných 91 492, ve skutečnosti přijelo do lázní jenom 78 058 pacientů (ÚZIS, 2021). Pokles byl zaznamenán i v dalším pandemickém roce, a to 2021 (-12,76 %), protože do lázní přijelo místo očekávaných 91 055, jenom 79 432 pacientů (ÚZIS, 2022). Pozitivní obrat ve vývoji komplexní lázeňské péče nastal až v roce 2022, kdy došlo k nárůstu o 17,63 %, protože místo očekávaných 90 617, přijelo na léčebný pobyt do lázní 106 589 pacientů (ÚZIS, 2023). V případě příspěvkové lázeňské péče byl propad v důsledku pandemie větší, v roce 2020 se v lázních léčilo místo očekávaných 6 374 jenom 4 210 pacientů (ÚZIS, 2021), co představovalo pokles o -33,95 %. V následujícím roce 2021 se pokles snížil na -26,42 %, protože místo očekávaných 5 534 přijelo do lázní 4 072 pacientů (ÚZIS, 2022). Pozitivní obrat nastal v roce 2022, kdy se místo očekávaných 4 694 léčilo v lázních 4 846 pacientů (ÚZIS, 2023), co představuje nárůst o 3,24 %. U domácích samoplátců byl pokles v důsledku pandemie Covid-19 poměrně velký. V roce 2020 se místo očekávaných 117 297, do lázní přijelo léčit jenom 75 204 pacientů (-35,89 %) (ÚZIS, 2021). V roce 2021 se očekával počet 117 867 domácích samoplátců, ve skutečnosti jich bylo jenom 105 676 (-10,34 %) (ÚZIS, 2022). Ani v následujícím roce nedošlo k pozitivnímu vývoji, protože pokles oproti očekávanému stavu byl až o -29,42 %. Největší propad ze všech zkoumaných ukazatelů v celém sledovaném období v důsledku pandemie Covid-19 byl v kategorii zahraniční samoplátci. V roce 2020 místo očekávaných 147 483 přijelo do lázní jenom 38 835 (-73,67 %) zahraničních samoplátců (ÚZIS, 2021). Pro lázně byl ještě horší rok 2021, místo očekávaných 147 828 přijelo ze zahraničí jenom 30 736 samoplátcích pacientů (-79,21 %) (ÚZIS, 2022). I v dalším roce 2022, ve kterém už pandemie Covid-19 nehrála ve společnosti tak významnou roli, do českých lázní přijelo o 55,29 % méně zahraničních samoplátců, než se očekávalo.

Lázeňská péče z hlediska nejčastějších indikací dospělých pacientů. Ke čtyřem nejčastěji léčeným indikacím dospělých pacientů v celém sledovaném období patří nemoci pohybového ústrojí, nemoci nervové, oběhového a dýchacího ústrojí. Z těchto indikací jsme zkoumali jenom dvě skupiny, a to nejčastější indikaci (nemoci pohybového ústrojí) a indikaci nemoci dýchacího ústrojí, protože pandemie Covid-19 byla primárně respiračním onemocněním.

Výsledky regresní analýzy jsou v případě vývoje indikací nemocí zajímavé, protože u nemocí pohybového aparátu pandemie Covid-19 v letech 2020 a 2021 způsobila pokles v desítkách procent; v případě nemocí dýchacího ústrojí došlo k významnému nárůstu až v letech 2021 a 2022. Výsledky regresní analýzy pro rok 2020 předpověděli 52 214 pacientů s nemocemi pohybového ústrojí, kteří se měli léčit v lázních. Realitou však bylo jenom 42 949 pacientů (ÚZIS, 2021), tzn., že do lázní si přijelo léčit svoje nemoci pohybového ústrojí o 9 265 (-17,74 %) pacientů méně. V následujícím roce, a to 2021 byla situace ještě nepříznivější, protože do lázní přijelo místo očekávaných 52 300 jenom 40 247 pacientů (ÚZIS, 2022), co představovalo méně o 12 053 (-23,05 %) pacientů. V roce 2022 se situace s léčbou nemocí pohybového aparátu zlepšila, místo očekávaných 52 386 pacientů přijelo do lázní 59 811 pacientů (ÚZIS, 2023), což představovalo o 7 425 (14,17 %) pacientů více, než jsme předpověděli pomocí regresní analýzy. U nemocí dýchacího ústrojí výsledky regresní analýzy předpokládaly postupný pokles počtu pacientů, ale situace byla jiná. Pokles nastal jenom v roce 2020, protože místo očekávaných 4 419 pacientů se do lázní přijelo léčit 3 250 pacientů (ÚZIS, 2023), co představovalo pokles o 1 169 pacientů (-26,45 %). Od roku 2021 zaznamenáváme nárůst v porovnání s výsledky regresní analýzy. V roce 2021 se do lázní přijelo léčit s nemocemi dýchacího ústrojí 8 583 (ÚZIS, 2022) místo očekávaných 4 218 pacientů, což představuje nárůst o 103,51 %. V následujícím roce se rozdíl mezi předpokládaným a reálným stavem počtu pacientů zmenšil, místo očekávaných 4 016 přijelo do lázní 6 192 pacientů (ÚZIS, 2023), co bylo o 54,17 % více, než nastínili výsledky regrese.

Závěr

Cílem studie bylo prozkoumat vývoj lázeňství v České republice se zaměřením se na vybrané ukazovatele (počet všech pacientů, počet dospělých pacientů, způsob úhrady nákladů na lázeňskou péči, nejčastější indikace léčených nemocí u dospělých pacientů – nemoci pohybového ústrojí, a nemoci dýchacího ústrojí, které Covid-19 vyvolával). Vývoj lázeňství byl zkoumán pomocí regresní analýzy (regresní přímka), absolutními a relativními početnostmi. Materiálem, s nímž bylo pracováno, byla data získaná ze Zdravotnické statistiky České republiky. Zkoumáno bylo období let 2007 až 2022. Pro odhalení vlivu celosvětové pandemie Covid-19 na vývoj českého lázeňství, byla v regresní analýze abstrahována data od pandemických let; posledním rokem, který vstupoval do regresní analýzy, byl rok 2019. Regresní analýza posloužila i pro predikování vývoje vybraných ukazatelů pro roky 2023 a 2024. Bylo zjištěno, že vývoj lázeňství v České republice do pandemie a pro některé ukazatele i po ní, měl ve všeobecnosti klesající trend (počet všech pacientů, počet dospělých pacientů, komplexní i příspěvková lázeňská péče, nemoci dýchacího ústrojí). Jenom vývoj počtu domácích samoplátců, zahraničních samoplátců, počet pacientů s nemocemi pohybového ústrojí vykazoval mírný trend růstu. Klesající trend počtu pacientů KLP a PLP v českých lázních by mohli lázeňské podniky zmírňovat zejména nabídkou zajímavých produktů pro další dvě cílové skupiny pacientů, a to samoplátců ze zahraničí a z České republiky ve větší míře, než tomu bylo doposud. Tyto dvě skupiny totižto vykazují trend růstu. Možná by bylo vhodné pro české lázně najít trhové mezery na silně konkurenčním mezinárodním trhu a vhodnou nabídkou lázeňských produktů přilákat do České republiky zahraniční samoplátce. Zápis tří nejvýznamnějších českých lázní, a to Karlových Varů, Mariánských Lázní a Františkových Lázní do Seznamu UNESCO, ke kterému došlo v roce 2021, by tomu mohl pomoci.

Pandemie Covid-19 „zamíchala karty“ v českém lázeňství a způsobila v některých případech mimořádně velké odchylky od trendu vývoje; prohloubila zejména propad vývoje počtu zahraničních a domácích samoplátců, ale i počet všech pacientů, pacientů čerpajících komplexní i příspěvkovou lázeňskou péči a počet pacientů léčených na nemoci pohybového ústrojí. Naopak, pandemie způsobila nárůst počtu pacientů s nemocemi dýchacího ústrojí, protože koronavirus vážně postihoval primárně dýchací ústrojí člověka. V prvním pandemickém roce (2020) docházelo v celé společnosti k poměrně nekontrolovanému a překotnému vývoji, lázeňství nevyjímajíc. Nevýhodou bylo, že pandemická situace byla zcela nová a nikdo nevěděl, jak na ni okamžitě reagovat. Státní orgány přijímaly během krátké doby velké množství různých opatření, vydávali se směrnice upravující a omezující poskytování lázeňských služeb apod. To vše mělo za následek velký propad sledovaných ukazatelů zejména v prvním roce pandemie. Z tohoto, pro celou společnost těžkého období vzešla alespoň výhoda a ponaučení pro budoucnost, jak reagovat na podobné krize a jaká opatření je potřeba přijímat na minimalizaci škod.

Regresní analýza umožnila předpovědět vývoj vybraných ukazatelů i pro následující období a proto v budoucnosti bude zaměřen výzkum autorů příspěvku i na to, do jaké míry korelují naše předpovědi vývoje s realitou.

Literární zdroje

[1] BENEŠOVÁ, P., KRUISOVÁ, H., 2015. *Zdravotně orientovaný cestovní ruch*. Praha: Idea servis.

[2] DOGAN, O., 2023. *Global perspectives on the Opportunities and Future Directions of health Tourism.* Antalya: IGI Gloval.

[3] GÚČIK, M., 2015. Zdravotný cestovný ruch ako vývojový trend – závery z konferencie. *Ekonomická revue cestovného ruchu*, 48(2), s. 117-119.

[4] HUANG, L. A., XU, H. B., 2014. A Cultural Perspective of Health and Wellness Tourism in China. *Journal of China Tourism Research*, 10(4), s. 493-510.

[5] LOH, C. P. A., 2015. Trends and structural shifts in health tourism: Evidence from seasonal time-series data on health-related travel spending by Canada during 1970 – 2010. *Social Science and Medicine*, 132, s. 173-180. Doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.03.036

[6] MINISTERSTVO ZDRAVOTNICTVÍ ČESKÉ REPUBLIKY, 2020. *Mimořádné opatření.* [vid. 1. dubna 2024]. Dostupné na intrnetu: https://www.mzcr.cz/.pdf

[7] MINISTERSTVO ZDRAVOTNICTVÍ ČESKÉ REPUBLIKY, 2021. *Covid Portál*, 2021. [vid. 1. dubna 2022]. Dostupné na internetu: https://covid.gov.cz/situace/zdravotnicka-socialni-zarizeni/lazne

[8] Ústav zdravotnických informací a statistiky ČR. (2021). *Lázeňská péče 2020*. Dostupné na internetu: https://www.uzis.cz/res/f/008366/lazne2020.pdf

[9] Ústav zdravotnických informací a statistiky ČR. (2022). *Lázeňská péče 2021*. Dostupné na internetu: https://www.uzis.cz/res/f/008413/lazne2021.pdf

[10] Ústav zdravotnických informací a statistiky ČR. (2023). *Lázeňská péče 2022*. Dostupné na internetu: https://www.uzis.cz/res/f/008446/lazne2022.pdf

[11] Tripartita. (2020). Pandemie Covid-19 zcela ochromila také lázeňství. *OS zdravotnictví a sociální péče ČR, Bulletin 4/2020*. Dostupné na internetu: https://www.tripartita.cz/pandemie-covid-19-zcela-ochromila-take-lazenstvi/

[12] VANÍČEK, J., HILŠEROVÁ, M., 2020. *Zdravotní, lázeňský a wellnes turismus.* Praha: Oeconomia.

[13] ZELENKA, J., PÁSKOVÁ, M., 2012. *Výkladový slovník cestovního ruchu.* Praha: Linde.

THE WIELICZKA SALT MINE AS A FLAGSHIP ATTRACTION OF INDUSTRIAL TOURISM AND AN UNDERGROUND HEALTH RESORT

Zygmunt Kruczek
Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego w Krakowie
Wydział Turystyki i Rekreacji, Instytut Turystyki, Poland
e-mail: zygmunt.kruczek@awf.krakow.pl
ORCID: 0000-0003-3015-2139

Karolina Nowak
Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego w Krakowie
Wydział Turystyki i Rekreacji, Instytut Turystyki, Poland
e-mail: karolina.nowak@doctoral. awf.krakow.pl
ORCID: 0000-0002-7251-0638

***Abstract**: The Wieliczka Salt Mine has been in operation for over 700 years and is the most recognizable and most frequently visited technical heritage site. The underground tourist route is a professional product dedicated to people interested in industrial heritage. In 1978, the mine was included on the UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage List, with a tourist attendance of 1.5 million in 2023. As far as the Wieliczka salt mine is concerned, it can be said to be both a flagship attraction due to the number of tourists visiting, as well as a cult attraction due to its educational, historical and cultural importance. Since 2011, the second function of the mine has been to provide health resort services, including the treatment of pulmonary and allergic diseases. The aim of the work is to present these two tourist functions, namely the assessment of the volume and structure of tourist traffic and the assessment of the quality of health resort services provided. The qualitative health resort research concerns various aspects of stays in the underground resort and was conducted using the diagnostic survey method. The results show that the Wieliczka salt mine health resort offers services that meet or exceed the expectations of a decided majority of clients. A 90% satisfaction rate shows that the services are well suited to the needs of patients and maintain a high standard. Most respondents, as many as 91%, declared that they would recommend the health resort's services.*

Key words: Wieliczka Salt Mine. Attractions. Spa.

Introduction

The Wieliczka salt mine is among the most well-known tourist attractions in the world, but at the same time is a complex tourist product. The beginnings of the salt mine stretch back to the second half of the 13th century, leaving to one side the traces of salt working from around 5,000 years ago. The activity of dozens of generations of Polish miners shaped an underground world unrivalled in its beauty and extraordinary in size. The mine is unique on a world scale and includes richly decorated underground chapels, original salt mining passageways and chambers, as well as old machinery and mining equipment. In 1978, the mine was included by UNESCO on the World Cultural and Natural Heritage List. For many years it has fulfilled a dual function – salt was extracted here, while at the same time part of the chambers were made available to visitors. Today the mine is mainly a tourist site attracting almost 2 million tourists every year, as well as a unique underground health resort.

The aim of the paper is to present the two functions of the Wieliczka salt mine – the tourist function and health resort function. The Wieliczka salt mine can be treated both as a tourist attraction, a complex tourist product, and a unique underground health resort. The quality of the product depends mainly on the value of the attraction itself as the core of the benefits in the structure of the tourist product. The measure of the value of the attraction is the strength of its ability to attract tourists. The paper presents the size and structure of the tourist traffic received in the mine and its economic importance. In terms of the health resort function meanwhile, an overview of this function is shown as well as its current situation. Based on research conducted among health resort patients using the diagnostic survey method, an evaluation is presented of the quality of the health resort services provided in the underground health resort.

1. Wieliczka Salt Mine as a flagship attraction of industrial tourism

Tourist attractions are a key element of the tourism sector as they stimulate interest in travelling to a destination and are a magnet attracting tourists to a region, while at the same time increasing the demand for other tourist services. Tourist attractions play a huge role in shaping the geography of tourist traffic and enable cities and regions to be identified as well as defining their identity and image (Kruczek, 2011). The variation in the meaning and importance of tourist attractions is of great importance in the planning and development of tourist regions. Flagship attractions are treated as a tool for economic development or as catalysts for revitalization, and can engender social and economic change, as well as impacting the quality of life of inhabitants. Cult attractions (icons) are sites considered to be representative as cultural symbols worthy of admiration. In tourism, these are considered to be authentic elements, and their perception makes it possible to build the image of an attraction as an icon. They are identified as universally recognized symbols and are perceived as such by both tourists and the local community.

