VYSOKÁ ŠKOLA OBCHODNÍ V PRAZE

Journal of Tourism and Services

ISSN 1804-5650

VŠO

Journal

of Tourism

and Services

Volume IX

Issue 17

Imprint

Title Journal of Tourism and Services

Published by Vysoká škola obchodní v Praze, o. p. s., Spálená 14, 110 00 Praha 1

www.vso.cz

ISSN 1804-5650

Journal of Tourism and Services is an international reviewed scientific research journal, published by the University College of Business in Prague since September 17, 2010 that publishes high quality, reviewed essays and analytical papers in English language with focus on tourism and service industry development. Together with scientific part and in order to promote the exchange of current and innovative ideas, the Journal also includes Reviews of Existing Work or Short Essays and Research Notes to address important topics and advance theoretical knowledge or thinking about key areas of tourism and services. The papers are approved by the Editorial Board and are blind peer reviewed by 2 independent reviewers. Each issue will also seek to include shorter non peer reviewed reviews of existing work or short essays aimed at stimulating debate, research notes to allow researchers to present initial findings and reflections or problems concerning fieldwork and research in general. The Journal is intended for international professionals, academics and students not only for reading but also as a space for publication and source of information for work. The Journal is published twice a year.

The Journal of Tourism and Services is indexed in Web of Science database - Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI).

The Journal of Tourism & Services is included on EBSCO database called Hospitality & Tourism Complete, in Global Impact Factor with ranking 0.543, in Google Scholar and is included in Index Copernicus - ICI Journals Master List.

The Journal of Tourism & Services is included to the database of the Research Development and Innovation Council, advisory body to the Government of the Czech Republic called "Seznam recenzovaných neimpaktovaných periodik vydávaných v České republice".

Editorial Board

Table of Content

DOI: https://doi.org/10.29036/jots.v9i17.45

Public Information and Perception of the Environmental Risk about the Works for the City High Speed Railroad Underpass in Florence, Italy

Bruno Bertaccini
University of Florence

Giulia Biagi
University of Florence

Received 15 March 2018; received in revised form 16 November 2015; accepted 10 December 2018

Abstract

The Florence railway node plays a strategic role in the panorama of the Italian transport system because of its geographical central position. To avoid excessive traffic density and to separate low and fast tracks, a railway city-bypass of 9 Km (7 of which underground) and a new station for the high-speed railway have been planned. Because of the political implications of this decision, it was designed a large opinion poll to understand the current level of information of the citizens on the planned works and to measure their perception of the environmental risks associated with. Given the number of people interviewed, the opinion poll conducted in Florence surely ranks among the most important surveys conducted in Italy on this topic and contributes new insights on the complex links between populations and the environment.

Key words: High-speed railways lines, environmental damages, risk perception, opinion poll, mixed survey techniques

JEL Classification: Q56, Q58, R58

1. Introduction

In the last 20 years, the European Union has allocated many resources in restructuring the European railways transport network with the aim of strengthening it with respect to the other transport modalities. The Trans-European Networks (TEN) is a railways network project regarding all the major lines that run through the nations belonging to the European Union. The Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport networks have been defined in Decision No. 1692/96/EC, as last amended by Decision n. 884/2004/EC which identifies thirty priority projects of European interest to be accomplished by 2020. Fourteen projects were already identified in the original text in accordance with the guidelines of the European Council in Essen in 1994; sixteen new projects were added in Decision n. 884/2004/EC to take account of the accession of new Member States. During the TEN-T (Trans-European Transport Networks) days held in Tallinn (Estonia - from 16th to 18th of October, 2013), the European Commission consolidated his railways transport infrastructure policy with the aim of bridging the gaps between the transport networks of the Member States, removing the bottlenecks hampering the smooth functioning of the internal market and, more in general, helping the economy in its recovery and growth. The slogan was "transform a patchwork in a network"; €26 billion to be spent before 2020 were allocated to this ambitious project.

The Scandinavian - Mediterranean TEN-T Corridor is the main corridor on the North-South axis. It is identified as one of the most strategic corridors for the growth of the European economy that should connect the major urban centers of Germany and Italy to Scandinavia and Mediterranean areas. Limiting our comments to the Italian section of the corridor, it is worth mentioning that the high-speed railway line between Milan and Naples became fully operational with the completion of the Bologna - Florence section at the end of 2009. The travel time between Milan and Rome was reduced from 5 hours to 2 hours and 45 minutes and the volume of passengers between Milan and Naples increased by about 25%, reaching 20 million passengers in 2010.

Florence plays a strategic role in the panorama of Italian railway system because of its geographical position representing the central nodes of the north-south ridge, the Tyrrhenian line and the Florence - Faenza line toward the Adriatic Sea. In addition, Florence is also the center of gravity of the regional and metropolitan traffic. This causes a traffic density close to saturation. In order to increase the overall capacity of the node and improve the compatibility

between the different types of local, freight and long-distance traffic, major upgrade works were planned at the beginning of the 70s. It was only from the 90s, with the planning of the Milan - Naples high speed railway line, that definitive solutions for the reorganization of the Florentine node were decided. Unfortunately, Florence is still the only point of the Milan-Naples line where high-speed trains do not pass on dedicated rails; this obviously causes the mentioned overload on this route, generating delays and preventing an expansion of the service.

The Protocol of agreement of 24 April '97 between local authorities, the Ministry of Transport and the Italian State Railways[1] preannounced the so-called "*cura del ferro*" ("iron treatment") for the metropolitan area, with the enhancement of the existing railway lines, the consolidation of the Faenza line and the creation of new stops for the urban trains. Later, the planning of the interventions and the priorities underwent several updates: the agreement of August 3, 2011 between the Italian Railway Network (RFI – the company that is nowadays in charge of the management of the Italian Railroad infrastructures), the Municipality of Florence, the Province of Florence and the Tuscany Region gave preference to aspects related to urban mobility. The main actions planned in the agreement were the construction of the Florence railway bypass and the related new high-speed railway station in the area called "ex-Macelli" (international tender won by Norman Foster studio & co. and by the engineering firm Ove Arup & co.). The Florence railway bypass is an urban crossing designed exclusively for the high-speed traffic of about 9 kilometers, 7 of which underground. It starts at the Florence Castello station, where the high speed line Bologna-Florence ends, goes underground near the Rifredi station (northern side of the city of Florence) and rises to the surface at the "Campo di Marte" station (southern side of the city). The work should bring several benefits to the urban and metropolitan area: reduction of noise and visual impact of the trains, clear separation between urban and domestic traffic to achieve more punctuality of regional trains, greater potential of the railway hub and increased operating speed. For the implementation of the work, RFI and the city administration agreed to a series of measures aimed at integrating the new railway infrastructure with the urban transportation system (construction of new tram lines, hydraulic adjustment of the Mugnone and Terzolle creeks, new railway underpasses, new parking areas, etc.).

The project started in 1995 and had a complex procedure with many local agencies involved and requiring permissions and approval by many authorities. In recent years, it also

[1] http://www.rfi.it/cms-file/allegati/rfi/documenti/19970424ProtocolloIntesaCastelloNodoFirenze.pdf

met a strong opposition from some citizens' committees, concerned about the cost of the work compared to the actual benefits for the community and the environmental impact of the underpass. The construction of the tunnel was stopped prematurely and, so far, the Ministry of the Environment has not yet given the permits necessary for the disposal of the excavated soils and stones.