One problem here is the imprecise differentiation in the definitions of these two types of attractions (Leask and Fyall, 2006). The terms are often used interchangeably. A flagship attraction is understood to be 'the best and the most important'. It is attributed such features as uniqueness, international importance, large size and considerable economic effects.

As far as the Wieliczka salt mine is concerned, it can be said to be both a flagship attraction due to the number of tourists visiting, as well as a cult attraction due to its educational, historical and cultural importance (Kruczek and Szromek, 2011, p. 96).

The rich history of the place, its educational and cultural importance and its unique atmosphere are just some of the features that go together to complete the description of the tourist importance of this attraction (Krupa and Dec, 2014). The beginnings of the salt mine stretch back to the second half of the 13th century, leaving to one side the traces of salt working from around 5,000 years ago. The activity of dozens of generations of Polish miners shaped an underground world unrivalled in its beauty and extraordinary in size. The mine is unique on a world scale and includes richly decorated underground chapels, original salt mining passageways and chambers, as well as old machinery and mining equipment. The mine was included by UNESCO on the first World Cultural and Natural Heritage List (D'obyrn and Rajchel 2015).

The mine is well prepared for receiving guests and is open for tourists daily for 12 hours. Visitors are welcomed by professionally trained staff speaking several languages. Around 300 qualified guides work in the mine, providing tours for tourists in more than a dozen languages. Every year events are organized in the mine both on a regional and national scale, as well as of world reach, attracting thousands of tourists, for example the International Minerals, Fossils and Jewellery Fair.

In addition, the mine offers tourists a wide range of services, i.e. organising conferences, concerts, masses for groups of pilgrims, wedding ceremonies and banquets. New Year's Eve balls and High School proms are also held here. It is possible to use the underground tennis court and the hall for team sports. What is more, the mine offers the possibility to purchase specialist guide services that include visiting areas outside the tourist route. In newly accessible chambers, there is a multimedia museum presenting inaccessible sections of the mine (the Crystal Grotto inanimate nature reserve), while new tourist products are continually being added, for example the ‘New adventure route’ for adrenaline seekers.

The attraction functioning under the name Wieliczka salt mine consists of three enterprises:

- The Saltworks Museum (exhibitions in the mine passageways and in the Saltworks Castle on the surface),
- ‘PPU Wieliczka’ health resort,
- Trasa Turystyczna Spółka z o.o.

The measure of the popularity of the attraction and its importance for tourism is the number of visitors, which in 2019 exceeded 2 million (Figure 1). The Covid-19 pandemic caused a considerable drop in tourist traffic. In 2023, 1.5 million people visited the mine, but due to the war in Ukraine the numbers did not yet reach the level from before the pandemic (Kruczek, Nowak, 2023). Tourist numbers were dominated again by guests from abroad, who came from 198 countries and constituted 57% of all visitors (866,000 people).

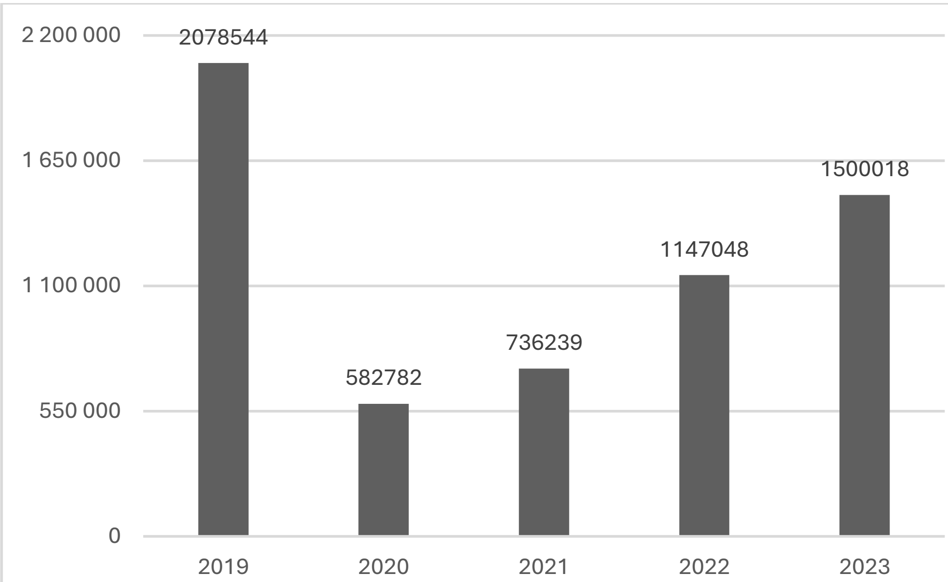


Figure 1 Visitor numbers to the tourist route and the Saltworks Museum in the years 2019 – 2023

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the report Kruczek Z., Nowak K., 2023.

Visitors to the mine most frequently organized their visits themselves, with as many as 64% of visitors being individual tourists. In 2023, the 45th anniversary of the mine being entered onto the UNESCO list was celebrated, while since the end of the Second World War, a total of 50 million tourists had visited the mine.

2. Wieliczka Salt Mine as an underground health resort

The Wieliczka salt mine health resort is one of the oldest and most famous brine resorts in Poland. Its origins date back to the 16th and 17th centuries, when the beneficial health properties of Wieliczka salt were first mentioned. One of the most important moments in the development of treatment at the health resort was in 1838 when, on the initiative of Dr Feliks Boczkowski, the first bath house was founded in the town, principally for the treatment of bronchial asthma and rheumatic diseases (Mirek, 2016). In 1843, he published the work 'On the natural history, annals and bath houses of Wieliczka' (*O Wieliczce pod względem historyi naturalnej, dziejów i kąpieli)*, in which he presented the health benefits resulting from periods spent in the salt chambers. This was because the mine doctor believe the opinion that the microclimate underground could be effective in treating respiratory tract diseases (Boczkowski, 1843).

The first official underground health resort in the mine chambers was founded by M. Skulimowski in 1958. In the 1960s and 1970s, the health resort underwent intensive modernization. The existing salt chambers were expanded and provided with modern medical equipment. New treatment chambers were also opened, such as the Wessel and Staszic chambers (Skulimowski, 1968).

The recognition of Wieliczka brine as healing waters in 2012 was significant. At this time, there was continuous development of the infrastructure. The complex was expanded to include two new chambers in addition to those already in existence, creating a modern health resort which currently offers a wide range of therapies based on the unique properties of the brine and the microclimate in the mine.

The principal treatment provided in the Wieliczka salt mine health resort is subterraneotherapy, that is treatment in underground mineworks. The creator of the term subterraneotherapy was M. Skulimowski, who, inspired by the observations of Feliks Boczkowski, began large-scale clinical research in 1958 that aimed to determine the impact of staying in salt chambers on human physiology and pathology (Mirek, 2016).

Currently, the Wieliczka salt mine health resort is one of the most modern and most well-renowned health resort facilities in Poland. It offers a wide range of services, including rehabilitation, preventative health and wellness programmes.

The Wieliczka salt mine health resort specializes in treating diseases of the respiratory tract, allergies and asthma, as well as dermatological and rheumatic diseases. The therapy is based on using the microclimate in the salt chambers, which is characterized by high humidity, a stable temperature and a high concentration of salt and minerals in the air. The principal treatment methods include salt inhalations, brine baths, and stays in the salt chambers.

Stays in the salt chambers constitute therapy based on the specific microclimate in the mine. Salt chambers feature a stable temperature (around 13 to 14° C), high humidity and air saturated with salt particles. Stays in salt chambers help in the treatment of respiratory tract diseases, strengthen the immune system, and improve general overall health. The salt therapy known as halotherapy consists of breathing in microscopic particles of salt, which are introduced into the air in special halotherapy chambers. Halotherapy is effective in the treatment of respiratory tract diseases, allergies and skin problems.

The health resort offers various balneotherapy treatments, such as mineral water baths, water jet therapy and showers. Volunteer therapy helps in the treatment of skin diseases, rheumatic diseases and circulatory problems.

The health resort offers a wide range of physiotherapy services, including rehabilitation exercises, massages, electrotherapy, laser therapy and ultrasound. The specialist rehabilitation programmes are tailored to the individual needs of patients, helping in the treatment of motor system diseases, rheumatic diseases and sports injuries.

The Wieliczka salt mine health resort also offers various health and wellness programmes, which include package stays with comprehensive health, dietary and relaxation programmes. Patients can seek dietary advice and participate in detox programmes, as well as sessions of yoga, pilates and other forms of physical activity that support a healthy lifestyle.

The health resort also conducts educational activity, organizing lectures, workshops and training sessions in health and disease prevention. The aim of this activity is to raise health awareness among patients and to promote a healthy lifestyle.

3.Opinions on the quality of health services offered at the Wieliczka salt mine

Nowadays, services constitute and increasingly dominant, broad and diversified sector of the economy (Panasiuk, 2007). Despite the complexity and diversification of this sector, attempts have been undertaken to define services. One of the most successful concepts was presented by Kotler (2005), who defined a service as any activity that one party may offer another, wherein such activity is intangible and does not lead to any form of property, and in which the production may but does not have to be related to a physical product. In health resorts, alongside accommodation, gastronomical and recreational services, the most important are health services (also called medical services), which include all types of treatment, rehabilitation and preventative activity (Hadzik, 2011).

One such activity are health resort rehabilitation services, which in recent years in Europe have become to experience a certain renaissance, influenced mainly by an increase in health awareness and aging populations. Today, it is important to provide high quality health services, and therefore it is not only important to evaluate the quality of the services themselves, but also their importance in the ‘eyes’ of health resort clients (Hadzik and Zamojcin, 2014; O’cathain at al., 2008).

Opinions on the quality of health services were obtained through interviews using a structured questionnaire and conducted among 200 clients using Wieliczka salt mine health resort services as part of the National Health Service. The interviews were conducted in 2023. This diagnostic survey is part of a broader research project on the quality of health services.

Table 1 Characteristics of research participants

Gender	N=200	In %
Female	112	56
Male	88	44
Age		
Under 18 years	0	0
From 19 to 30 years	15	7.5
From 31 to 50 years	65	32.5
From 51 to 65 years	61	30.5
Above 65 years	59	29.5

Source: Own elaboration.

Among the respondents, there was a slight predomination of women (56%), while the age groups that stood out in terms of numbers were people aged from 31 to 50 years (32.5%) and from 51 to 65 years (30.5%). Almost 30% were seniors above 65 years of age (Table 1).

Table 2 presents the opinions of respondents regarding the level of the services provided. Respondents could select options on a five-point scale, assigning the services from a very high to a very low level.

Tabe 2 Assessment of health resort services in the opinion of clients

Quality of services	N=200	In %
Services at a very high level	98	49
Services at a high level	82	41
Hard to assess the level of services	8	4
Services at a low level	8	4
Services at a very low level	4	2

Source: Own elaboration.

As many as 90% of clients assessed the level of services as very high (49%) or high (41%). This indicates the domination of positive experiences among most patients. However, 4% of respondents, that is 8 people, were not able to clearly determine their level of satisfaction with services. This suggests that there is a certain group of clients who may need more information or time to develop an opinion. Meanwhile 12 clients (6%) assessed the level of services as low or very low.

The results show that the Wieliczka salt mine health resort offers services that meet or exceed the expectations of a decided majority of clients. A 90% satisfaction rate shows that the services are well suited to the needs of patients and maintain a high standard.

In terms of the 4% of the clients who are unable to determine their level of satisfaction, it is recommended that the benefits and details of the services on offer be better communicated. This may be key to transforming this group into satisfied clients, on condition that they are provided with additional information. While it is true that only 6% of respondents assessed the services negatively, this does indicate areas requiring improvement. Detailed analysis of the reasons for their dissatisfaction may help in identifying specific problems and in implementing corrective actions.

Table 3 presents respondents' answers to the question regarding recommendation of the health resort's services. Most respondents, as many as 91%, declared that they would recommend the health resort's services, while only three people (2.5%) stated that they would not recommend them.

Table 3 Assessment of health resort services in the opinion of clients

Likelihood of recommending the health resort	N=200	In %
I will definitely recommend it	182	91
I will probably recommend it	8	4
I don't know if I will recommend it	5	2.5
I won't recommend it	4	2
I definitely won't recommend it	1	0.5

Source: Own elaboration.

Conclusion

The Wieliczka salt mine, which has been in operation for over 700 years, is the most recognisable and most frequently visited technical heritage site in Poland, fulfilling the criteria of a flagship tourist attraction. The principal tourist product, that is the unique underground tourist route, is dedicated to people interested in industrial heritage, but tourists of all types are found among total visitors. The mine found international renown when it was entered into the UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage List in 1978, which has translated into a high level of tourist numbers and the domination of foreign visitors.

In addition to the underground tourist route in the complex functioning under the name ‘Wieliczka Salt Mine’ there is also the Saltworks Museum with an underground mining exhibition and a museum exhibition in the Saltworks Castle, as well as an underground health resort.

The Wieliczka salt mine health resort is an example of a successful combination of tradition and modernity. Its rich history and unique treatment conditions make it an exceptional place on the map of health resorts in Poland. Thanks to continuous development and innovation, the health resort in Wieliczka still attracts patients from around the world, offering them effective therapy and an improvement in their quality of life. This research shows that the health resort services offered by the Wieliczka salt mine are very highly assessed by most clients. Most clients also declared that they would recommend the Wieliczka health resort’s services to others. The care taken to ensure the high standard of services as well as the response to negative opinions will allow the health resort to continue developing and ensure that client satisfaction is maintained at a high level.

References

[1] D’OBYRN, K, RAJCHEL, L., 2015. Balneoterapeutyczne wykorzystanie solanek w uzdrowisku Kopalnia Soli „Wieliczka”, *Przegląd Geologiczny*, vol. 63, nr 10/2, p. 981.

[2] BOCZKOWSKI , F., 1843. *O Wieliczce pod względem historyi naturalnej, dziejów i kąpieli,* Bochnia.

[3] HADZIK, A., ZAMOJCIN, R., 2014. Ocena ważności usług turystki zdrowotnej na przykładzie badań gości statutowego uzdrowiska Iwonicz-Zdrój. *Rola uzdrowisk i przedsiębiorstw uzdrowiskowych w turystyce i w lecznictwie uzdrowiskowym,* A. R. Szromek (red.). Kraków, Proksenia, pp. 249 – 268.

[4] HADZIK, A.,2011. *Turystyka i rekreacja uzdrowiskowa*. Katowice, AWF, 2011.

[5] KOTLER, P., 2005. *Marketing*. Poznań: Dom Wydawniczy Rebis.

[6] KRUCZEK Z., 2011. *Atrakcje turystyczne. Fenomen. Typologia. Metody badań*. Kraków, Prokksenia, 192 pp.

[7] KRUCZEK Z., NOWAK K., 2023a. Attendance at tourist attractions in 2022, Polish Tourism Organisation, Warsaw 2023. Available at: https://www.pot.gov.pl/attachments/article/1804/Raport%20Frekwencja%20w%20atrakcjach%20turystycznych%20w%202022.pdf)

[8] KRUCZEK Z., NOWAK K., 2023b. *Frekwencja w atrakcjach turystycznych*, Polska Organizacja Turystyczna, Warszawa-Kraków. Available at: https://www.pot.gov.pl/attachments/article/1804/Raport%20Frekwencja%20w%20atrakcjach%20turystycznych%20w%202022.pdf

[9] KRUCZEK Z., SZROMEK A., 2011. Wykorzystanie modelu R.W. Butlera w interpretacji rozwoju atrakcji turystycznej na przykładzie Kopalni Soli w Wieliczce. *Folia Turistica*, 25(2).

[10] KRUPA, J., DEC B., 2014. Atrakcyjność turystyczna i uzdrowiskowa kopalni soli w Polsce, *Turystyka i Rekreacja*, Tom 11, nr 2, pp. 121-131.

[11] LEASK, A., FYALL, A., 2006. Researching the Management of Visitor Attractions: International Comparative Studies. *Tourism Recreation Research*, Vol. 31, No. 2, pp. 23–32.

[12] O’CATHAIN, A., MURPHY, E., NICHOLL, J., 2008. The Quality of Mixed Methods Studies in Health Services Research. *Journal of Health Services Research & Policy,* 13(2):92-98. doi:10.1258/jhsrp.2007.007074

[13] MIREK, J., 2016. Analiza ruchu turystycznego realizowanego w Uzdrowisku Kopalnia Soli Wieliczka w ramach turystyki zdrowotnej. *Ruch turystyczny,* red. B. Meyer, Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, *Ekonomiczne Problemy Turystyki*, Szczecin, pp. 223 – 236, DOI: 10.18276/ept.2016.3.35-18
[14] PANASIUK, A., 2007. *Jakość usług turystycznych*. Warszawa: PWN.
[15] SKULIMOWSKI, M., 1968. The microclimatic effect of the subterranean Chambers of the salt mine of Wieliczka in the treatment of bronchial astma, *Annals of Allergy*, Volume 26, pp. 66-69.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF INDIVIDUAL RECREATIONAL BUILDINGS, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM USING POLISH SOLUTIONS AS AN EXAMPLE

Joanna Smarż
Wydział Prawa i Administracji, Uniwersytet Radomski im. Kazimierza Pułaskiego w Radomiu
Poland
e-mail: j.smarz@urad.edu.pl
ORCID: 0000-0002-2450-8162

Abstract: *Recently, there has been a notable and dynamic growth in tourism and recreational development, coinciding with the construction of individual recreational buildings that amplify tourist activity. This trend has been significantly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and the widespread adoption of remote work, leading to increased interest in properties outside urban centres, particularly recreational properties. In this paper, legal changes in building law will be analyzed. The study aims to facilitate the construction of individual recreational buildings, which could positively impact tourism development by increasing the attractiveness of new regions where such facilities will be built. Currently, most individual recreational buildings are constructed in attractive regions of Poland, characterized by beautiful landscapes, proximity to nature, and access to various forms of active recreation. This is particularly true for regions such as Warmia and Masuria, Podhale and the Tatra Mountains, Pomerania and Kashubia, the Bieszczady and Beskid Mountains, the Sudetes, and coastal areas like the Baltic coast. The effect of the discussed amendment could be a shift in this trend, benefiting the development of tourism.*

Key words: Tourism. Individual recreation building. Construction law.

Introduction

Recently, there has been a dynamic growth in the field of tourism and recreation. This growth is related, for example, to the construction of individual recreation buildings, which enables the intensification of tourist trips. The Covid-19 pandemic and the spread of remote work have had a significant impact on this situation. This increased interest in properties located outside city centres, including recreational properties (Wodka, 2023).

The intensification of recreational development can have a positive impact on the development of tourism by increasing the attractiveness of the region and balancing the seasonality of leisure. Many regions experience a sharp increase in the number of tourists only at certain times of the year. The construction of individual recreation buildings allows for tourist trips throughout the year, which has a positive impact on the local community and economy. The above trend is reinforced by the facilitation of the construction of individual recreation buildings in Poland, which result from the provisions of the Act of 7 July 1994 - Construction Law (Dz. U. z 2023, poz. 682).

The article aims to demonstrate the positive impact of the intensification of the construction of individual recreation buildings on the development of tourism through the example of legal solutions in force in Poland. The work will use dogmatic and legal methods.

1.Basic principles of investment implementation

Following the principle resulting from Article 28(1) of the Construction Law, construction works can only be commenced based on a decision on a building permit. This provision, while defining the adjectival rule, at the same time introduces exceptions to it, regulated fully in Articles 29-31. The cited provisions indicate what type of construction and construction works are exempt from the obligation to obtain a building permit, or they are also exempt from the obligation to submit a notification.

A building permit is an administrative decision issued by an architectural and construction administration body, under which the investor is granted the right to perform specific construction works (Niewiadomski et al., 2024). This is related to the legal definition of the term "building permit" contained in Article 3(12) of the Construction Law. Following the above, this term should be understood as an administrative decision permitting the commencement and conduct of construction or the performance of construction works other than the construction of a building. Therefore, a building permit is required not only for the construction of a new building but also for the extension of an existing structure (II SA/Rz 134/19), as well as its reconstruction (II OSK 1383/22).

Although Article 28 provides only for the commencement of construction works, taking into account the above-mentioned definition of a building permit, it should be recognized that the legislator requires that not only the "commencement" but also the "conduct" of construction works take place based on a decision on the issuance of a building permit (Niewiadomski et al., 2024).

Prior inspection by the architectural and construction administration authority is aimed at protecting the interests of third parties who may be affected by the planned investment. Therefore, the purpose of the proceedings for the issuance of a building permit is to examine the compliance of the planned investment not only with the applicable regulations but also with the interests of entities whose rights may be infringed by the planned investment (II SA/Kr 1474/22).

The issuance of an administrative decision serves to protect constitutional values, including the freedoms and rights of others. The above objective justifies not only the control of a public authority concerning an investment and construction project but also its interference with the rights of entities holding titles to develop the land property by its development. Third parties have the right to protection against possible nuisances related to the implementation of a construction project (Smarż, 2020).

The decision on the building permit is also an instrument for the protection of architectural and spatial order, the provision of which is an important public interest. This is an important guarantee of the protection not only of the rights of third parties but also of the public interest (P 2/98; VIII SA/Wa 951/21). The regulations setting out the rules for the implementation of construction projects require the protection of values related to the public interest, such as protection of the safety of citizens, national heritage, protection of the natural environment, public order, and architectural and spatial order (Smarż, 2016).

2. Simplified form of investment implementation

However, the legislator does not require a formalized procedure to issue a building permit in every case. The obligation to obtain such a decision applies only to the construction of facilities, the construction of which may have an impact on the sphere of broadly understood social interest (Jędrzejewski, 1995). Therefore, the legislator considers it advisable to subject the construction of such structures to prior inspection by architectural and construction administration authorities. In this way, the building permit is an important, although not the only manifestation of legal regulation of the investor's intentions under the Construction Law (Kucharski, 2020).

Many investments and construction works can be carried out based on a notification made under Article 30 of the Construction Law. However, this applies only to the cases enumerated in Articles 29 and 30, the catalogue of which is constantly expanded as part of subsequent amendments to the Act.

The notification is simplified form of administrative regulation of the construction process. It applies to less complex investments that do not require as much attention from the competent authority as investments requiring a building permit (II OSK 197/05).

In the case of a notification, as in the case of issuing a building permit, the architectural and construction administration authority checks the compliance of the notification with the applicable law. The location of the building and the intended date of commencement of construction are also evaluated. The investor should submit the notification before the date of the intended commencement of construction works (Kafar, 2022). Therefore, the authority's inspection will also be prior, i.e. before the planned construction works are commenced.

The simplified procedure means that if the authority considers the notification to be lawful, it "remains silent" about it, leaving it without further proceedings, only making an appropriate annotation in the case files. In such a case, the expiry of the 21 days provided for a possible objection, results in the applicant acquiring the right to implement the planned construction project. On the other hand, filing an objection will mean that the authority does not consent to proceed with the implementation of the investment (VII SA/Wa 1437/19).

Sometimes the authority may, and sometimes is even obliged, to issue a decision on objection, which it should do in the situations specified in Article 30(6) of the Construction Law. According to this provision, the architectural and construction administration authority raises an objection if: the notification concerns the construction or performance of construction works subject to the obligation to obtain a building permit; the construction or performance of construction works covered by the notification violates the provisions of the local spatial development plan, the decision on development conditions, other acts of local law or other regulations; the application concerns the construction of a temporary structure in the place where such a structure exists; The construction works were commenced without prior notification.

By filing such an objection, the authority may also impose an obligation to obtain a building permit concerning a specific structure or construction works, if their performance could result in a violation of the provisions of the local plan or threaten the safety of people or property, or introduce, consolidate or increase restrictions or nuisances for neighbouring areas (Article 30(7) of the Construction Law). The application of a simplified procedure for the construction and execution of works does not preclude their verification in terms of environmental impact or the protection of monuments.

Notification of construction is undoubtedly an effective solution in relation to construction projects of a less complicated nature and negligible impact on the surroundings and neighboring property. Because of the above, the implementation of most of the plans listed in Article 29 of the Construction Law requires prior notification. This means that the legislator subjects them to administrative regulation, but of a slightly "weaker" nature than in the case of a building permit. This is because the notification is not granted by way of an administrative act, but by tacit consent of the authority.

The separation of the catalogue of projects exempts from the obligation to obtain a building permit is a manifestation of the legislator's appropriate approach in grading the administrative regulation of the right to develop real estate, following the principle of proportionality (Niewiadomski et al., 2024).

3.Simplified rules for the construction of individual recreation buildings

As it has already been indicated, in Article 29 of the Construction Law, the legislator has defined a closed list of cases constituting an exception to the rule under Article 28(1) of the Construction Law, according to which the commencement and conduct of construction works is permissible only based on a decision on a building permit.

This exception does not mean, however, that the investment plans indicated in this provision are associated with their complete exclusion from the control of architectural and construction administration authorities. In the case of investments and construction works enumerated in this provision, the legislator requires a notification.

The catalogue of construction sites exempts from the obligation to obtain a permit also includes individual recreation buildings. As follows from Article 29(1)(16) of the Construction Law, their construction does not require a building permit, but it does require a notification if they meet the conditions set out in this provision. It follows from the disposition of this provision that the investor, on simplified terms, may construct free-standing single-story buildings for individual recreation, which are understood as buildings intended for periodic recreation, with a built-up area:

a) up to 35 m²,
b) over 35 m², but not more than 70 m², with a span of structural elements up to 6 m and a cantilever outreach of up to 2 m

- whereby the number of these buildings on the plot cannot be more than one for every 500 m² of the plot area.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that, in such cases, obtaining a decision on development conditions is not required, which warrants critical assessment. This could lead to increased recreational development in areas with valuable natural assets, potentially impacting the principle of sustainable development. One must trust that, in such instances, the authority will raise an objection.

When analysing this regulation, it should be remembered that this is an exception to the rule that conditions the commencement of construction works on obtaining a building permit. Therefore, the interpretation of the conditions for the construction of the indicated individual recreation buildings must be made using a restrictive interpretation. Therefore, both their purpose, the parameters of the indicated objects, as well as their number on the plot should be considered.

The recreational purpose of individual recreation buildings is the same as their purpose, specified in the definition of this type of buildings, contained in § 3 point 7 of the Regulation of the Minister of Infrastructure of 12. April 2002 on the conditions of technical standards such as buildings and their location should be appropriate (Dz. U. z 2022, poz. 1225) (Golat, 2021). Following the above, this term should be understood as a building intended for periodic recreation. Therefore, *a contrarian*, it should be considered that an individual recreation building is not a residential building (II SA/Po 857/18).

The above-mentioned definition of an individual recreation building shows that for a facility to be classified as such a building, it must meet three conditions:

1) it must be a building,
2) it must be intended for rest,
3) the rest should be periodic (Wodka, 2023).

The indicated periodicity of rest will be the basis for assessing whether a given facility fulfils the purpose of leisure or is used for residential purposes. In addition to the purpose of the holiday, it is also important that it is temporary, i.e. lasts for some time. The basic function of summer housing is the possibility of periodic rest, not living in it. Staying in a summer house is only an additional and independent purpose of such a building, functionally related to leisure (II SA/Bk 221/22).

It should also be noted that summer housing, implemented in the form of an individual recreation building, differs from residential development in technical terms (II SA/Kr 273/18). Therefore, the temporality of the object is objective and is evidenced by elements such as the structure, technologies, and materials used (II OSK 2549/18).

From the name of such facilities ("individual recreation building"), it can also be interpreted that it is a building intended for the rest of its owner and his family (II SA/Gd 243/17; II SA/Gd 7/21). Such facilities should therefore not be intended for an indefinite group of entities, including hotel services (II SA/Go 252/22).

The construction of free-standing, one-story individual recreation buildings, intended for periodic recreation, referred to in Article 29(1)(16) of the Construction Law, requires notification of construction works (Sypnicki, 2021).

Such a notification is a deformalized procedure allowing for faster commencement of the planned construction works.

First, the investor submitting the notification may proceed with the construction works if the architectural and construction administration authority has not objected within 21 days from the date of delivery of the notification. This is a significant acceleration of the proceedings because the decision on the building permit is issued by the authority no later than 65 days from the date of submission of the application. Also, the requirements for the notification application are lower than for the application for a building permit. The difference is, m.in, that the investor does not have to submit a construction project. The commencement of construction works should take place before the end of 3 years, counting from the date specified in the notification. If the construction does not start within the above-mentioned period, it will be necessary to submit a new notification (Wodka, 2023).

4.Construction of individual recreation buildings to support tourism

Although the construction of individual recreation buildings is to be carried out exclusively for the use of their owner and his family, the construction of such facilities can have a positive impact on the development of tourism.

The highest dynamics in the construction of individual recreational buildings are observed in attractive regions of Poland, characterized by beautiful landscapes, access to lakes, and various forms of active recreation and tourist attractions (Ozimek, Gralak, Pomianek, 2019). In Poland, such regions undoubtedly include Warmia and Masuria, Podhale and the Tatra Mountains, Pomerania and Kashubia, the Bieszczady Mountains and the Beskid Mountains, the Sudetes, and coastal areas such as the Baltic coast (Kozak, 2006).

However, it should be noted that the facilitation measures provided by the Construction Law have the potential to increase interest in constructing individual recreational buildings in previously undiscovered locations for tourists. This could enhance the attractiveness of the region where such facilities are built. As a result, the region may become more appealing to tourists, who might be more inclined to invest in their own properties in these areas.

The construction of recreational buildings in smaller, previously little-known towns can contribute to their revitalization through tourism. New facilities generate demand for local services such as restaurants, shops, and tourist services, which in turn stimulates the local economy and creates jobs (Januszewska, Nawrocka, 2015). The significance of tourism development is evident not only in its capacity to generate new jobs and improve the quality of life for local communities but also in enhancing the competitiveness of regions (Witek, 2013).