A Committee, the "Guarantee Committee for Information and Communication of the Florence High-Speed Node" (composed by independent members designated by the Municipality, the Province of Florence and the Tuscany Region), has been specially established in order to implement a timely and accurate plan of communication and information on the work. The Committee, among the first steps taken, considered it essential to commission a local demoscopic survey to understand the state of information of Florentine citizens about the project underway. In order to plan information campaigns aimed at preventing unjustified fears, the survey sought in particular to assess the level of concern of citizenship on some aspects related to the implementation phases of the work and to know the opinion of the population about the opportunities, in terms of cost-benefit ratio, offered by its realization. 2446 interviews were carried out; the survey was conducted in May and June of 2012, i.e. before the scheduled departure of the drilling activities. Given the large number of people interviewed and the methodologies employed, this opinion poll surely ranks among the most important surveys conducted in Italy on this topic. The scientific dissemination of the survey results has been intentionally delayed in order to ensure to the urban policy an adequate period of reflection on the most appropriate ways to use research outcomes, given the ongoing political debates and the extreme relevance of the issues being investigated.

We believe that this type of investigation can facilitate the relationship between Public Administrations and Citizens. The nature of the survey (i.e. based on sampling techniques) is not under discussion (especially when it is important to return timely information to the decision makers). But, due to its nature, it is important that the survey methodology maximizes the participation rate, reducing all the possible distortions related to the non-response issue. The methodology we adopted in this paper is easily replicable and guarantees a very satisfactory participation rates in relation to the survey themes and to the worsening trend highlighted by the average rate of participation in opinion polls recorded over the last 15 years.

In the following paragraphs: to understand how the population's concerns arise, also in relation to the environmental effects of major public works, a brief overview of the literature on perception of risk is firstly presented; then some of the main events that in this sense have

influenced recent Italian history are mentioned; it is therefore motivated the need to find appropriate communication policies aimed at preventing unjustified dreads in the population. Finally, the survey methodology and an explanation to the main results of the poll are then illustrated.

2. Citizens' Risk Perception about Environmental Damages

Currently, the word "risk" is used to express danger, threat, hazard and harm; today is hence no longer associated, as in the Enlightenment era, also to positive outcomes but it has only negative connotations (Lupton, 2003). The cultural theory of risk was originally proposed by Mary Douglas (Douglas, 1992; Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982), who argued that the perception, recognition and management of risk are intimately connected and filtered by the specific culture and social organization in which people act. The perception of risk is a cognitive process that assesses the immediate and future consequences of a particular event or action; the implications of these consequences develop not only at an individual level, on an emotional and subjective sphere, but mostly at the collective level, on a rational and objective sphere as a culturally standardized response (Douglas, 1992; Slovic, 2001).

According to the sociologist Luhmann, one of the main reasons why the concept of "perceived risk" has become relevant in contemporary world lies in the fact that "the future of our society depends increasingly on social decisions”. While science and technology, with their almost limitless possibilities, are supplanting nature, on the other hand also give us a sense of distrust that leads us to believe that any excess of progress may bring destructive effects. The fear that things can go awry is quickly growing, and with it the amount of risk that is attributed to policies that involve the environment in which people live (Ruggiero, 2000). The environmental risks have become an important ground to measure the ability to govern a territory and in which economic factors intersect with the scientific knowledge, with the available technical solutions and, most importantly, with the beliefs, the expectations and the fears of the citizens. With regard to the environmental risks, the already existing gap between technicians and the population is emphasized, as the population generally disagrees with the "objective" estimates of the impact and the risk that the technicians propose.

The quantitative estimation approach "usually" ignores non-quantifiable aspects, such as the indirect economic losses, the political and social damages and the effects on long-term health (carcinogenicity, mutagenicity, etc.), particularly felt by the population. Furthermore, in the calculation of the probability of the occurrence of an accident that involves

consequences for the environment (and hence for the human being), the common person tends to fear an occurrence of it even if it is excluded on the basis of statistical reasoning. On the contrary, the population would accept, on a precautionary way, a risk hypothesis (which is not statistically significant) which then is actually false.

The statistical significance of the results depends on the choice of a threshold that the involved population often does not share. Finally, the acceptability of the final results of an analysis, presented in statistical form, is still subject to perception. Normally, low probabilistic values, typical of the objective analysis of risk, are very difficult to interpret by most people that tend to accept the technicians' conclusion about an accident with high probability and low consequences, refusing the ones about an accident with low probability and high consequences, although both events, according to the expected utility theory, have the same expected social cost (Cossu, Gadia and Luria, 2013).

3. Mugello, "Variante di Valico" and Susa Valley

Environmental risks have become a significant issue for the community, for health, for economic and social growth. As saw above, the project for the completion of the high-speed railway network in Italy is of crucial importance for a quick connection of the main Italian cities. However, a major work is never with zero impact on the environment and the balance between costs and benefits could often be negative.

In March 2014, the Court of Appeals of Florence convicted the top management of the CAVET Consortium (Consortium High Speed Emilia Tuscany, responsible for the direction of the works of the high-speed line Florence - Bologna) for environmental crimes. The environmental crimes attributed to them were: unlawful disposal of excavated debris that are still releasing pollutants; desiccation and depletion of 81 waterways; desiccation and depletion of 37 springs; desiccation and depletion of approximately 30 wells; desiccation and depletion of 5 five aqueducts; non-reclamation of polluted streams.

The excavation works for the implementation of the 73.3 km tunnel required for the conclusion of the Florence-Bologna High Speed railway resulted in a reduction, often a completely elimination, of the flow rates of many wells and springs, some of which fed important aqueducts ("Scarperia", "Luco di Mugello", "Grezzano"), with the consequence of heavy damages to agriculture and livestock raising and irreversible damages to the hydrophil fauna and vegetation. The entire hydrogeological balance of the Mugello region has been

shocked. The decrease of water resulted in a heavy fallout of the mountain ecosystem, forcing many agro-livestock farms to close. Just to cite some examples of such worrying situation, there are areas in the Mugello region where water has to be brought up from a lower level using a lot of electricity while, in the past, the same water was got for gravity; moreover, the water shows a decline in quality and often necessitate costly operations of purifications.

In recent years the Mugello region was also interested by the implementation of the so-called "Variante di Valico" which is a stretch of a highway between Barberino di Mugello and Sasso Marconi (65.8 km of total length). The major work was decided by the Prodi government in 1996 as a high priority work. It is divided into two sections: "Sasso Marconi - La Quercia" and "La Quercia - Barberino". The work of the first stretch started in 2002 and ended in July 2006. The second stretch was supposed to end in 2015, but a series of technical and environmental problems delayed the completion of it. The mountain push first reached the Val di Sambro tunnel bringing it off-axis with respect to the nearby roadway. With the awareness of the risks related to the implementation of the new hole in the rock, ultra-modern systems equipped to block immediately the eventual collapse of the earth were used for the implementation of the new tunnel. Unfortunately, in spite of the expensive measures taken, the casing of the tunnel roof has fallen out for part of the tunnel length (about 250 metres) and for several time it was has not been safe to open the tunnel to the traffic.

In recent years, always relating to the high-speed railway works, great emphasis was given to the riots in the Susa Valley (in the province of Turin) where the construction of the Lyon-Turin high-speed railway line is underway, an integral part of the TEN-T corridor 6 Lyon-Budapest. Citizens see the construction of this line as a threat to both their health, since the extraction of rocks is characterized by the presence of hazardous materials (asbestos and uranium), and to the maintenance of the valley rivers. The construction of the main tunnel between France and Italy would dug out an enormous amount of material that, it is estimated, could form a tower 750 meters high with a base of 100 square meters (AA.VV., 2002). The project would create an indirect flow of debris and stones containing dangerous substances that must be transported and handled at local and national level. Studies of the Geo-technological Center of the University of Siena (Maccheri, Monaci Naldini and Antompaoli, 2003) have estimated that more than one million cubic meters of material containing asbestos would be extracted from the tunnel that should pass under Musinè mount: although asbestos can safely be treated, these procedures would considerably increase the costs and the duration of the project and the risks would not be totally eliminated. The use of mines and other excavation activities could alter dangerously the underground waterways, vital for the springs,

and dry completely part of the mountain areas, as happened in the Mugello region. Furthermore, even the morphology and the landscape features would be changed by the planned works. The areas required for the construction sites and storage of the extracted material will result in the loss of arable land, meadows and forests. This threat raises the question of the lack of assessment of landscape impact currently absent from any decision-making process.