Recreational buildings, especially those designed with respect for local architecture and traditions, can become symbols of local identity. Therefore, the specific characteristics of a given place should be shaped to ensure they are preserved and developed (Łuczak, Leśniak, 2021). Creating and maintaining such facilities according to local patterns allows the community to nurture its culture and heritage and present them to tourists, encouraging them to explore the region.

Individual recreation buildings can also serve as starting points for exploring local attractions, such as national parks, hiking trails, monuments, or local festivals. By promoting these attractions to guests, recreational facilities can contribute to their discovery and appreciation by a wider audience. In this way, individual recreation buildings can serve as educational centres, where tourists can learn more about local history, culture, nature, or environmental protection.

Conclusion

The construction of individual recreation buildings, which has recently gained momentum, can contribute to the development of tourism on many levels, both economic, social, and environmental. Therefore, it is an important element of the tourism development strategy for many regions, not only in Poland but also in the world.

They are becoming an integral part of the life of local communities and tourist regions, contributing to both their economic and cultural development. Their role therefore extends beyond the function of providing accommodation, becoming an important factor in shaping the tourism experience and supporting sustainable development.

The development of this type of construction is fostered by the provisions of the Construction Law, which provides for simplified procedures for the construction of such facilities, which should be assessed positively. Instead of a formalized procedure for obtaining a building permit, the legislator only requires notification of their construction. Introduced changes should be assessed positively.

However, the exclusion of individual recreational buildings with a built-up area of up to 35 m² from the requirement to obtain a decision on development conditions should be critically assessed. This exemption could lead to increased recreational development in areas with valuable natural assets, which should ideally remain undisturbed by construction. It is to be hoped, however, that the relevant authorities will raise objections in such cases.

References

[1] GOLAT, R., 2021. Nieruchomości „letniskowe" – uwarunkowania systemowe. *Nieruchomości*, nr 6, p. 3.

[2] JANUSZEWSKA M., NAWROCKA, E., 2015. Wpływ turystyki na rozwój lokalny. In *Gospodarka turystyczna w regionie. Przedsiębiorstwo. Samorząd. Współpraca, No. 379.*

[3] JĘDRZEJEWSKI, S., 1995. *Proces budowlany – zagadnienia administracyjno-prawne.* Bydgoszcz, p. 78.

[4] KAFAR, D., 2022. Pozwolenie na budowę, zgłoszenie lub brak formalności – zasady korzystania z art. 29 i 30 PrBud. D. Kafar, J., Kornecki, K., Sielicki, M., Stachal, K., Szocik: *Prawo budowlane elektronizacja procesu budowlanego*. Legalis el.

[5] KOZAK, M. W., 2006. Konkurencyjność turystyczna polskich regionów. In. *Studia Regionalne i Lokalne* Nop. 3(25), p. 55.

[6] KUCHARSKI, K., 2020. Ochrona prawna interesu indywidualnego w procesie inwestycyjno-budowlanym dróg publicznych w Polsce. In *Zagadnienia administracyjnoprawne*, Legalis el.

[7] ŁUCZAK K., LEŚNIAK A. 2021. Tożsamość miejsca w kontekście architektonicznym. In *Przestrzeń Urbanistyka Architektur*, No. 1, p. 87.

[8] NIEWIADOMSKI, Z., ASMAN, T., DESSOULAVY-ŚLIWIŃSKI, J., JANISZEWSKA-KUROPATWA, E., KUCHARSKI, K., PLUCIŃSKA-FILIPOWICZ, A., SIEGIEŃ, J., 2024. In *Prawo budowlane. Komentarz*, Legalis el., komentarz do art. 28 i 29.

[9] OZIMEK, I., GRALAK, K., POMIANEK, I. 2019. *Atrakcyjność turystyczna województw w Polsce – wybrane aspekty*. Warszawa, p. 31.

[10] SMARŻ, J., 2016. Pozwolenie na budowę jako wyraz troski o dobro wspólne. *Służąc dobru Wspólnemu*, red. K. Kułak-Krzysiak, J. Parchomiuk. Lublin, pp. 251-266.

[11] SMARŻ, J., 2020. Poszanowanie uzasadnionych interesów osób trzecich na etapie projektowania inwestycji. In *Prawo i więź*, No. 33, pp. 141-156.

[12] SYPNICKI, A., 2021. Budowa domów rekreacji indywidualnej a zasada zrównoważonego rozwoju. In *Radca Prawny*, No. 4, p. 95.

[13] WITEK, J., 2013. Turystyka jako determinanta rozwoju gospodarczego regionu. wybrane aspekty In *Handel Wewnętrzny*, No. specjalny

[14] WODKA, A., 2003. Zakup nieruchomości rekreacyjnych - kilka uwag na temat problematyki prawnej domków letniskowych, cz. I. *Nieruchomości*, No. 7, p. 4.

[15] WODKA, A., 2023. Zakup nieruchomości rekreacyjnych - kilka uwag na temat problematyki prawnej domków letniskowych, cz. II. *Nieruchomości*, No 7, p. 15.

Case law

[1] Judgment of the Constitutional Tribunal of 12 January 1999, P 2/98, Legalis No. 43175.

[2] Judgment of the Supreme Administrative Court of 17 November 2005, II OSK 197/05, LEX No. 196647.

[3] Judgment of the Provincial Administrative Court in Gdańsk of 5 July 2017, II SA/Gd 243/17, Legalis No. 1653053.

[4] Judgment of the Provincial Administrative Court in Kraków of 7 May 2018, II SA/Kr 273/18, Legalis No. 1776973.

[5] Judgment of the Provincial Administrative Court in Poznań of 31 January 2019, II SA/Po 857/18, Legalis No. 1880180.

[6] Judgment of the Provincial Administrative Court in Warsaw of 16 October 2019, VII SA/Wa 1437/19, Legalis No. 2520021.

[7] Judgment of the Provincial Administrative Court in Rzeszów of 8 January 2020, II SA/Rz 134/19, Legalis No. 2288840.

[8] Judgment of the Provincial Administrative Court in Gdańsk of 12 May 2021, II SA/Gd 7/21, Legalis No. 2581128.

[9] Judgment of the Supreme Administrative Court of 27 May 2021, II OSK 2549/18, Legalis No. 2593111.

[10] Judgment of the Provincial Administrative Court in Warsaw of 24 February 2022, VIII SA/Wa 951/21, Legalis No. 2786821.

[11] Judgment of the Provincial Administrative Court in Białystok of 12 July 2022, II SA/Bk 221/22, Legalis No. 2742280.

[12] Judgment of the Provincial Administrative Court in Gorzów Wielkopolski of 21 July 2022, II SA/Go 252/22, Legalis No. 2744229.

[13] Judgment of the Provincial Administrative Court in Kraków of 26 April 2023, II SA/Kr 1474/22, Legalis No. 2957403.

[14] Judgment of the Supreme Administrative Court of 25 October 2023, II OSK 1383/22, Legalis No. 3065317.

ANALYSIS OF THE READINESS OF HOSPITALITY ENTERPRISES IN SLOVAKIA FOR THE IMPACTS OF AUTOMATION AND DIGITALISATION

Šenková Anna
University of Prešov, Faculty of Management and Business
Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, Slovakia
e-mail: anna.senkova@unipo.sk
ORCID: 0000-0002-5291-1194

Kormaníková Erika
University of Prešov, Faculty of Management and Business
Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, Slovakia
e-mail: erika.kormanikova@smail.unipo.sk
ORCID: 0000-0002-1071-669X

Kolesárová Stela
University of Prešov, Faculty of Management and Business
Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, Slovakia
e-mail: stela.kolesarova@unipo.sk
ORCID: 0000-0001-7275-1936

***Abstract**: The paper deals with highly topical issue of the impact of digitalisation and automation on enterprises operating in the accommodation and catering sector and the preparation of these enterprises for these impacts. Therefore, the aim of the paper is to determine the readiness of Slovak enterprises for the impacts of automation and digitalisation on accommodation and catering facilities. The paper was written in cooperation with the Association of Hotels and Restaurants of Slovakia, which conducted a questionnaire survey among its members. Due to the low response rate to the questionnaire, the research sample consisted of only 44 accommodation and 11 catering establishments in Slovakia. Based on this sample, the level of readiness of the selected companies was examined with regard to the impact of automation and digitalisation on these companies. In terms of the specific ways in which automation and digitalisation will affect tourism businesses, respondents most often cited an improvement in the skills and knowledge of employees. The key skill that respondents believe will be affected by automation and digitalisation is digital literacy. At the end of the paper, we discuss the main management implications for tourism enterprises under the influence of preparation for the manifestations of automation and digitalisation, focusing mainly on solutions in the area of customer satisfaction with the services provided by the accommodation and catering facilities, big data systems especially for collecting data on customer preferences, as well as the issue of sustainability, which is currently a hot topic and the desired outcome of automation and digitalisation in selected enterprises.*

Key words: Hotel industry. Gastronomy. Digitalisation.

Introduction

Recently, the need for digitalisation has come to the fore in many sectors. The World Tourism Organization points to the fact that the tourism industry was one of the first to digitize business processes on a global scale, making the online environment one of the digital pioneers.

As information and communication technologies have become a global phenomenon, tourism has been an early adopter of new technologies and platforms (EU, 2022).

Innovations in the tourism market picked up a fast pace, especially in the period after the visible subsidence of the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. Even before the pandemic, the digitalisation of the industry was progressing relatively rapidly, and new technologies and principles were being applied to individual services within the industry. With its presence, digitalisation thus brings change, but also several advantages in the selection or consumption of basic and additional services of tourism businesses. For example, Crowe (2022) points out many advantages. It states that digital financial innovations can permeate the entire tourism consumption process. For example, they significantly improve payment efficiency and the tourist experience by offering customers services such as instalment plans, insurance and financial products related to tourism (Wang, 2022).

Digital tools can not only streamline business processes, but also improve the overall guest experience and increase revenues. However, lack of funding remains a key issue. Tourism businesses need to invest in the implementation and development of digital technologies in order to compete in the marketplace and meet the needs of today´s customers. It is therefore important that tourism businesses recognise the potential of digital solutions and look for ways to raise funds for their implementation. This is especially true in the case of Slovakia, where up to 90 % of the hotel and gastronomy sector is made up of small and medium-sized enterprises (Lednárová Dítěová, 2023).

While other sectors boldly digitized during the Covid-19 pandemic to maintain employment and especially business, the hospitality and gastronomy segment was closed and for this reason a massive digitization debt began. In addition, the sector is struggling with a shortage of skilled labour that found employment in other sectors during the pandemic and is finding it difficult to return to jobs that often require effort and tougher working conditions. It cannot even rely on enough future graduates, because only 25% of them remain to work in the sector (Lednárová Dítěová, 2023).

For this reason, our research also focused on the readiness of companies in the accommodation and gastronomy sector for the effects of automation and digitalisation from the point of view of the labour market, i.e. job applicants. The importance of solving this issue comes to the fore mainly because digitisation will affect every other skill of employees in the future, and at the same time the fact of an ageing population comes into play, which will lead to a shortage of labour (also) in the hospitality sector. At the same time, this means that the issue of digitalisation and automation will become an increasingly important part of everyday decision-making in the future. As far as the level of research in the field of digitalisation of tourism enterprises in Slovakia is concerned, we encounter a relatively large research gap. One of the first research in this area in Slovakia was conducted by Melnychenko et al. (2021), whose research focused on digitalisation as a tool for the recovery of tourism enterprises in the territory of the European Union, so Slovakia is only marginally addressed in this research. Among Slovak researchers, the issue of automation and digitalisation in tourism enterprises is mainly addressed by Gajdošík et al. (2017), Gajdošík and Marciš (2018); Gúčik and Marciš (2018).

However, none of the authors addresses the issue of the readiness of Slovak tourism enterprises for the manifestations of automation and digitalisation. As the research was commissioned by the Association of Hotels and Restaurants of Slovakia, the paper presents concrete, factual and current issues faced by Slovak tourism enterprises.

1.Theoretical starting points of the solved problem

Digitisation initiatives have accelerated in recent years in line with technological developments, increased pressure on costs and productivity, and higher customer expectations

(Hollander, 2022). Traditionally, IT implementation in the hotel industry focused on operational support in the form of room and reservation management systems, which subsequently expanded to include pricing applications, distribution systems and customer relationship support (O'Connor and Murphy, 2004).

Over the last decade, the scope of IT applications in the industry has expanded to include process automation as well as more innovative guest services and touchpoint management applications such as artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR) and social media technologies (Crowe, 2022); Li et al., 2021). The IT strategy must be developed to adapt to the consequences of such rapid change (Gajdošík and Marciš, 2018; Partt and Sparani, 2021).

Sheldon (1983) was one of the first researchers to examine the application of information and technology in the hospitality sector, focusing on front office systems in US hotels, including guest reservation systems and room management applications, and their impact on efficiency. Implications for guest safety and energy management have also been explored. During the 1980s, the first integrated property management system (PMS) software for the hotel sector appeared, which included not only the front office, but also applications, as well as back-end functions of processing financial transactions and reporting (Puerto, 2023).

Ten years after Sheldon's publication, Poon (1993) suggested that information technology was rapidly expanding throughout the tourism and hospitality industry. Digitisation and the introduction of various types of information technologies have different driving forces that influence the speed at which digitisation takes place. Wynn and Lam (2023) point out what characteristics and driving forces (Figure 1) businesses in the hospitality sector respond to the effects of digitisation.

Figure 1 Drivers and enterprise properties (shaded grey) for digitalisation in hospitality
Source: Wynn and Lam, 2023.

After the turn of the century, with the rapid development of mobile applications, the expansion of the Internet and cloud applications, new opportunities for using technologies for innovation, improving the customer experience and increasing efficiency opened for the hotel industry (Gajdošík et al., 2017).

Law et al. (2009, p. 599) noted that: "IT is becoming increasingly important to the competitive operations of tourism and hospitality organizations, as well as to managing the distribution and marketing of organizations on a global scale".

The opportunities that these technologies offer present new challenges for IT managers in this industry (Gúčik and Marciš, 2018). Lack of integration with central information systems and data inconsistency can be a consequence of the rapid implementation of digital technologies.

The terms "digitalisation" and "digital transformation" are often used in the existing literature, although there are no generally agreed definitions of these two terms.

According to Gartner (2023), "digitalisation is the use of digital technologies to change the business model and provide new opportunities for revenue and value creation; it is the process of transition to a digital business". Digital transformation is often seen as formulating new ways of doing business rather than implementing technologies.

For example, Rogers (2016, p. 2) notes that "digital transformation is not about technology - it is about strategy and new ways of thinking". However, Pratt and Sparapani (2021) define digital transformation as "the incorporation of computer technologies into the products, processes and strategies of the organization". In contrast to the perception of digitalisation and digitalisation processes from the point of view of companies in the hospitality sector, the point of view of the employees of these companies is also important, and finally the point of view of the customers themselves.

However, technological innovation offers added value only if customers perceive it as leading to improved services and not just as a novelty for its own sake (Dixon et al., 2009). The rapid adoption of digital systems in society in general, with now ubiquitous examples of digitization including self-service check-in kiosks in the airline industry, online banking, online shopping, e-government services, e-learning, remote working, etc., has accelerated following the Covid-19 pandemic.