Furthermore, the projects for carrying out the new lines of the high-speed railway often require the construction of new stations to separate slow (local passengers and goods) from fast traffic. The drilling works needed for the construction of the new station in Bologna, during the years 2008/2009, have compromised the static of some public and private buildings.

4. The Importance of Communication Policies

The processes of diffusion of fears related to risk perception occur spontaneously and continuously. It is important, therefore, to consider risk communication as a process of public interest, which should share conditions and modalities, adequate to be effectively carried out, starting from the trust between all the parties involved. These, however, although in theory have the same rights to be informed and to express opinions, do not have the same communicative force. Risk communication is therefore defined as "the exchange of information and risk assessments among experts, public authorities, media, special interest groups and citizens, aimed at helping in making decisions about the acceptance, the reduction or the avoidance of risk" (Leiss, 1996) and also "an interactive process of exchange of information and opinions among individuals, groups and institutions, involved in the assessment and management of a risk. People (stakeholders) often with different interests and different roles and different skills and different perceptions..." (Gray and Wiedemann, 1999).

According to Kasperson et al. (1988) mass media are generally the main source of risk information. In this regard, an effect widely studied in literature concerns the social amplification of risk. With social amplification of risk is meant a typical effect of mass communication which tends to increase the importance and the spread of negative news rather than positive ones. For this reason, the communication cannot be translated into simple transmission of technical data. It requires the analysis of several parameters so that it can become an effective process, able to act on opinions and behavior errors, modifying them in

such a way as to avoid or reduce to a minimum the harmful effects on individuals and environment. It is necessary that the communication focuses on both the transmission of simple, clear and correct information, and especially on the credibility of the sources (scientific research, independent researchers, international experts, the convergence of judgments etc.).

5. The Survey Design

The events that occurred both in Mugello and in other parts of our country could presumably have act as a factor influencing public opinion on the construction of high-speed railway work at Florence's node. So that, the Guarantee Committee for Information and Communication of the Florence High-Speed Node has been established with the aim to start a timely and accurate implementation of the communication and information plan on the state of progress of the yards.

The Committee has firstly planned a demoscopic survey on sample basis to test the degree of concern of the citizens about certain aspects related to the implementation phases of the work as well as the opinions on the cost / benefit ratio of the project. The information to achieve the objectives were collected by administering a questionnaire designed also to measure the citizens' levels of information and their perception of risk about health and environment. For such research issues, the designing process of the questionnaire was a key step of the research (Pheland and Reynolds, 1996). The questionnaire was principally defined by the Committee and was refined by us in the formulation of some item. Indeed, poorly formulated questions are likely to induce obvious responses or, in addition, to generate anxiety and / or fears in those people who are not adequately informed (Sidhu, 2005). The questionnaire consisted of 22 items organized in 5 sections: a) socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents; b) level of awareness on the whole project (with questions about the work on the underpass and the new station); c) perception of risk and dreads about possible damages to the citizens' health; d) information about political issues; e) need to be periodically updated. The questionnaire was administered to a stratified random sample of adult residents of the city of Florence: a stratification by district of residence (5 districts), gender and age group (18 - 35; 36 - 65; over 65 years) was adopted, for a total of 30 strata. The survey was conducted during the months of May and June 2012, at a time when it was expected the start of the works for the implementation of the underpass. The survey was

commissioned to VALMON s.r.l., a spin-off participated and supported by the University of Florence.

Since most of the variables under investigation are percentage values (e.g. percentage of people aware of the project, percentage of people who consider it a useful intervention, etc.), it was decided that these values should be estimated with a maximum error of 4 percentage points (with probability 0.95). In the simple random sampling this result is achieved with a sample size of approximately 600 statistical units if the percentage value is equal to 50%, that is the worst possible scenario when it is present the maximum variability of the phenomenon; values different than 50% will give errors smaller than 4 percentage points. In fact, the precision of the estimates increases if the estimated percentages deviate from 50% and if more efficient sampling designs are adopted (such as the stratified random sampling, adopted in this work, that is one of the most efficient design). As a precautionary measure, to estimate percentages for the entire municipality with the above precision, it was felt that 1,200 interviews was a sample size sufficient to ensure at least 600 answers in all significant questions of the questionnaire (even for those questions that are at greater risk of non-response because of their presence in the final part of the questionnaire or that belong to particular sub-paths of the questionnaire).

Given the objectives of the inquiry and considering that the drilling activities for the realization of the High Speed Railroad underpass affect only the part of the municipal area to the right of the Arno river, it was considered that the two macro-territorial aggregations (identified with the names of the Florentine popular tradition: "Di quà d'Arno" and "Oltrarno", Graph 1) could realistically better respond to the information needs of the Municipality. For this reason, it was decided to set the final sample size of at least 2400 interviews, or at least 1200 interviews for each of the two identified macro-area.

For the variables expressed in percentage values, the sample size allows us to contain the estimation error to around two percentage points (with a probability equal to 0.95) if we assume simple random sampling (so below the maximum level of 4% initially fixed). Therefore, the actual estimation error is almost surely lower due to the particular sampling plan adopted (Cochran, 1977).

Graph 1

Districts of the Municipality of Florence with the superimposition of the new high-speed railroad line

Source: Open GIS of the Municipality of Florence: http://maps.comune.fi.it/tav

Note: the dotted line represents the underpass

Given the number of people interviewed, this opinion poll ranks among the most important surveys conducted in Italy on this topic. A total number of 2,446 interviews were carried out: 1,277 were assisted by computer with CATI (*Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing*) and the others were directly conducted in the municipal area with a mix method PAPI (*Paper Aided Personal Interviewing*) - CAWI (*Computer Aided Web self-Interviewing*), paying particular attention to the residents in areas facing the railroad tracks under construction or in areas directly affected by the drilling activities.

Due to the sensitiveness of the topic of the survey (and its significant political implications at both local and national level), the research has some innovative ideas for the survey plan adopted that mixes different techniques of administration of the questionnaire (CATI, CAWI and PAPI), with the general aim to make the "target population", the "sampling frame" and the sampled population as close as possible (Sarndal, Swensson and Wretman, 1992). The “target population” of this survey is represented by all people resident in the city of Florence of major age, stratified as described earlier. Since the “target population” differs from the “sampling frame” due to the “no response” phenomenon, in literature, many contributions suggest the use of mixed interviewing strategies to reduce non-response and

improve the quality of data obtained from surveys on sensitive issues (De Leeuw, Hox, and Dillman, 2008; De Bernardo and Curtis, 2013; Kays, Keith, and Broughal, 2013) like the one (politically correlated) promoted by the "Guarantee Committee for Information and Communication of the Florence High-Speed Node".