Automation and digitalisation are part of the industry referred to as 4.0, which was introduced by German companies such as Siemens and gradually started to be used all over the world (Srivastava, 2015). Industry 4.0, whose global recognition is gradually increasing, affects three main areas in the business world: the integration and digitization of horizontal and vertical value chains; digitization of products and services; forming a digital business model and customer relationships (Guban and Kovacs, 2017).

"Industry 4.0" has the main features of virtualization, interoperability, autonomy, real-time availability, flexibility, service orientation and energy efficiency. On the other hand, it is researched and found out which technologies and concepts can be included under the term "Industry 4.0" in these three areas. In this context, number of technologies and concepts have been analysed and grouped into 4 relevant and representative areas: Cyber-Physical Systems (CPS), Internet of Things/Services (IoT/IoS), Smart Data and Smart Factory. Finally, it was identified how the mentioned technologies and concepts provide the properties of Industry 4.0 and serve its purpose (Prales et al., 2016).

2. Objectives and methodology

The aim of the paper is to determine the readiness of accommodation and catering establishments in Slovakia for the effects of automation and digitalisation. The paper was prepared in cooperation with the Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, Faculty of Management and Business of the University of Prešov in Prešov and the Association of Hotels and Restaurants of Slovakia.

The collection of primary data was carried out using the CAWI method (Computer-Assisted Web Interview) in the period from 03/24/2023 to 04/16/2023. The implementation of the questionnaire survey was ensured by the Association of Hotels and Restaurants of Slovakia in cooperation with the Republic of Employers' Union and the Tourism Association. Out of the total number of 477 approached businesses, 44 accommodation and 11 catering establishments from all over Slovakia took part in the survey. We note that the difficulty of data collection and the reluctance of companies to participate in the survey also affected deviations in the sample from the plan, and we perceive their occurrence as a limitation of the research.

In terms of size class, majority of respondents were small (0-49 employees) accommodation establishments with 29 and small catering establishments with 9. There were 12 medium (50-249 employees) accommodation establishments and only one catering establishment. In addition, 3 large accommodation establishments (250 or more employees) and only one catering establishment participated in the survey.

From the data obtained by the questionnaire, we investigated the association between the impact of automation and digitalisation and the readiness of the labour market (job seekers) for the effects of these two phenomena in terms of their competences, skills and knowledge. To determine the association, we used the Pearson correlation coefficient at the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$. Data for statistical analysis were processed in the R program.

3. Results and discussion

The first researched area in the questionnaire survey was finding out the impact of automation and digitalisation on the organization in general. Respondents could answer on a scale from 1-6, with 1 indicating that a specific company perceives the impact of automation and digitalization very positively, and 6 indicating that the company perceives the impact of automation and digitalisation very negatively.

Figure 2 The impact of automation and digitization on the organization in general
Source: Own processing.

From the above Figure 2, we can see that companies perceive the impact of automation and digitalisation on the organization as mostly neutral (in the range of 3-4). However, most companies are inclined to the opinion that automation and digitalisation have a positive effect on their operations from the point of view of all industries.

Subsequently, we found out whether accommodation and catering facilities are planning investment plans in connection with digitalisation and automation. As for accommodation and catering establishments, we can state that majority of companies are planning investment plans in connection with automation and digitalisation within the next three years. The following graph shows the facts.

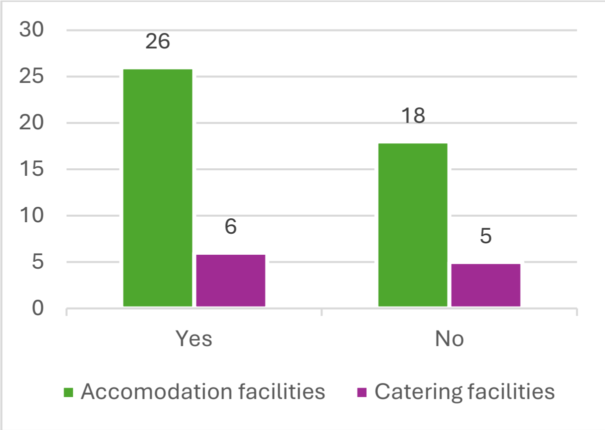


Figure 3 Investment intentions of equipment in connection with automation and digitalisation
Source: Own processing.

Individual investment plans for establishments in the field of gastronomy ranged from €50,000 to €200,000. In the case of accommodation establishments, these were investment intentions in the amount of €10,000-100,000 (Figzre 3).

Digitalisation and automation will affect individual businesses belonging to the hospitality sector in different ways. These methods of influence were also part of our questionnaire. The results show that digitalisation and automation will have the greatest impact on increasing the skills and knowledge of employees, including in the case of accommodation and catering establishments (Figure 4).

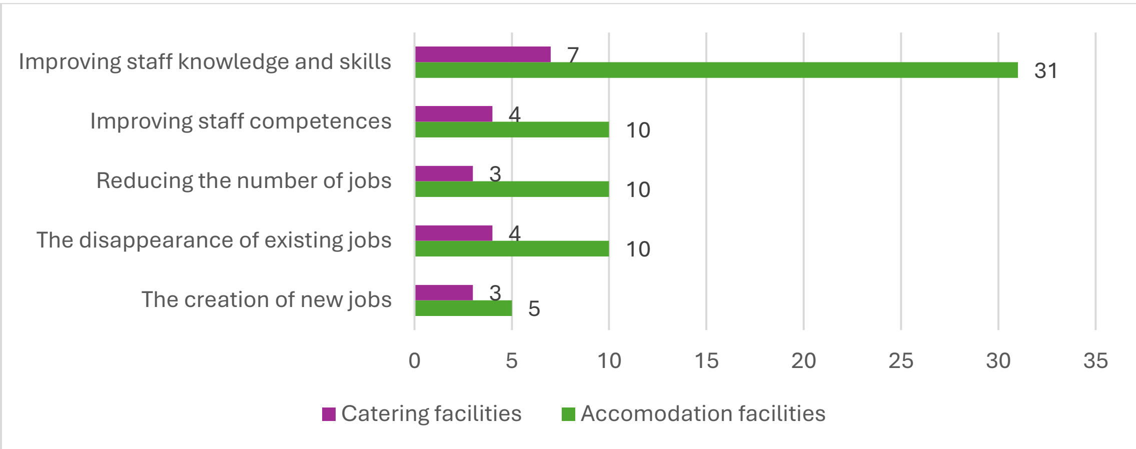


Figure 4 The way automation and digitalisation impact organizations
Source: Own processing.

From the point of view of job positions that will be affected by automation and digitalisation, according to the accommodation facilities, these are mainly:

- line (executive) workers – 13 facilities,
- operating personnel – 13 devices,
- middle management – 10 devices,
- auxiliary and unqualified workers – 8 facilities.

According to catering establishments, it will mainly be service workers, which was indicated by 4 catering establishments. At the same time, digitalisation and automation will also affect line workers and middle management, which was confirmed by 3 catering establishments.

Automation and digitalisation are not a relatively new concept, so we asked the respondents whether the labour market (job seekers) is also ready for automation and digitalisation, in terms of competences, knowledge and skills. Respondents gave their answers on a scale from 1-6, with 1 indicating that the labour market is ready for automation and digitalisation, and 6 indicating that the labour market is ready for automation and digitalisation at the lowest level.

Respondents from accommodation establishments most often reported the readiness of the labour market for automation and digitalisation at an average level (specifically level 3). From the point of view of catering establishments, the readiness of the labour market is at level 6.

So here we return to our research question about the impact of automation and digitization on individual devices and the degree of readiness of the labour market for digitalisation and automation.

We verify this research question through Pearson's correlation coefficient, as we want to find out the association of these two phenomena. The p-value reached a value of 0.0137, which is less than the significance level. This means that the Pearson correlation coefficient is statistically significant, i.e. j. that there is an association between the impact of automation and digitalisation on facilities and the degree of preparedness of job seekers for the impacts of these two phenomena. The association is direct and positive (Figure 5), which means that the higher the impact of automation and digitalisation on equipment, the higher the level of preparedness of job seekers for these phenomena.

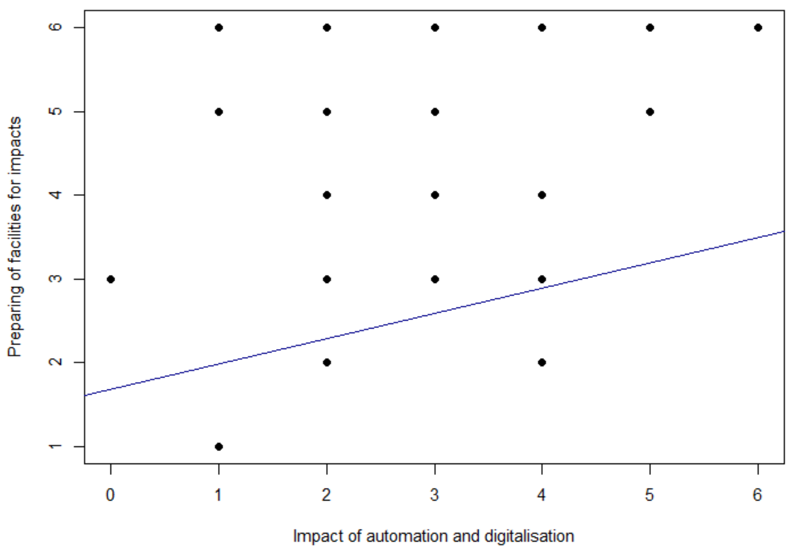


Figure 5 The association between the impact of automation and digitalisation on facilities and the readiness of job seekers for these impacts
Source: Output from the R program.

Since the association between the impact of automation and digitalisation on devices has been confirmed, we also present the number of devices that have experienced the impact of automation and digitalisation.

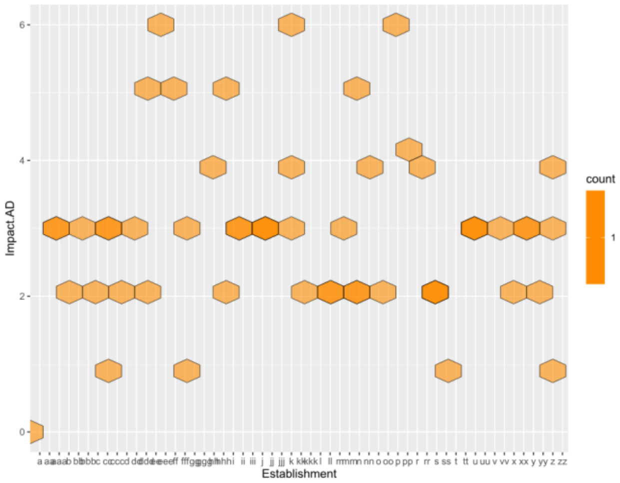


Figure 6 The number of individual devices that have experienced the effects of automation digitalisation

Source: Output from the R program.

The effects of automation and digitalisation were recorded to the highest extent by 3 companies. From Figure 6, we can conclude that only one company did not experience any impact from automation. What we can also observe is the fact that most of the surveyed companies recorded the effects of automation and digitalisation on their operations at an average level (on a scale from 2-4).

Since the connection between the impact of automation and digitalisation on equipment and the readiness of job seekers was confirmed, we were also interested in the key competencies of employees and job seekers that, according to the respondents, will be affected by automation and digitalisation. We present the results on the following Figure 7.

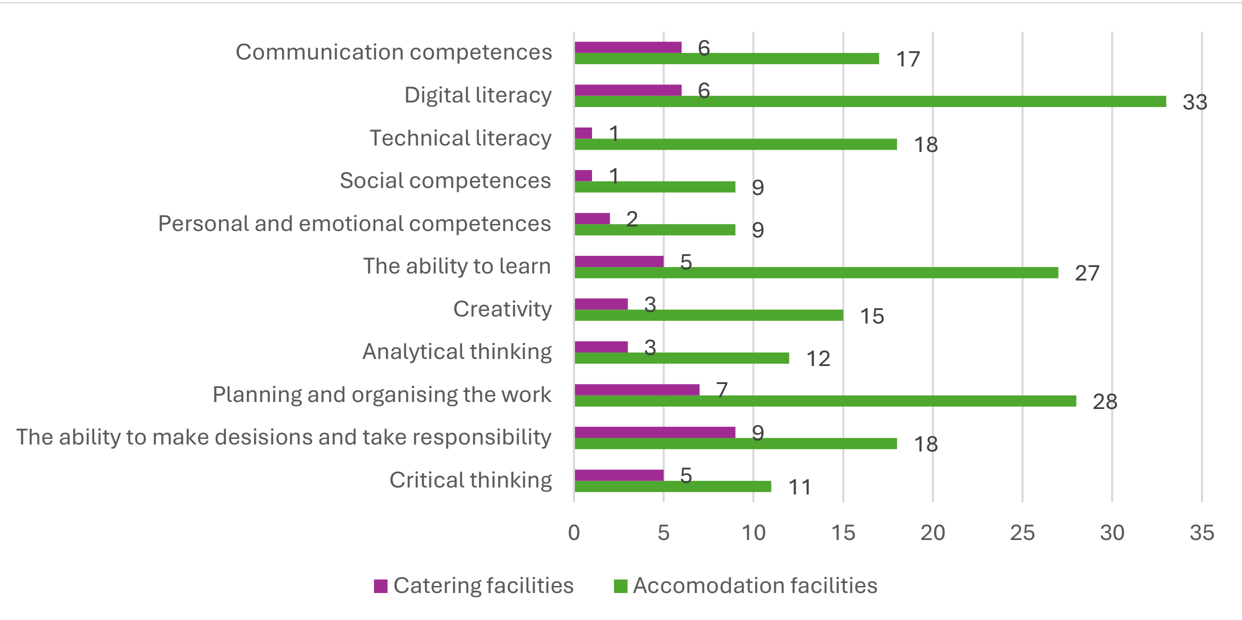


Figure 7 Key employee competencies affected by automation and digitalisation

Source: Own processing.

We can conclude that, according to respondents from accommodation establishments, digital literacy is the key competence that will be affected by digitalisation and automation. In the case of catering establishments, the ability to make decisions and take responsibility is a key competence affected by digitalisation and automation (Figure 7).

Since the contribution also focuses on evaluating the level of preparedness of selected Slovak enterprises in the gastronomy and accommodation sector for the effects of automation and digitalisation, we have therefore created a visualization using plot.

In the following (Figure 8), we can observe that compared to companies in the hotel and gastronomy sector (Figure 6), job seekers are better prepared for the effects of digitization and automation (opinion of 9 respondents). The degree of preparedness of job seekers for the effects of automation and digitization is at level 3. This fact was stated by 16 respondents, which is the largest number of answers regarding the degree of readiness.

An interesting finding is that a greater number of respondents indicate the readiness of job seekers for the effects of automation and digitalisation at level 3-6. Only 6 applicants state a lower level of readiness, i.e. at the level of 2-1. (Figure 8).