During the sample design, the possible distortions on the estimation procedures introduced by the method used to draw the sample were evaluated. The first interviews were collected by CATI. The use of CATI methodology allows to interview, nowadays in Italy, only the people who own a landline phone. The diffusion of cell phones in Italy is the highest in Europe and one of the highest in the rest of the world and the number of people that give up landline phones has been increasing in the last few years as well as the number of people that owns more than one mobile phone number (currently, Italy does not have reliable cell phone lists, although some market research companies claim to have them). If people that abandon landline phones are a random sample of the target population there would not be any bias in sampling the remaining population. People who give up landline phones could probably represent the younger population (De Leeuw, 2005) and they are probably more concerned about the use of public resources and more sensitive to environmental issues that are just the issues addressed in the research. Furthermore, in case of strong stratification of the sample, CATI surveys show increasing cost per respondent as the survey progresses, because it is increasingly difficult to identify individuals with certain characteristics, i.e. belonging to particular strata (Bowyer and Rogowski, 2015).

To partially correct the mentioned problems, some interviewers were sent to some meeting points inside the 5 districts of the city (mostly supermarkets, street markets or postal offices), paying particular attention to individuals living in the surroundings of the excavation lines. Respondents were initially proposed to choose whether or not to fill in the questionnaire themselves via web. If so, he or she received a ticket with a link to the web page of the questionnaire and personal access keywords. In order to be placed in the correct strata, the interviewee, at the beginning of the web questionnaire, had to specify their own individual characteristics. The questionnaire was instead directly administered to those who preferred the face-to-face interview.

The strategy adopted allows to obtain an overall final response rate of about 22,2% (Table 1); this rate should to be considered more than satisfactory in view of the topics of the survey, the questionnaire length and, above all, in relation to the worsening trend highlighted by the average rate of participation in opinion polls recorded over the last 15 years, that in recent years is fallen below 10% (Pew Research Center, 2012).

Table 1

Survey summary

Interview techniques	Contacts	Interviews	Participation rate
CATI (*Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing*)	6.383	1.277	*20,0%*
PAPI (*Paper Aided Personal Interviewing*) + CAWI (*Computer Aided Web self-Interviewing*)	4.620	1.169	*25,3%*
Total	**11.003**	**2.446**	***22,2%***

Source: Authors

6. Main Results of the Survey

In this paragraph, every estimate will be associated with the relative margin of error, always calculated at a 95% significance level. The percentage of people with some knowledge of the fact that the city of Florence would be affected by the works for the construction of the high speed railroad underpass Milan - Naples was equal to 72.2%. In relation to the sample size, it is estimated that the same proportion in the target population, with a 95% probability, is between 70.4% and 73.9%.

As expected, citizen resident in the "Di quà d'Arno" area (75.8% ± 2.42%, compared to "Oltrarno" with 68.6% ± 2.60%), i.e. in Districts affected by excavation works, show higher levels of information compared to the others. Only 50% ± 1,99% of respondents believe correctly that the project plans a new layout of a railway line, the rest or has no idea or thought, wrongly, that the existing railway line will simply be modernized (18.5% ± 1,55%).

Only 1444 respondents answered the questions about the exact location of the track line, the rest did not respond and therefore presumably ignores this location; only 33% ± 2,43% revealed a correct level of information in identifying the stretch of track in the tunnel as located mainly under the existing track. Just over half of respondents (52.1% ± 1,98%) is aware of the fact that the project involves the construction of a new station; of these, however, only 75.3% ± 2,37% were able to correctly locate the new station on the stretch of road between Rifredi and Santa Maria Novella. If the differences by gender and age group are generally not worth mentioning, those relating to the area of residence, although not significant, showed higher percentages of correct information for residents in the areas affected by the works.

Citizens expected that the average duration of the work would be 7.7 ± 0,36 years, with all values above 7 years for all the sampled districts, well above the previsions of the official authorities.

In the questionnaire was included a series of items designed to measure the level of concern of the citizens on some aspects related to the various stages of the construction work. Respondents were asked to express the level of concern (on a scale from 1 = not at all concerned and 10 = extremely concerned) on topics such as: the increase in dust, noise and vibration, damage to homes, damage to monuments, underground water contamination, land subsidence, safety on construction sites, disruptions for city traffic. Table 2 summarizes the average recorded levels of concern, disaggregated by area of interest.

Table 2

Average recorded levels of concern

	Di qua d'Arno		**Oltrarno**		**Total**		
	mean	***n***	**mean**	***n***	**mean**	***n***	**confidence interval**
The increase in dust	6,7	*1210*	6,4	*1210*	6,55	*2420*	6,45 - 6,65
Noise and vibration	6,84	*1192*	6,57	*1177*	6,7	*2369*	6,60 - 6,81
Damage to homes	6,9	*1204*	6,73	*1202*	6,82	*2406*	6,71 - 6,92
Damage to monuments	6,13	*1125*	6,18	*1128*	6,15	*2253*	6,04 - 6,27
Underground water contamination	7,16	*1189*	7,01	*1202*	7,09	*2391*	6,99 - 7,19
Land subsidence	6,77	*1083*	6,65	*1060*	6,71	*2143*	6,60 - 6,82
Safety on construction sites	5,39	*1034*	5,72	*968*	5,55	*2002*	5,42 - 5,68
Disruptions for city traffic	7,45	*1164*	7,52	*1177*	7,49	*2341*	7,39 - 7,59

Source: Authors
Note: on a scale from 1 = not at all concerned and 10 = extremely concerned;, broken down by area of interest, about topics related to the realization of the work

For almost all aspects, the average concern exceeds 6 points, except for the question about the safety in the high speed railroad construction sites (5.55 ± 0,13) which, however, appears to be the only aspect that does not directly affect the citizens. The main concern is obviously linked to the possible inconvenience due to the increase in the city traffic (7.49 ± 0,10), caused by the assumed presence of the vehicles used for the underpass construction or the expected closure of some roads. Also high is the concern for the underground water contamination (7.09 ± 0,10), probably due to the media attention given to the damages related to the high-speed railway works in the Mugello region. Strangely, there are no differences in the average levels of concern expressed by residents in the areas affected and not affected by the passage of the line.

Grouping the judgments of concern in the usual four category of scoring "not worried" (scores 1 and 2), "a little worried" (scores of 3, 4 and 5), "somewhat worried" (scores of 6, 7 and 8) and "very concerned" (scores 9 and 10), the percentage of concern for the last two bands ("somewhat" and "very ") were higher than 50% for all issues related to the works of the construction sites. Obviously, confirming what already said for the detected average levels, the higher percentages of concern were observed for the possible inconvenience of the increase in traffic in the city (79.3% ± 1,64%) and the underground water contamination (74.8% ± 1,74%).

A second set of indicators was included in the questionnaire to measure people's expectations about the estimated impact of construction work on some factors related to the realization of the High speed lane. Respondents were asked to quantify (on a scale from 1 "maximum improvement" to 10 "maximum deterioration") their expectations on factors such as the price of train tickets, quality of local public transport on rail or rubber routes, the city's economy, livability of the area where the new station will be built, prestige and beauty of the city. For the price of the tickets and the livability of the area where the new station will be built the average expectations show a slight decrease compared to the center of the scale place at 5.50. For almost all other factors, great changes are no expected (values around the center of the scale), except for the local public transport by rail for which is expected to improve slightly, probably because of the information given by the media to the fact that the realization of the underground line should be able to free the surface tracks.

With regard to the opinion that the residents have on the usefulness of the project, 72% ± 1,80% of respondents believe the intervention useful, although 59.2% ± 2,32% of them (42.6% ± 1,98% of the respondents) consider it too expensive. 78.9% ± 1,62% of respondents, unfortunately, is not aware of the fact that the work will include the construction of additional measures (so-called "compensation") for the benefit of the Florentine area (e.g. the works for the hydraulic adjustment of the Mugnone creek, urban regeneration and environmental improvements, realization of new car parks, the expansion of the network of bicycle lanes, etc.) although some of them have already been implemented or are being realization.

Finally, 74.5% ± 1,74% of the polled citizens expressed interest for the work in progress. The main reason for which the work is deemed deserving of attention is that this is considered to be of public interest, although not directly relate to the respondent (61,4% ± 2,64%). 60.9% ± 1,95% of respondents then declares he wants to be informed about the project and the development of the works. Favorite information channels are the local press, the local radio stations, the local television and the web.

7. Conclusions

The survey results show the level of concern for the Florentine citizen for the construction of the new high-speed rail bypass; citizens are in particular worried about the increase in the city traffic and for the possible damages to the groundwater. The major concern for the possible underground water contamination is most probably due to the emphasis given by the media to the damages happened in the Mugello Valley. Considering the opposition demonstrations promoted by local committees and the events that occurred both in Bologna and in the Mugello region, the general levels of concern measured in the city are not as high as one could imagine at first. The general level of information about the project is not very high and only 50% knows most of the details. The level of concern expressed by the respondents about the several aspects of the planned works are also related to the way the questionnaire was administered. It was frequent, for example, to find very high level of concern in people who were not aware of the project; a simple listing of the possible environmental damages is probably able to activate cognitive processes capable of generating states of fear. This behavior is probably due to the theory of the so-called NIMBY phenomenon that stands for "Not In My Back Yard" (Hermansson, 2007): the knowledge of the possible implementation of a great work in the vicinity of their homes activate in the citizens a spontaneous opposition process in defense of the current environment and of an idealized quality of life.

In the case of the Florentine bypass, the causes of these opposition processes are not to be found in the city's history and culture of the inhabitants as it happened in the Susa Valley where the so called “No Tav” protest movements were also due to the negative health effects of asbestos experienced in the past by the local miners of the Ambin and Musinè massifs, and are still common knowledge among the inhabitants of the Valley (Marincioni and Appiotti, 2009).

The communication policies introduced by the "Guarantee Committee for Information and Communication of the Florence High - Speed Node" tried to give more visibility to the project and to the works underway through frequent reports on the state of progress; the aim is to clarify to the citizens that the Municipality is an active agent in supervising the work with a priority interest in controlling any risk factors for residents and environment.

The survey described above was designed taking into account these purposes. These policies provide support to the hypothesis that the building of the citizens’ consensus for the

implementation of large public works is closely linked to the communication process of the local administration. Adequate policies of communications can efficiently reduce citizens' dreads.

The survey was conducted in May and June of 2012. However, the scientific dissemination of these results has been intentionally delayed in order to ensure to the urban policy an adequate period of reflection on the most appropriate ways to use research results because of the ongoing political debates, the extreme relevance of the issues being investigated and in the light of the fact that the drilling work has not yet started.

In January 2013, a national investigation coordinated by the Florence Public Prosecutor's office put the seal on the TBM - Tunnel Boring Machine, which was ready to start the excavation site in the "Campo di Marte" station. In December 2013, the TBM was unlocked but the materials for the lining of the tunnels were still seized. Two inquiries were activated: one relating to environmental crimes for the disposal of the sludge and the other for security crimes, in particular for the material used for the lining of the tunnels, which would not be as fire resistant as required by current safety standards. To date the biggest hurdle is a protocol issued by the Ministry of the Environment regarding the use of the excavated soils and stones that the TBM will produce. In December 2017 a special commission of the Ministry of the Environment evaluate positively the latest submitted plan by the contractor, after that the previous one was postponed (Min. Environment, 2016). Drilling activities should resume within the first quarter of 2018.

References

AA. VV. (2002). Impatto sul territorio delle grandi infrastrutture di trasporto: Il caso del TAV Torino-Lione, paper presented at the *Seminario del Torino Social Forum sul Piano Strategico 2000-2010*, Torino, 20 February 2002. Retrieved from: http://www.notavtorino.org/documenti/il-caso-tav-1a-parte.htm.

Pew Research Center (2012). *Assessing the Representativeness of Public Opinion Surveys*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

Bowyer, B. T., & Rogowski, J. C. (2015). Mode Matters: Evaluating Response Comparability in a Mixed-Mode Survey. Political Science Research and Methods, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2015.28.

Camera dei Deputati - XV Legislatura (2007). Ufficio Rapporti con l'Unione Europea; Progetti di finanziamento della rete trans europea di trasporto riguardanti l'Italia; Documentazione sulle politiche dell'Unione europea numero 22 del 05/12/2007. Retrieved from: http://documenti.camera.it/Leg15/Dossier/Testi/Po022.htm.

Cochran W. G. (1977). *Sampling techniques* (3rd edn). New York: Wiley.

Cossu R., Gadia R., & Luria P. (2013). *Environmental Impact Assessment*. Retrieved from: http://147.162.77.55/VIA/dispensa_PDF.

Bernardo, D.H., & Curtis, A. (2013). Using online and paper surveys: The effectiveness of mixed-mode methodology for populations over 50. *Research on Aging*, 35 (2), 220-240. doi: 10.1177/01640275124416.

De Leeuw E. D. (2005). To mix or not to mix data collection modes in surveys. *Journal of Official Statistics*, 21, 2: 233-255 Retrieved from: http://www.jos.nu/Articles/abstract.asp?article=212233.

De Leeuw E. D., Hox J. J., & Dillman D. A. (2008). *International handbook of survey methodology*. European Association of Methodology Series, New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Douglas M., & Wildavsky A. (1982). *Risk and culture: An essay on the selection of Technical and Environmental Dangers*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Douglas M. (1992). *Risk and Blame: Essays in Cultural Theory*. London: Routledge.

European Commission (2013). Infrastructure - TEN-T - Connecting Europe. Retrieved from: http://ec.europa.eu/transport/wcm/video/VP_Kallas_CoreNetworkCorridors.mp4.

Gray P. C. R., & Wiedemann P. M. (1999). Risk management and sustainable development: mutual lessons from approaches to the use of indicators. *Journal of Risk Research*, 2(3), 201-218.

Hermansson H. (2007). The ethics of NIMBY conflicts. *Ethic Theory Moral Practice* 10(1) 23-34.

Kasperson, R. E., Renn, O., Slovic, P., Brown, H. S., Emel, J., Goble, R., … Ratick, S. (1988), The Social Amplification of Risk: A Conceptual Framework. *Risk Analysis*, 8: 177–187. doi:10.1111/j.1539-6924.1988.tb01168.x.

Kays K., Keith T. L., & Broughal M. T. (2013). Best Practice in Online Survey Research with Sensitive Topics. In Sappleton N.: *Advancing Research Methods with New Technologies*. IGI Global, 157-168. doi:10.4018/978-1-4666-3918-8.ch009.

Leiss W. (1996). Three phases in the evolution of risk communication practice. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 545, 85-94. doi.org/10.1177/0002716296545001009.

Lupton D. (1999). *Risk*. New York: Routledge.

Maccheri M., Monaci Naldini D., & Antompaoli M. L. (2003). Relazione sulle ricerche di Amianto nella Bassa Val di Susa, lungo il tracciato del progetto preliminare del nodo urbano di Torino, potenziamento linea Bussoleno-Torino e cintura merci. Siena: Centro di Geotecniche dell'Università di Siena.

Marincioni F., & Appiotti F. (2009). The Lyon-Turin High-Speed Rail: The Public Debate and Perception of Environmental Risk in Susa Valley, Italy. *Environmental Management*, 43, 863-875. Doi:10.1007/s00267-009-9271-2.