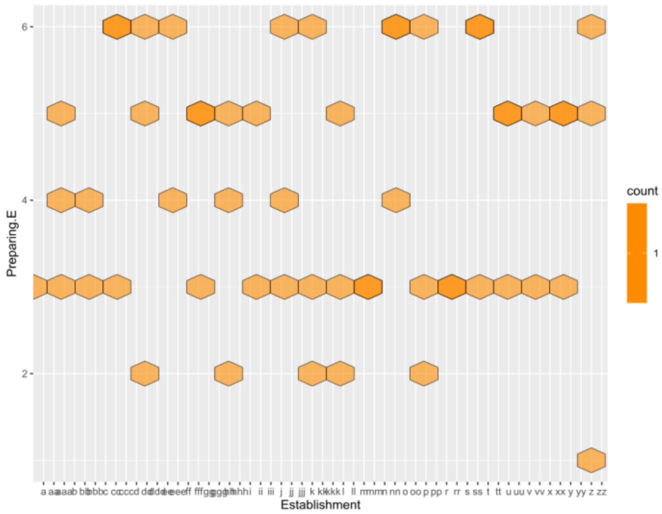


Figure 8 The number of job seekers who are prepared for the effects of automation and digitization

Source: Output from the R program.

In general, the results of the analysis show that our respondents from accommodation establishments have been most affected by automation and digitalisation through increasing the competences and skills of employees, while the most important competence affected by automation and digitalisation is digital literacy. In the case of catering establishments, automation and digitalisation have most manifested themselves in terms of increasing the competences and skills of employees, while the most important competence affected by both phenomena is the ability to make decisions and take responsibility.

From the point of view of the results of the verification of the research hypotheses, the association between the effects of automation and digitalisation and the readiness of the labour market for these effects was confirmed, which means that currently enterprises in the hospitality sector are ready for automation and digitalization, and at the same time the labour market is ready for these effects. The level of readiness is highest at level 3.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the companies that participated in the survey are as prepared for the effects of automation and digitalisation as are the job seekers. These facts are positive because they bring benefits to both parties. Job seekers have already encountered the manifestations of digitalisation (e.g. internet banking), so their preparation for employment is easier than if they had not encountered this phenomenon (O'Connor and Murphy, 2004).

At the same time, it is also easier for companies because they can apply various forms of digitalisation earlier than, for example, in the pre-pandemic period, which accelerated these manifestations (Wang, 2022). Digitalisation and automation also bring benefits to the customers themselves, for whom certain processes are simplified (Gajdošík, Gajdošíková and Marčeková, 2017).

In terms of managerial implications of digitalization and automation in tourism enterprises, it is now necessary to focus on service quality and customer satisfaction. Customers can express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the services, for example, through Trip Advisor or Google Reviews, which can be managed by the manager and responded to electronically. If the review is positive, it can be shared on the website or social networks to attract new customers. Another suitable area in which a manager could invest is big data systems that can identify customer preferences and tailor services accordingly. However, in this context, it is important to create sufficient cyber protection for customers, where they can be sure that their personal data is protected. Digitalisation is also a good step towards increasing the sustainability of tourism businesses, particularly in that digitalisation facilitates many processes in tourism businesses (e.g. check-in software, large electronic boards in some accommodation establishments where guests can make their own check-in and check-out).

From the above, it can be concluded that the topic of digitalisation and automation in tourism enterprises is extremely topical, but at the same time it is still relatively broad and demanding, which leads to a large space for research on these two phenomena. Given that the paper presents the results of a survey conducted on a small sample of Slovak companies, interesting results would certainly be obtained by expanding the sample and extending the analysis to include foreign companies in the hospitality industry, with a subsequent comparison between individual countries.

References

[1] CROWE, E., 2022. Why ‘Digital Twins’ Are the Future of Travel and Hospitality. *Boutique Hotelier 2022.* Available at: https://www.boutiquehotelier.com/digital-twins-matterport-travel-and-hospitality/

[2] DIXON, M., KIMES, S. E., VERMA, R., 2009. Customer Preferences for Restaurant Technology Innovations. *Cornell Hospitality Reports,* 9, pp. 4-16.

[3] EU, 2022. *Transition Pathway for Tourism.* Luxemburg: Publication Office of the European Union. ISBN 978-92-76-47149-3.

[4] GAJDOŠÍK, T., MARCIŠ, M., 2018. Artificial intelligence tools for smart tourism development. *Artificial intelligence methods in intelligent algorithms.* Zlín. ISBN 978-3-030-19809-1.

[5] GAJDOŠÍK, T., GAJDOŠÍKOVÁ, Z., MARČEKOVÁ, R., 2017. *Informačné technológie v cestovnom ruchu.* Bratislava: Wolters Kluwer. ISBN 978-80-8168-587-3.

[6] GARTNER., 2023. Garner Glossary. Available at: https://www.gartner.com/en/information-technology/glossaryglossarykeyword=Digitalization

[7] GUBAN, M., KOVACS, G., 2017. Industry 4.0 conception. *Acta Technica Corviniensis-Bulletin of Engineering*, 1. ISSN 2067-3809.
[8] GÚČIK, M., MARCIŠ, M., 2018. The impact of globalization on the Slovak hotel industry. *Acta academica karviniensia*. 18(4), pp. 29-39. ISSN 2533-761.
[9] HOLLANDER, J., 2022. Digital Transformation in the Hotel Industry. *Hotel Technology Report 2022*. Available at: https://hoteltechreport.com/news/digital-transformation.
[10] LAW, R., LEUNG, R., BUHALIS, D., 2009. Information Technology Applications in Hospitality and Tourism: A Review of Publications from 2005 to 2007. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 26, pp. 599–623. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/10548400903163160
[11] LEDNÁROVÁ DÍŤEOVÁ, L., 2023. Inovácie a digitálne nástroje formujú budúcnosť cestovného ruchu. Trexima. *Novinky 2023*. Available at: https://www.trexima.sk/trexima-na-horeca-digital/ 9
[12] Li, M., YIN, D., QIU, H., BAI, B. A., 2021. Systematic Review of AI Technology-Based Service Encounters: Implications for Hospitality and Tourism Operations. *International Journal of Hospitality Management.* 95. 102930. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2021.102930
[13] MELNYCHENKO, S., TKACHENKO, T., DUPLIAK. T., 2021. Digitalisation as a Tool of Tourism Recovery in European Union in Post-Covid-19. *Financial and Credit Activity-Problems of Theory and Practice.* 41. pp. 427-436. ISSN 2306-4994.
[14] O'CONNOR, P., MURPHY, J., 2004. Research on Information Technology in the Hospitality Industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management.* 23, pp. 473–484. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2004.10.002
[15] POON, A., 1993. *Tourism, Technology and Competitive Strategy*. Wallingford, UK: CAB International.
[16] PRALES, D. P, ALARCON, F., BOZA, A., 2016. Industry 4.0: A classification scheme. *International Joint Conference-CIO-ICTEOM-IIE-AIM*, July 13-15, Spain.
[17] PRATT, M., SPARAPANI, J., 2021. Digital Transformation. TechTarget/Search CIO. Available at: https://searchcio.techtarget.com/definition/digital-transformation
[18] PUERTO, S., 2023. *A Brief History of Property Management Systems*. Available at: https://www.phocuswire.com/A-brief-historyof-property-management-systems
[19] ROGERS, D. L., 2016. *The Digital Transformation Playbook: Rethink Your Business for the Digital Age*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
[20] SHELDON, P. J., 1983. The Impact of Technology on the Hotel Industry. *Tourism Management.* 4(4), pp. 269–278. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177(83)90005-5
[21] SRIVASTAVA, S. K., 2015. Industry 4.0. *BHU Engineer's Alumni,* 15, pp. 23-24.
[22] WANG, Q., 2022. Research on development of digital finance in improving efficiency of tourism resource allocation. Resources. *Environment and Sustainability.* 8. 100054. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resenv.2022.100054
[23] WYNN, M., LAM, C., 2023. Digitalization and IT Strategy in the Hospitality Industry. *Systems.* 11, p. 501. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3390/systems11100501

IMPACTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON CHANGES IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN PURCHASING LEISURE PRODUCTS

Lenka Veselovská
Matej Bel University, Faculty of Economics, Institute of managerial systems
Slovakia
e-mail: lenka.veselovsk@umb.sk
ORCID: 0000-0003-1867-2692

***Abstract**: The Covid-19 pandemic was a major adverse event that significantly changed the business environment. The research into effects of COVID-19 pandemic has provided many significant findings with drastic implications for societies worldwide. This paper strives to contribute to current pool of knowledge by providing information on how Slovak consumers changed their behavior during the pandemic and soon after its conclusion in relation to purchasing leisure products. The main aim of the research was to document consumer behavior changes during and after the COVID-19 pandemic with special focus on leisure products. The data used in this research is based on a survey that collected opinions and experiences of 987 consumers during various pandemic years enabling comparison with pre-pandemic situation, as well as different stages of the pandemic. Two hypotheses were formulated to direct the research. The findings indicate major changes in purchasing leisure products, however these changes manifested themselves differently throughout various years of the pandemic. Most consumers in every age group decrease the number of products that they bought during the pandemic. The biggest decrease can be observed in the age group of consumers ages between 30 and 39 years old since up to 60.91% of consumers decreased the number of products they bought during the pandemic. This change was more significant in 2021 and 2022. Furthermore, this research provides information on how different segments of consumers reacted and adapted their behavior. More than 40% of people between 30 and 39 years old made changes in buying leisure products during the pandemic. When asked to provide the reason for this behavior, up to 92% of consumers stated the pandemic itself. Fear as a possible source of influence was explored and based on research findings rejected.*

Key words: Covid-19 pandemic. Consumer behavior. Leisure products.

Introduction

The research into effects of Covid-19 pandemic has provided many significant findings with drastic implications for societies worldwide. Such drastic changes created a new reality that many of the entrepreneurs had to face. Tourism and selling of leisure activities products and services were the industries that were impacted the most during the pandemic. Data shows that up to 87.62% of enterprises was affected by the pandemic (Tsui et al., 2021; Sacramento, 2024).

The state of society during the pandemic years generated an atmosphere of dread and even repression as perceived by some consumers. Individuals were no longer free to decide when to go to the store or even which store to visit, as many countries implemented lockdown policies or containment zones. Consequently, people visited shops less frequently and prioritized stores located near their homes or workplaces. As numerous recent research findings indicate, this situation compelled consumers to focus more on planning their shopping, leading to significant changes in consumer behavior (Li et al., 2024; My and Tung, 2023). Two distinct yet interrelated influences drove these changes. The first group of factors was linked to the pandemic itself and the measures taken by governments to mitigate its effects. The second group of factors was internal, based on how individual consumers perceived the pandemic's impact on their lives. These factors were associated with the levels of fear of health risks or economic risks related to the pandemic's adverse effects on global economies. People feared for their health, the health of their loved ones, and often their livelihoods, as the pandemic significantly affected many economic sectors, such as tourism and other service industries. Therefore, people were both compelled and motivated to alter their shopping habits, as demonstrated by various indicators such as the frequency of shop visits or even their choice of stores (Rakitovac and Urosevic, 2023).

However, the situation was different in tourism industry. Many of the hotels, restaurants and other similar enterprises were partially or completely closed. The ban of traveling made it pretty much impossible for airlines to operate under normal conditions. Since people were unable to spend their vacations by traveling to different places, it would be natural to expect a decrease in their expenses on laser activities and related products.

There's a lot of data on how the enterprises faced this crisis and how they dealt with it. However, what is lacking form the current pool of knowledge are the opinions of consumers who also had to change their habits and shopping patterns during the pandemic. Their response to changes in the business environment has not yet been properly explored. Therefore, this paper strives to contribute to current pool of knowledge by providing information on how Slovak consumers changed their behavior during the pandemic and soon after its conclusion in relation to purchasing leisure products.

1. Literature review

Consumer behavior is a complex phenomenon that is very difficult to understand and even more challenging to properly describe. However, the concept of consumer behavior is crucial for modern marketing. Several studies have incorporated the factors that influence the consumer behaviors (Dixit et al., 2019; Durmaz et al., 2022; Li et al., 2024; Gnoth et al., 2009). The influence of these factors is unique on different individual consumers depending on their gender, age and other socio-economic factors. This research also took this fact under consideration and hypothesis was formulated to explore the consumer behavior changes depending on age of consumers.

Several adverse events have already occurred in 21st century. All these events had a severe impact on society including the consumers. The earthquake and following tsunami that damaged the Fukushima nuclear power plant resulted in significant decreased the demand for food products produced in the impacted region (Reiher, 2017; Aruga and Wakamatsu, 2018). Covid-19 pandemic was the most severe disease pandemic in 21st century. Its negative impacts have still not been overcome in economies almost 2 years after the conclusion of the pandemic (Niewczas-Dobrowolska et al., 2024; Tudoran et al., 2024). Tourism sector was especially impacted. Wolak-Tuzimek and Maráková (2024) and Huang et al. (2022) discovered that the Covid-19 pandemic has imposed various obstacles and restrictions for the tourism and hospitality industry. Furthermore, Okamuro et al. (2022) explore the impacts of anti-contagion policies on demand of leisure products. An increase in consumers' risk aversion of buying leisure products was also an accompanying phenomenon. Wells et al. (2023) explored the temporal and social challenges within the pandemic and their different implications on consumer's decisions. Niewczas-Dobrowolska et al. (2024) discovered that the most common changes in consumer shopping behavior caused by the Covid-19 pandemic in Poland were frequency of purchases, their number of products purchased and place of purchase. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected consumer behavior so much that new trends were introduced by enterprises to overcome the negative impacts. Gastaldello et al. (2024) examined the behavior of consumers toward virtual experiences. Kim et al. (2023) discovered higher demand for accommodation in private apartments in comparison to hotels. On the other hand, consumers were found to be less likely to choose sharing economy products under pandemic conditions. During the pandemic, cleanliness is considered more important than location when people choose Airbnb accommodation.

Evidence in the current pool of knowledge on consumer behavior changes during the Covid-19 pandemic are not united on how the consumers altered the amount of product they bought during the pandemic in comparison to pre-pandemic situation. Several studies show that consumers increase the amounts of products they bought especially in the early stages of the pandemic (Ali et al., 2022; Durmaz et al., 2022). On the other hand, there is evidence on the contrary. Several researchers discovered that consumers turned more towards sustainable consumption during the pandemic and decreased the number of products they bought (Gastaldello et al., 2024; Li et al., 2022). This evidence is also supported by the research that was conducted in the initial stages of the pandemic which explode the assumption that the measurements taken by the government to contain the spread of the virus would result in smaller quantities of products bought by consumers (Streimikiene et al., 2021). Based on these contradictory trends this research study also aims to provide evidence on how the situation was in context of Slovak consumers.

Accompanying phenomenon to pandemic was an increase of fear in societies. Cakirkaya and Kocyigit (2024) and Ali et al. (2022) discovered that panic buying occurred during the Covid-19, however Luc and Hoang (2023) proved that this phenomenon was significant only during the early stages of the pandemic. Fear is a state of mind that deteriorates the ability of mind to make decisions objectively (Stylidis et al., 2024). Therefore, this research also focused on exploring the effects of fear on decisions of consumers to either buy or not buy leisure products during the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Methodology

The aim of the research was to document consumer behavior changes during and after the Covid-19 pandemic with special focus on leisure products. This aim was fulfilled by exploring data based on the empirical study conducted as a part of the research project. A questionnaire was used to collect data from up to 987 consumers in the Slovak Republic. The data collection period was between 2020 up to 2023. As a result, a representative sample file of base file was created. The whole Slovak adult population was selected as base file. Age of consumers was selected as the criterion of verifying its representativeness. Chi-square test was used to verify and confirm its representativeness. Figure1 shows the distribution of consumers from sample file based on their age.