Min. Ambiente (2016). Comunicati Stampa. http://www.minambiente.it/comunicati/tav-firenze-riutilizzo-di-terre-e-rocce-da-scavo-servira-nuovo-put.

Pheland P., & Reynolds P. (1996). *Argument and evidence, critical analysis for the social sciences*. London: Routledge.

Ruggiero V. (2000). *Movimenti nella città*. Torino: Bollati-Borighieri.

Sarndal C. E., Swensson B., & Wretman J. (1992). *Model Assisted Survey Sampling*. New York: Springer-Verlag.

Sidhu K. S. (2005). *New Approaches to Measurement and Evaluation*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

Slovic P. (2000). *The Perception of Risk*. London: Earthscan Publications Ltd.

Prof. Bruno Bertaccini, PhD
Dept. of Statistics, Informatics, Applications "G. Parenti" of the University of Florence
v.le Morgagni, 59, 50134 – Italy
www.disia.unifi.it
bruno.bertaccini@unifi.it
Bruno Bertaccini research interests involve the evaluation of teaching policies and, more in general, the evaluation of public services. He is also expert in the design and development of (web based) statistical information systems. He carries out regular teaching activity in first level and second level degree and master courses. He is the author and co-author of monographs and many scientific articles in national and international journals.

Giulia Biagi, PhD
Dept. of Statistics, Informatics, Applications "G. Parenti" of the University of Florence
v.le Morgagni, 59, 50134 – Italy
www.disia.unifi.it
biagi@disia.unifi.it
Giulia Biagi graduated in Business Economics at the Faculty of Economics and got a PhD in Applied Statistics at the Dept. of Statistics of the University of Florence at the University of Florence. She is a Postdoctoral Researcher since 2014. Her research interests involve the evaluation the evaluation of public services. She is also expert in the design and management of opinion polls and surveys. She is co-author of scientific articles in national and international journals.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.29036/jots.v9i17.44

Exposure of Travel Destinations on the Front Covers of the Magazines National Geographic Traveler and Podróże

Anna Jupowicz-Ginalska
Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies, University of Warsaw

Received 5 May 2018; received in revised form 2 December 2018; accepted 10 December 2018

Abstract

The article presents the results of the analysis of destinations presented on the front covers of Polish travel magazines National Geographic Traveler and Podróże. The author accomplished two research goals: firstly, she examined the scale of popularisation of travel destinations in two contexts: the geographical one (division into continents, countries and cities) and the chronological one (investigating changes in popularising particular travel destinations and referring them to the broader political or social context of a given time). Secondly, she indicated the differences or similarities in the selection of the destinations at the macro-level (among magazines, i.e. their editorial policies or affiliation to publishing companies) and at the micro-level (between the main and supporting cover stories).

Key Words: magazines' front covers, tourism, travel destinations, National Geographic Traveler, Podróże

JEL Classification: L8, L83, Z32

1. Introduction and Review of Literature

Tourism is subject to mediatisation, i.e. "a universal social process (...), meaning the adjustment of activities of various entities to the conditions defined by the specificity of the

media's influence" (Oniszczuk, 2011, p. 13). With reference to the tourist sector, it concerns experiences of tourists, mutual influence of real and simulated experiences and the role of tourist agencies in creating media messages (Cohen & Cohen, 2012). Travel journalism, seen as "intersection between information entertainment, journalism and advertising", has an undeniable role in tourism mediatisation (Lizzi, Cantoni & Inversini, 2011, pp. 356). Its role is growing with the importance of the industry, especially in such aspects as, for example, the study of the socio-cultural impact of tourism on society or the analysis of the idea of free time as a social practice (Fursich & Kavoori, 2001). Analyzing the evolution of travel journalism, Folker Hanusch lists its interdisciplinary dimensions (2010): cultural (presenting foreign cultures); market (the range of information or entertainment presented to recipients); ethical (the impact of PR materials on journalists and on the rules of cooperation with business partners); motivational (critical or approving of tourism).

Dissemination of information, inspiring recipients, valorising tourist products and creating opinions about them are the most important duties of travel journalism, and thus of the media, which carry the effects of journalistic work (Kruczek & Walas, 2004). Diversified tasks of the media, their ubiquity and influence on recipients make them an important element of tourism, from information policy of its subjects, to opinion formation.

1.1 The Media against the background of sources of travel information

The media are one of the sources of travel information. Others, non-media ones, include contacts with friends or family (the so-called word of mouth), advice of tour operators, promotional materials (leaflets, brochures), guidebooks, fairs and exhibitions (Sarma, 2007).

In 2009, Rafał Marek claimed that the Internet will be "the most important source of presentation of tourist offers" (2009, p. 127). These words turned out to be prophetic: today it is "the main communication channel for the tourist sector, as shown by the average number (...) of people seeking information before making a trip" (Drozdowska & Duda-Seifert, 2016, p. 2). This is confirmed by industry reports: e.g. IAB Polska reports that the Internet is the most useful source of information: behind it are recommendations of friends and family, advertising, television, the press, radio, leaflets, folders and expert statements (2015). This context supports the conclusion of Robert Wolny, who claims that "this is how information is obtained by (...) almost half of respondents using e-tourism services" (2015, p. 413-414). The above data coincide with the global trend indicating the high position of the Internet: Oxford

Economics research shows that 63% of Europeans believe in online news, another 34% pay attention to travellers' opinions and ratings, 17% gain knowledge from service providers, and 12% – from social media (Szypuła, 2017).

In view of the above, it can be concluded that the Internet prevails over traditional media (also in terms of broadcasters offering travel content, e.g. blogs, vlogs, social media, portals and specialized vortals). This does not mean, however, that by dominating them, it causes their decline. It should be emphasized that in each of the reports, important sources of knowledge are the recommendations of friends or family and people's own experiences as tourists. The effectiveness of interpersonal contacts in tourism is confirmed by scientific research (Mack Blose & Pan, 2007), which sometimes questions the direct impact of online content on purchasing decisions. For example, Serena Volo claims that "there is little evidence that the future travel intentions of the readers of these travel blog are significantly influenced by the blog narratives" (2010, p. 12). Also in the IAB Polska report, in the area of effective impact on recipients, the Internet is second only, but the results of traditional media are also significant: for 51% respondents television is the impulse for shopping, the press for 45%, and radio for 32% (2015). This means that while the Internet is a popular source of information, other ways of acquiring knowledge turn out to be valuable in the final stages of making decisions. Here it is worth referring to the research from 2014, in which respondents indicated, among others, such sources of travel ideas as recommendations, travel programmes, books, films, the press, recommendations from travel agencies, and advertising in the media (VMG PR, 2014). The Internet was at the end of the list, which was commented: "This shows a clear trend – we want to make individual decisions that meet our needs. We prefer the quality of recommendations over their number – not forums and anonymous opinions, but recommendations of relatives and independent searching for information" (ibid, p. 4).

In the face of a convergent and chaotic communication polyphony, it is optimal for the recipient to use a lot of data. It makes it possible to compare offers, broaden knowledge about selected destinations or check the reliability of published content. The practice of reaching for a combination of information sources (so-called "information search strategies") is common in tourism, and its research has been conducted for many years (Gursoy, 2011).

Such behaviour patterns can also be noticed in Poland, as evidenced by Ingvar Tjøstheim, Iis P. Tussyadiah and Sigrid Oterholm Hoem. According to them, the sources of information which are complementary to the Internet include friends and family, guide books as well as TV and press materials (2007). Traditional media are still an important element of the tourism sector, still playing a significant role in the process of searching for travel

information. Among them are TV channels (Discovery, National Geographic), TV programmes (in Poland, for example, "Boso przez świat"), radio programmes ("Reszta świata" in Program I Polskiego Radia SA), sections in advice and lifestyle magazines, as well as travel magazines, which focus entirely on getting to know and discovering the world.