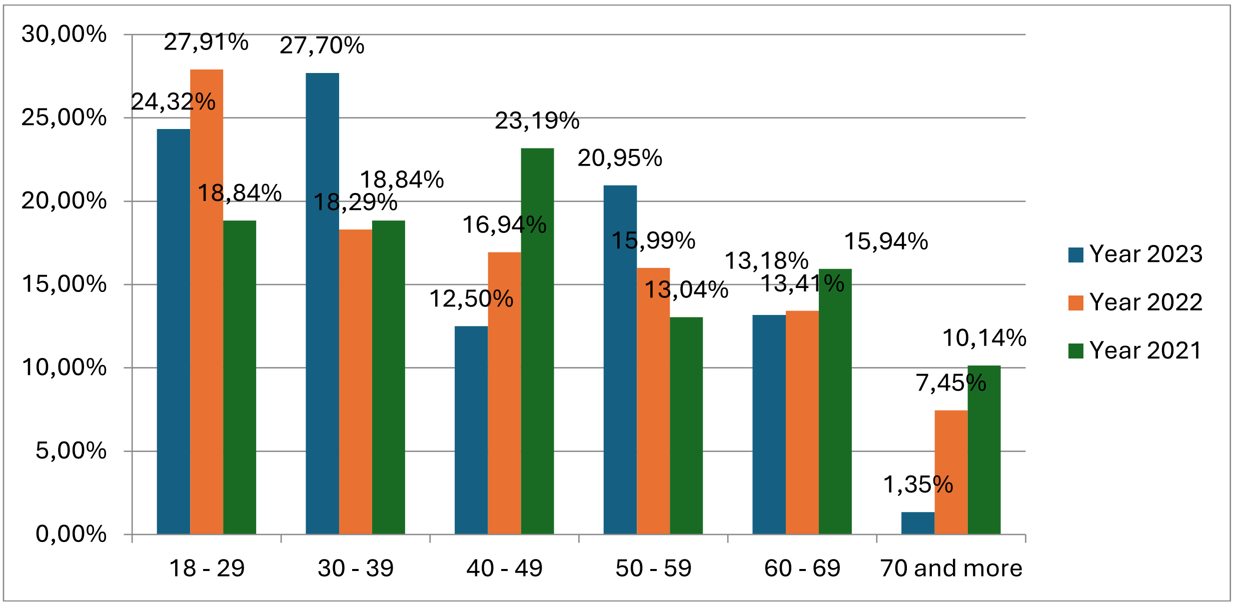


Figure 1 Sample file

Source: Own elaboration.

Two hypotheses were formulated to direct this research. Both hypotheses address a critical issue of this research, and their verification will contribute to current pool of knowledge on impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on business environment. The hypotheses are formulated as follows:

H1: There are significant differences in how consumers of different ages have changed the quantities of leisure products purchased during the Covid-19 pandemic.

H2: Fear was a significant factor influencing consumers in their decisions to buy or not to buy leisure products during the pandemic.

Statistic tests are used to verify the hypotheses, specifically the binomial test and Spearman's Rho coefficient that were used in similar empirical research studies (Salisu et al., 2021; Koçak et al., 2023; Kunjuraman, 2023).

3. Results

The aim of this research is to explore consumer behavior changes that occur during the pandemic in the Slovak Republic in with special interests in leisure products. One of the first assumptions that were created during the pandemic was the fact that consumers decreased the number of products they bought. However, our research shows that this was not the case. It is true that some consumers decreased the number of products they bought, however, it is clear that there was not the case for throughout the whole spectrum of consumers. Figure 2 shows how the consumers of different ages reacted to pandemic in different years of its occurrence based on the age of consumers. According to the data shown in Figure 2, it is possible to conclude that most consumers in every age group decrease the number of products that they bought during the pandemic. The biggest decrease can be observed in the age group of consumers ages between 30 and 39 years old since up to 60.91% of consumers decreased the number of products they bought during the pandemic. On the other hand, consumer's older than 70 years old equally didn't change the number of products they bought or decreased it. However, almost 21% of these consumers increased the number of products they bought. This result is the highest from all age groups.

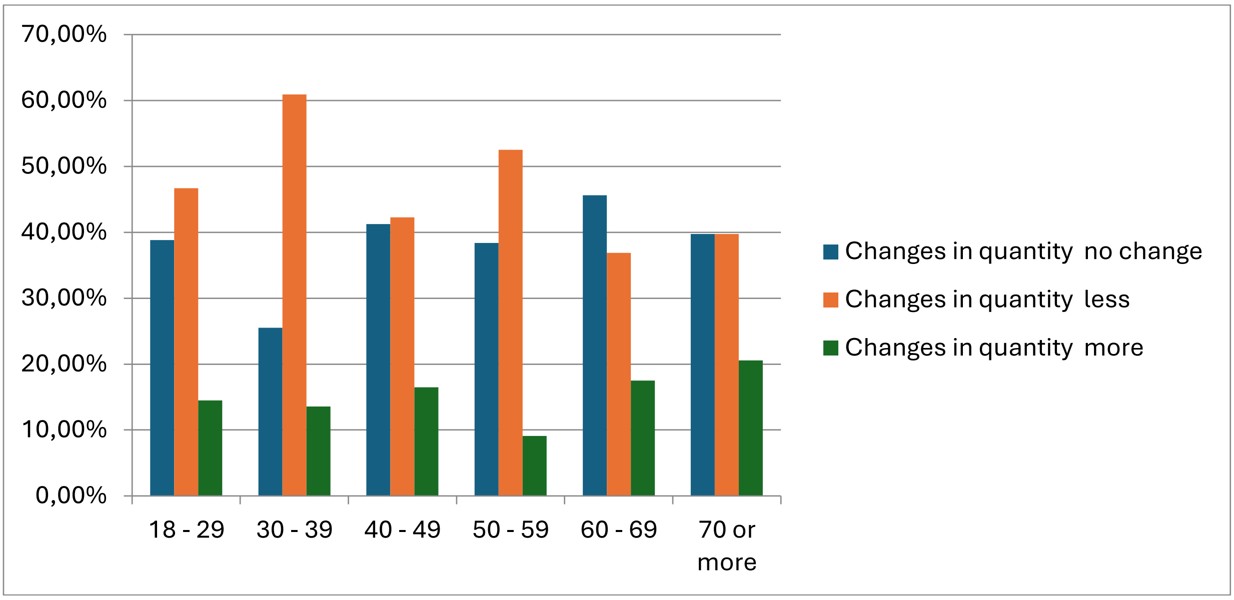


Figure 2 Changes in the quantity of purchased products
Source: Own elaboration.

Changes in the amount of purchased products, however, don't completely reflect on the reality in all sectors of the economy. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate what types of products were bought more and what types of products were bought less. Figure 3 shows the differences in types of products they bought depending on the age of consumer. According to the data, daily consumption products were the ones where the differences between and during the pandemic were the highest. This difference is significant especially for older consumers. The data also shows that approximately 20% of all consumers made changes in buying leisure products. However, this percentage is not equal in all age categories. By grouping the consumers by age and it's possible to ascertain the differences between some groups of consumers. While less than 20% of consumers older than 60 years old only made changes in buying these types of products and services, this share was significantly higher in younger groups of consumers. More than 40% of people between 30 and 39 years old made changes in buying leisure products during the pandemic. When asked to provide the reason why they changed the quantities of leisure products bought during the pandemic, up to 92% of consumers stated the pandemic itself. Only 12% of consumers indicated the changes in prices as the main reason.

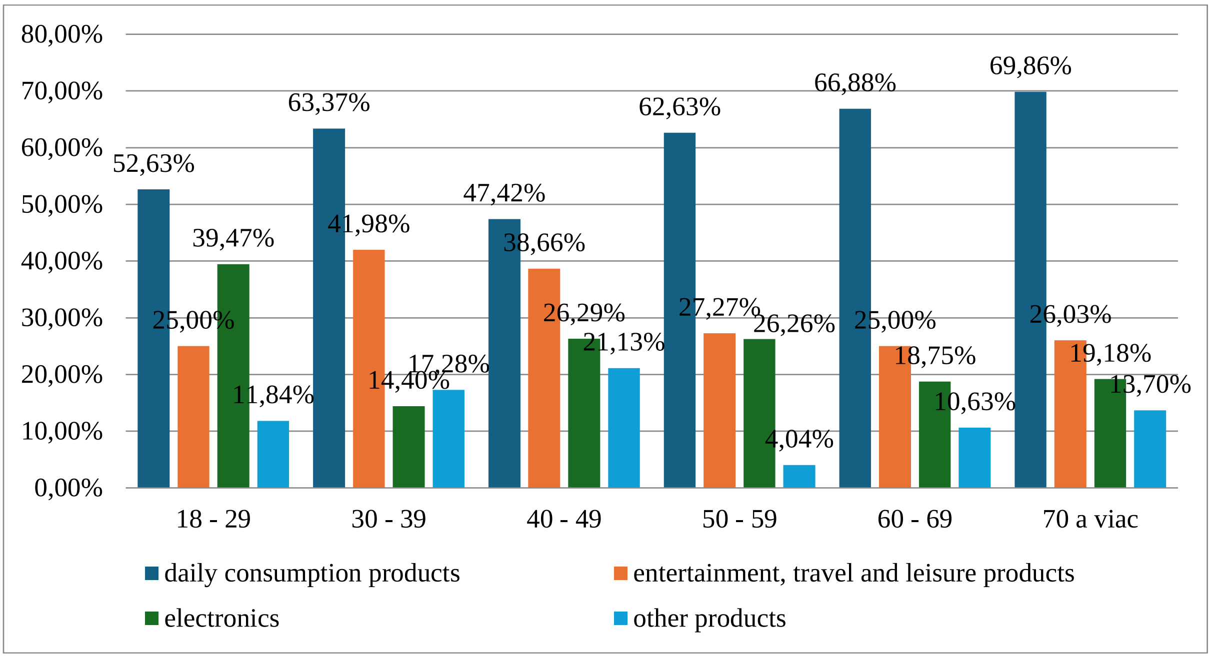


Figure 3 Change in the amount of purchased different types of products based on age
Source: Own elaboration.

A hypothesis was also formulated to explore this phenomenon. Hypothesis H1 focused on exploring whether there are significant differences in how consumers of different ages have changed the quantities of leisure products purchased during the Covid-19 pandemic. Verifying this assumption proposes the premise of correlated relationship between age of consumers and changes in quantity of leisure products purchased. Spearman's Rho index was used to verify this hypothesis. The coefficient was calculated at the level 0.679 which indicates medium strong indirect relationship. This finding indicates that the older the consumer is, less likely he or she is to change the quantity of purchased leisure products. Since the strength of the relationship is higher than low, it is possible to ascertain that this relationship is significant. Therefore, we can confirm the hypothesis H1.

Furthermore, it is interesting to investigate this issue based on the year of pandemic. Figure 4 shows the differences between individual years of pandemic. Two opposite trends can be observed. Firstly, we can observe a significant decrease in the percentage of those who bought less leisure products during the researched period. From 53.62% in 2021 this share decreased to 35.14% in 2023. On the other hand, the share of those who increased the amounts of leisure products they bought slightly rose during the observed period. These findings clearly show that there were differences during the different years of pandemic on how the consumers perceived its impacts.

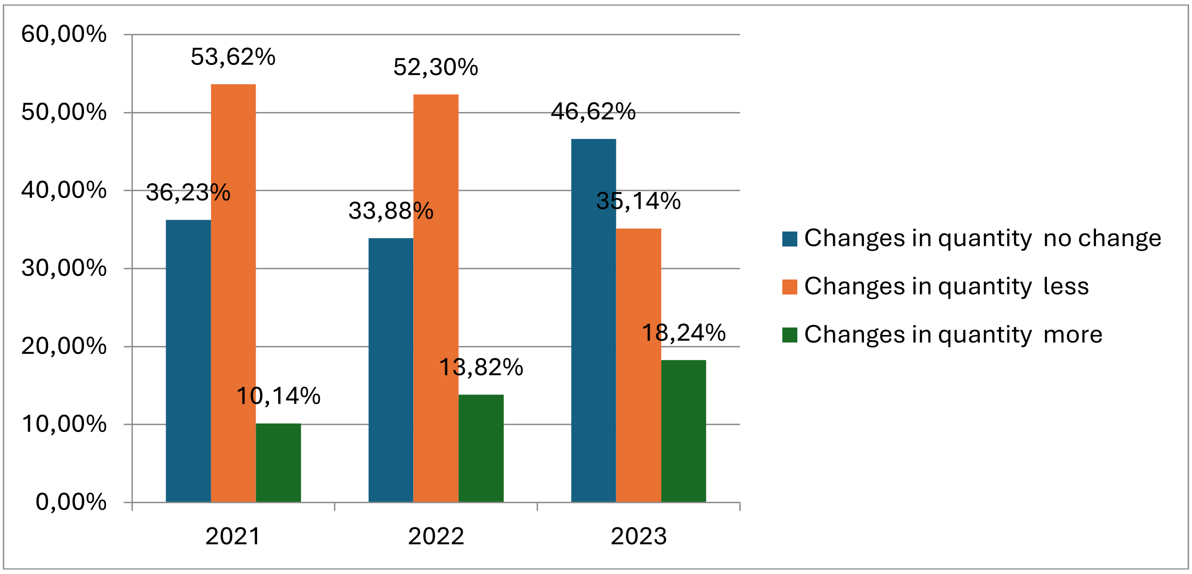


Figure 4 Change in the amount of purchased leisure products based on year of pandemic
Source: Own elaboration.

Hypothesis H2 was formulated to explore the possibilities that fear was a significant factor influencing consumers in their decisions to buy or not to buy leisure products during the pandemic. Since there are different types of fear that consumers could possibly experience during the pandemic, this issue was explored in relation to different possibilities of fear sources. Figure 5 shows data on changes in the amount of leisure products purchased and the degree of different forms of fear that consumers felt or did not feel as significant. Left part of the chart shows those consumers who changed the quantity of leisure products they bought during the pandemic and on the right are those who didn't. And the first look at the data, it is obvious that the differences between those who change the number of products they bought and those who didn't are not very significant. The only small difference that can be observed is in the last statement. Since Hypothesis H2 assumed that fear would be the significant factor influencing the decision to either buy or not to buy leisure products, this hypothesis cannot be confirmed. Clearly, the results of descriptive statistics are enough to confirm that this assumption was wrong. Therefore, it is necessary to conclude that other factors influenced consumers more significantly in their decisions when purchasing leisure products during the pandemic.