1.2 Printed travel magazines

Christine A. Vogt and Daniel R. Fesenmaier (1998) claim that the informational needs of tourists are of a functional nature (among listed here are the need for knowledge and the usefulness of the acquired information), innovative (creativity, diversity), aesthetic (fantasising), symbolic (social interactions) and hedonistic (e.g. emotionality, phenomenology).

According to Dale Fodness and Brian Murray, travel magazines play a functional role, i.e. they are used because of the systematically delivered knowledge. Thanks to them, planning a trip is easier: „The use of newspapers and magazines to plan a trip suggests a strategy in which information acquisition occurs on a relatively regular basis irrespective of impending purchase, i.e., ongoing search (1998, p.115). Kathleen L. Abdereck (2007) heads towards hedonism and aesthetics; she stresses that the first motivation is about enjoying the search itself, and the second one is the need to see the place, or, in other words, its visualization. In this way, magazines arouse interest of recipients and make it easier for them to make decisions. Eduardo Brito-Henriques (2014, p. 323) also writes about the pleasure resulting from the use of the travel press, recognizing that „many readers (…) merely use magazines as a means to relax and withdraw themselves and to enjoy the pleasure of a disembodied experience of exotic places”.

Madelene R. McWha, Warwick Frost, Jennifer Laing and Gary Best emphasize that travel journalists go beyond reporting, since they take up political, social or cultural issues. Thanks to this, they have "a persuasive power to mediate foreign cultures and destinations and could potentially influence their readers’ views” (2016, p. 86). They use language means whose task is to engage the recipient and encourage them to experience the journey. Such narrative has "the ability to mentally transport the reader to an imaginary landscape" (ibid., p. 87).

Photographs are an important element of every magazine as well as an effective tourist marketing tool (Farahani et al., 2011). Photographs, and stories accompanying them, influence the readers most strongly. According to Woojin Lee and Kathleen Andereck, they

form a general impression of the usefulness of the magazine, which in turn supports the decision-making process of the recipients and at the same time transfers to the image of the magazine as a consultant and sources of information (2010). Arturo Molina and Águeda Esteban write about their role in the informative and decision-making context, claiming that the attractiveness of the place shown in the pictures may encourage and motivate readers to choose a destination or set out on a journey (2006). It should be added that the condition for the full impact of images is their coherence with the text, because its lack negatively affects the memorisation and assimilation of content (Hsu & Song, 2013).

1.3 The front cover of an illustrated magazine

One of the most important elements of each magazine is its front cover. It is considered a showcase of the press brand and at the same time a packaging of its content (White, 1982), which has more recipients than the magazine itself (Brzoza, 2016). It strengthens the competitiveness of the title, guarantees its variability (e.g. updated cover stories) and stability (e.g. layout) at the same time. It has the following functions (Jupowicz-Ginalska, 2017a):

a) information and promotional – provides information about the content of the magazine, date, price; it creates the image of people, products and services appearing on it; is the subject and object of promotion (it is part of communication activities in itself);
b) ideological – divided into culture-forming (comments on social, political, cultural, religious phenomena) and educational (inspires to broaden knowledge); According to Sammye Johnson and Carlos A. de Lozano, it refers to current events, thus becoming "a historical artifact" (2002);
c) relational – broken down into communication (builds interaction with the reader through direct phrases and metaphorical formulations) and entertainment (entertains, relaxes);
d) innovative – modernises the magazine, introducing unusual design and technical solutions (e.g. covers enhanced with VR technology);
e) protective – secures the content of the magazine;
f) financial – affects the purchase of the magazine by readers (first it draws the attention of recipients, then encourages to browse the magazine, and finally affects shopping decisions: in other words, the fate of the magazine is largely determined

by what will be on its front page).

A particularly important part of front covers are cover stories, which take graphic-text forms and thus represent the content of the whole magazine (Jupowicz-Ginalska, 2017b). They are divided into the main ones, exposed in the most visible way (the largest picture and noticeably separated text) and the supporting ones (based on the text itself or simple graphics, rarely on an additional photo). The role of the main cover story, regarding its size, is to maximally draw attention to the magazine and encourage people to browse through it. Supporting stories have a strengthening and complementary function. They can influence recipients' decisions if the impact of the main topic turns out to be insufficient. However, due to smaller graphics and texts and because there are more of them, they require concentration and perceptiveness.

Of course, front covers also consist of other elements. Ben Wasike adds the logo with the name of the magazine (2017), while David E. Sumner and Shirrel Rhoades exchange the tagline, price, barcode, date of issue and website address (2016).

The front cover is important for every participant in the publishing process. Taking on the one hand its importance and interdisciplinarity (it can be analysed, for example, from the media, linguistic, marketing and economic perspective), on the other – the mediatising role of travel magazines in tourism, and on the third – the position of tourism sector, the author decided to combine these three threads and explore the role of the front covers of Polish travel magazines.

2. Research Methodology, Description of the Research Sample, Objectives and Hypotheses

The author's goal was to select magazines with a comparable subject and position, while differentiating them due to the genealogy of the brand. Hence, National Geographic Traveler and Podróże were chosen as the subject of the analysis.

The title selection key was based on the following categories:

a) readership level – the titles are the only ones in their thematic category to appear in the summary of the Polish Reading Research (CCS[2] index for NGT was 1.0%, for

[2] The seasonal cycle readership (CCS) – the percentage of respondents who came across the title at least once during the seasonal cycle of the title (PBC, 2018).

Podróże – 1.2%[3]);

b) average circulation per issue – in December 2017 for Podróże it was 19,600 copies, for NGT – 29,100 copies (Teleskop.org.pl, 2017);

c) sales of printed editions – in December 2017, for Podróże, it was 6,664 copies, for NGT – 17,293 copies (Teleskop.org.pl, 2017);

d) affiliation to publishing companies – Podróże is published by a Polish group TIME SA, while NGT by Burda Publishing Polska Sp. z o.o. (Podróże is known on the domestic publishing market, whereas NGT in the world, for example due to the brand National Geographic);

e) publishing cycle and subject matter – the magazines are travel monthly magazines, where:

- NG: Traveler has been published in Poland since 2005 (in the world since 1984), initially as a bimonthly. It is one of 12 national editions of the title. It is addressed to "active people who are curious of the world and its natural, architectural and cultural attractions" (Burdamedia.pl a, 2018). The magazine consists of reportages, tips and "adventure" type of material. Its opinion-forming function is emphasized: "Traveler sets travel trends. It indicates unobvious destinations, which become fashionable. Sometimes it creates these trends" (Burdamedia.pl b, 2018, p. 3).
- Podróże has been published since 1998, first as a bimonthly. The publisher puts emphasis on the informative and cognitive values of the magazine, tips and recommendations, targeted at people "looking for inspiration for trips, not only on holiday" (Grupazpr.pl, 2018). The editor-in-chief of the magazine claims: "We want to encourage travel, suggest ideas, solutions, advice (...) Our magazine is for those who organize trips individually, on their own and want to know something about the place they are going to. We try to prepare suggestions for a centralized group of recipients. These trips are neither luxurious nor extreme; they are for everyone." (Kłopotowska, 2015).

The front covers of both magazines available on the publishers' websites were analysed, including the period when they appeared as bimonthlies. In this way:

[3] Other magazines, e.g. "Poznaj Świat", were not included in the analysis as they do not appear in the ranking (PBC, 2018).

a) for NGT – from 2006 to the end of 2017, after rejecting unreadable or inaccessible covers, 110 covers were studied (National-geographic, 2018);
b) for Podróże – from 2007 r. do the end of 2017 r., after rejecting unreadable or inaccessible covers, 124 covers were studied (Podroze.se.pl, 2017).