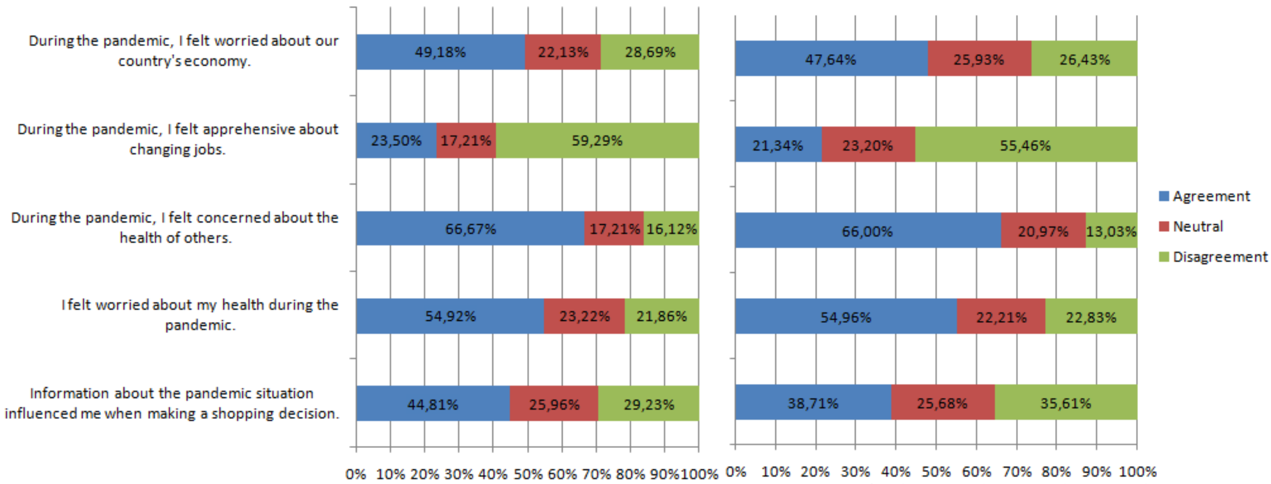


Figure 5 The influence of fear on changes in purchased leisure products
Source: Own elaboration.

Firstly, the influence of information about the pandemic on the purchased quantities of products was examined. Nearly half of all consumers consider this information important when making decisions. The percentage is slightly higher for those who changed the amount of leisure products they bought. Moreover, the share of those who did not consider this information important, nor did they incorporate it into their decision making was slightly lower in this category of consumers.

The most obvious sources of fear during any pandemic are the health concerns. This research focused not only on the fear concerning the health of consumer himself or herself, but also the fear for health of family members. It is interesting to discover that consumers were more concerned for the health of their family members than of their own.

Since the pandemic also brought on economic crisis, several organizations had to decrease the number of employees. Therefore, there was also the fear of losing employment during the pandemic. Nearly a quarter of consumers felt this fear during the Covd-19 pandemic. However, the findings show that this was the least important fear of all the explored factors.

Lastly, this research also explored the possibility of fearing for the national economy during the pandemic and its relation to changes in quantity of leisure products bought. There's a slight difference that can be observed between the two researched categories of consumers. It was discovered that those who did change the amount of leisure products they bought were more affected by their concern for the national economy. However, the difference in comparison to the other consumers is only less than 2%.

Conclusion

Covid-19 pandemic created an unprecedented situation in our societies. Governments, organizations, enterprises and regular people had to face challenges they had never even predicted could happen. Dealing with these challenges was a complex process that brought on new innovations. As a result, societies have changed and therefore consumers have also changed. The findings of this research clearly show that consumers altered their shopping habits during the pandemic. As whole these changes underline a socio-economic transformation in attitudes and beliefs.

Tourism industry was among the most affected by this major crisis (Gössling et al., 2021). Year 2022 was especially difficult according to these research findings as well as other similar research studies (Oliveira et al., 2023; Subadra and Hughes, 2022). According to the findings of this research the amount of leisure products significantly decreased in the Slovak republic, especially among younger consumers. However, this was not a unique situation. Strouhal et al. (2024) and Munjal (2023) provided evidence on similar cases in other countries. Therefore, it is safe to assume that this was a worldwide problem. This has raised an obvious challenge for tourism enterprises to recover their customers by provided targeted strategies.

Furthermore, this research proved that even though fear played a significant role in influencing consumer behavior, its impacts on the number of products bought by the consumers was not so significant. Other factors had more influence on consumer behavior during the pandemic. Similar findings can be found in other research studies on the subject (Chen et al., 2024; Pongsakornrungsilp et al., 2022; Stankov et al., 2022).

Many enterprises, especially in the tourism industry, struggled very much during the pandemic to stay afloat. Some of them managed to do so and emerged from this experience even more resilient than before. However, the whole industry needs new strategies to deal with possible new threats in the future. More pronounced thinking in system context should be applied. Consumers emerged from the pandemic years with new needs and desires that the enterprises in tourism industry need to address. Even though pandemic brought on new innovations and accelerated the technological process of development, not only the enterprises have changed, but also their customers have become more knowledgeable and more demanding. Therefore, the pandemic can also be treated as a lesson for what the future could hold in store for all enterprises and their customers.

Acknowledgment: This contribution was supported by the VEGA project No. 1/0134/22, "Changes in consumer behavior due to the Covid-19 pandemic with intent to predict its development".

References

[1] ARUGA, K., WAKAMATSU, H. 2018. Consumer Perceptions toward Seafood Produced near the Fukushima Nuclear Plant. In *Marine Resource Economics*, 33(4), pp. 373-386. ISSN 2334-5985. Available at: http://doi.org/10.1086/698998

[2] ALI, M. R., KHAN, A. G., ISLAM, M. N. a AKRAM, U. 2022. Determinants of panic buying during Covid-19: causes and consequences. In *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences*, 15(1), pp. 34-56. ISSN 1756-6703. Available at: http://doi.org/10.1108/IJQSS-12-2021-0187

[3] CAKIRKAYA, M., KOCYIGIT, M. 2024. The Relationship between Consumer Life Orientation and Panic Buying Behavior in the Covid-19 Pandemic Process. In *Marketing and Management of Innovations*, 15(1), pp. 143-159. ISSN 2227-6718. Available at: http://doi.org/10.21272/mmi.2024.1-12

[4] CHEN, D., TANG, Y. F., ZHANG, Y., SUN, J. Y. 2024. Covid-19, financing constraints, and performance of listed tourism companies: Evidence from China. In *Finance Research Letters*, 65. ISSN 1544-6131. Available at: http://doi.org/10.1016/j.frl.2024.105635

[5] DIXIT, S. K., LEE, K. H., LOO, P. T. 2019. Consumer behavior in hospitality and tourism. In *Journal of Global Scholars of Marketing Science*, 29(2), pp. 151-161. ISSN 2163-9167. Available at: http://doi.org/10.1080/21639159.2019.1577159

[6] DURMAZ, Y., CAYIRAGASI, F., COPUROGLU, F. 2022. The mediating role of destination satisfaction between the perception of gastronomy tourism and consumer behavior during Covid-19. In *International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science*, 28. ISSN 1878-4518. Available at: http://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijgfs.2022.100525

[7] GASTALDELLO, G., ROSSETTO, L., GIAMPIETRI, E. 2024. Consumer behavior toward virtual wine experiences as a technology-based sustainable transformation. In *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, 8. Available at: http://doi.org/10.3389/fsufs 2024.1384011

[8] GNOTH, J., ANDREU, L., KOZAK, M. 2009. Advances in tourism marketing research: introduction to a special issue on consumer behavior in tourism destinations. In *International Journal of Culture Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 3(2), pp. 99-102. ISSN 1750-6190. Available at: http://doi.org/10.1108/17506180910962104

[9] GÖSSLING, S., SCOTT, D., HALL, C. M. 2021. Pandemics, tourism and global change: a rapid assessment of Covid-19. In *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 29(1), pp. 1-20. ISSN 0966-9582.

[10] HUANG, A., JAHROMI, M. F., MARQUEZ, J. 2022. Customers' behavioral immune system responses to pathogen cues at tourism and hospitality facilities during the Covid-19 pandemic. In *European Journal of Tourism Research*, 30. ISSN 1994-7658.

[11] KIM, J., KIM, S., GIROUX, M., PARK, J., YAP, S. F., KIM, J. E., BADU-BAIDEN, F. 2023. Impacts of Covid-19 on preferences for Airbnb and car-sharing services and marketing implications. In *Tourism Analysis*, 8(4), pp. 511-525. Available at: http://doi.org/10.3727/108354222X16534530194831

[12] KOÇAK, E., DOGRU, T., SHEHZAD, K., BULUT, U. 2023. The economic implications of the Covid-19 outbreak on tourism industry: Empirical evidence from Turkey. In *Tourism Economics*, 29(3), pp. 742-758. ISSN 2044-0375. Available at: http://doi.org/10.1177/13548166211067188

[13] KUNJURAMAN, V. 2023. Community-Based Tourism Resilience Framework during the Covid-19 Pandemic/Endemic. In *Akademika*, 93(1), pp. 365-372. ISSN 0126-8694. Available at: http://doi.org/10.17576/akad-2023-9301-26

[14] LI, Y., YANG, D. C., GUO, J. E., SUN, S. L., WANG, S. Y. 2024. Daily tourism demand forecasting before and during Covid-19: data predictivity and an improved decomposition-ensemble framework. In *Current Issues in Tourism*, 27(8), pp.1208-1228. ISSN 1747-7603. Available at: http://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2023.2202308

[15] LI, Z. H., WANG, D. K., ABBAS, J., HASSAN, S., MUBEEN, R. 2022. Tourists' Health Risk Threats Amid Covid-19 Era: Role of Technology Innovation, Transformation, and Recovery Implications for Sustainable Tourism. In Frontiers *in Psychology*, 12. ISSN 1664-1078. Available at: http://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.769175

[16] LUC, P. T., HOANG, T. H. 2023. Social media and panic buying during the Covid-19 pandemic in Vietnam: Preliminary analysis. In *Journal of Human Behavior in The Social Environment*. ISSN 1540-3556. Available at: http://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2023.2275623

[17] MUNJAL, P. 2023. A Systemic Analysis of the Impact of the Pandemic on the Indian Tourism Economy. In *MARGIN - Journal of Applied Economic Research*, 17(1-2), pp. 113-123. ISSN 0973-8010. Available at: http://doi.org/10.1177/00252921231200209

[18] MY, D. T. H., TUNG, L. T. 2023. Travel Intention and Travel Behavior in the Post-Pandemic Era: Evidence from Vietnam. In *Organizations and Markets in Emerging Economies*, 14(1), pp. 171-193. ISSN 2345-0037. Available at: http://doi.org/10.15388/omee.2023.18.87

[19] NIEWCZAS-DOBROWOLSKA, M., GORKA-CHOWANIEC, A., SIKORA, T. 2024. In *International Journal for Quality Research*, 18(1), pp. 129-152. Available at: http://doi.org/10.24874/IJQR18.01-09

[20] OKAMURO, H., HARA, Y., IWAKI, Y. 2022. Impact of Consumer Awareness and Behavior on Business Exits in the Hospitality. Tourism, Entertainment, and Culture Industries under the Covid-19 Pandemic. In *Administrative sciences*, 12(4). Available at: http://doi.org/10.3390/admsci12040169

[21] OLIVEIRA, W. A., DA FONSECA, I. L., MARQUES JUNIOR, S. 2023. Tourism and covid -19: the tourism consumer's travel intention for the year 2021 and 2022. In

[22] *PASOS - Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural*, 12(1), pp. 115-128. ISSN 1695-7121. Available at: http://doi.org/10.25145/j.pasos.2023.21.008

[23] PONGSAKORNRUNGSILP, P., PONGSAKORNRUNGSILP, S., JANSOM, A., CHINCHANACHOKCHAI, S. 2022. Rethinking Sustainable Tourism Management: Learning from the Covid-19 Pandemic to Co-Create Future of Krabi Tourism, Thailand. In *Sustainability*, 14(18). ISSN 2071-1050. Available at: http://doi.org/10.3390/su141811375

[24] RAKITOVAC, K. A., UROSEVIC, N. 2023. Stakeholders' Perspectives on Post-Pandemic Sustainable Tourism Development - The Case of Vrsar, Croatia. In *Tourism*, 71(1), pp. 193-210. ISSN 1849-1545. Available at: http://doi.org/10.37741/t.71.1.12

[25] REIHER, C. 2017. Food safety and consumer trust in post-Fukushima Japan. In *Japan Forum*, 29(1), pp. 53-76. ISSN 1469-932X. Available at: http://doi.org/10.1080/09555803.2016.1227351

[26] SACRAMENTO, O. 2024. Mass tourism, biosecurity and sustainability challenges: prospects illustrated by the current Covid-19 pandemic. In *Journal of Tourism Futures*. ISSN 2055-592X. Available at: http://doi.org/10.1108/JTF-07-2022-0173
[27] SALISU, A. A., AKANNI, L. O., VO, X. V. 2021. Volatility spillovers and hedging effectiveness between health and tourism stocks: Empirical evidence from the US. In *International Review of Economics & Finance*, 74, pp. 150-159. ISSN 1873-8036. Available at: http://doi.org/10.1016/j.iref.2021.02.005
[28] STANKOV, U. et al. 2022. The pandemic of loneliness: designing smart tourism for combating loneliness. In *Information Technology & Tourism*, 24(4), pp. 439-455. ISSN 1943-4294. Available at: http://doi.org/10.1007/s40558-022-00234-9
[29] STREIMIKIENE, D., SVAGZDIENE, B., JASINSKAS, E., SIMANAVICIUS, A. 2021. Sustainable tourism development and competitiveness: The systematic literature review. In *Sustainable Development*, 29(1), pp. 259-271. ISSN 1099-1719. Available at: http://doi.org/10.1002/sd.2133
[30] STROUHAL, J. et al. 2024. Unraveling the Financial Impact of Covid-19 on the Tourism Industry through a Difference-In-Difference Analysis. In *Journal of Tourism and Services*, 15(28), pp. 143-160. ISSN 1804-5650. Available at: http://doi.org/10.29036/jots.v15i28.614
[31] STYLIDIS, D., WOOSNAM, K. M., SHARMA, S., SINGH, G. 2024. Resident rebellion: The interplay of fear, responsibility, animosity, and norms in shaping residents' opposition towards tourism. In *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 58, pp. 445-455. ISSN 1839-5260. Available at: http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2024.03.004
[32] SUBADRA, I. N., HUGHES, H. 2022. Pandemic in paradise: Tourism pauses in Bali. In *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 22(1), pp. 122-128. ISSN 1742-9692. Available at: http://doi.org/10.1177/14673584211018493
[33] TUDORAN, A. A., THOMSEN, C. H., THOMASEN, S. 2024. Understanding consumer behavior during and after a Pandemic: Implications for customer lifetime value prediction models. In *Journal of Business Research*, 174. ISSN 1873-7978. Available at: http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2024.114527
[34] TSUI, K. W. H., FU, X. W., CHEN, T. T., LEI, Z., Wu, H. J. 2021. Analyzing Hong Kong's inbound tourism: The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. In *IATSS Research*, 45(4), pp. 440-450. ISSN 2210-4240. Available at: http://doi.org/10.1016/j.iatssr.2021.11.003
[35] WELLS, V, CARRIGAN, M., ATHWAL, N. 2023. Pandemic-driven consumer behavior: A foraging exploration. In *Marketing theory*, 23(4), pp. 631-659. Available at: http://doi.org/10.1177/14705931231175695
[36] WOLAK-TUZIMEK, A., MARÁKOVÁ, V. 2024. Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on competitive potential of large enterprises. In *Business impacts of Covid-19: international business, crisis management, and the global economy*. New York: Routledge. ISBN 978-1-032-43744-6.