The covers were not totalled up, as each magazine was analysed separately and the analysis categories were the same for both titles.

The main objective of the quantitative analysis (enriched with the qualitative analysis) was to research the scope of exposure of travel destinations through main and support cover stories. The specific objectives of this article were:

a) researching the scale of popularization of travel destinations in a geographical context (division into continents, countries and cities, with reference to other attractions) and a chronological context (in the adopted time interval of the analysis, with reference to changes in the popularization of particular directions of travel and their reference to the broader political or social context prevailing at that time);
b) indicating differences or similarities in the selection of the destination at the macro-level (among magazines, i.e. their editorial policies or affiliation to publishing companies) and at the micro-level (between the main and supporting cover stories).

The specified goals were used to verify the following hypotheses:

H1. The front covers of NGT and Podróże differ in destinations presented in the main and supporting cover stories. It is assumed that Podróże, due to its affiliation to the Polish publisher, will refer to Poland more often, while NGT will refer to exotic directions and extraordinary areas, not necessarily placed in Europe. It means, that if covers are the quintessence of the magazine's editorial policy, it can be assumed, that editorial strategy influences on choosing main and supporting cover stories, therefore support of the touristic destinations.

H2. Magazine covers are "historical artefacts". That is, their content is a reflection of the global political, cultural or economic situation: it is assumed that events in Egypt, Libya or Syria have affected the cover content – these countries were replaced by other, more stable ones, for example in Central and Eastern Europe (so it can be assumed that these events negatively affected the mediatization of tourism of these destinations).

The author decided to submit this paper to the Journal of Tourism and Services due to

the common theme between the magazines, the content of the article and the subject of the research presented in the article. As it is written on the magazine's website, Journal "focuses on tourism and service industry development" and is connected with „important topics and advance theoretical knowledge or thinking about key areas of tourism and services". It can be said with certainty that the mediatization of tourism is a part of the above thematic area: after all, the media not only inform about this industry, but also they promote it, support it and help in its development. One of the most important participants in the mediatization of tourism is, of course, tourism media. In this article they are represented by recognized magazines in Poland: National Geographic Traveler and Podróże. In turn, one of the most important elements of each magazine is the front cover, which promotes everything that is on it. In the case of the abovementioned media, these are, e.g., destinations, lifestyle, products and services related to the tourism. Therefore this text, focusing on the analysis of the front covers of two tourism magazines, is an example of studies on the tourism mediatization (in the area of the tourist destination).

3. Problem Solution and Results

The subjects of the main and supporting cover stories were not only continents, countries, cities but also geographical lands. It should be clarified that when for example a country was mentioned on the cover, its continental affiliation was not always mentioned (just like cities were not located in countries). To average the results, the author assigned the directions to their geographical origin. She arranged the obtained results and arranged them chronologically for each of the continent, later she placed them on world maps (for the main stories); for supporting stories, tables were used. Antarctica and the Arctic were omitted in the lists, because the total number of their indications was negligible.

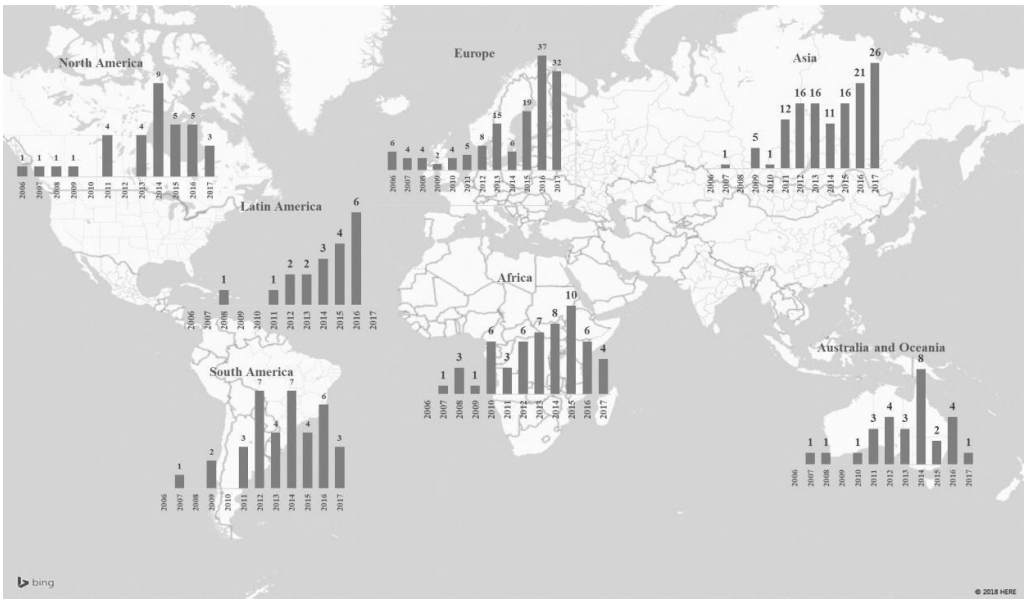
3.1 Recommended destinations in main cover stories

3.1.1 Indications of destinations on the covers of NGT in the years 2006 – 2017 - main cover stories

On the basis of Graph 1, it can be stated that currently the most exposed travel destinations are European and Asian locations. The sharp rise in their popularity falls in the years 2011 – 2012. It can be seen that this is a growing trend (apart from declines in 2014).

Graph 1

NGT - the number of indications for each destination promoted on the covers of the magazine in the years 2007 – 2017



Source: Author (for this study)

As far as Europe is concerned, in recent years there was an increase in interest in the destinations considered as the domain of mass tourism (in the past, they rarely or never appeared in NGT). These destinations are:

a) Italy – in 2008 mentioned once, while from 2012 to 2017 as many as 13 times (including several mentions of Venice, Rome, but also less obvious Bari or Cinque Terre);
b) Spain – in 2006 described twice, while 16 times since 2012 (usually Barcelona and the islands, for example the Canary Islands or Balearic Islands);
c) France – until 2010 it appeared 5 times altogether, and since that time 14 times (mostly as Paris, Provence, or generally as a country);
d) Greece – it was on the cover 10 times since 2013 (as a country, Crete, the Cyclades, Santorini)
e) Croatia – appeared five times since 2011 (as a country rather than attractions)
f) Turkey and Portugal (each of them four times in the years 2012 – 2016).

Recently, NGT more often indicated directions outside the list of "holiday" destinations. These are Albania (twice in recent years, earlier once), Belarus (once in 2017),

Bulgaria (once in 2016), the Czech Republic (once in 2017), Iceland (five times in 2014 – 2017), Romania (twice in 2017, earlier once), Ukraine (four times in 2015 – 2017), Germany (four times in 2016 – 2017, including Berlin and Bavaria) or Hungary (twice in 2015 – 2017). Norway was keenly supported by the magazine (10 publications in total, eight of them since 2011, usually as a country).

How is Poland presented on this background? In the years 2007 – 2010, three mentions appeared about it, and since 2011 – as many as 10. In this country, the publisher focused on lands (Podlasie, Warmia, Kashubia, Roztocze), less on cities (e.g. Wrocław, Gdańsk, Poznań, Warsaw). Taking into account the number of publications on European countries, it can be concluded that Poland is ranked in the middle in this respect.

Asia, on the other hand, is presented either as a continent or a geographical region, e.g. Borneo or Mekong. There are also non-standard destinations, e.g. Sipadan and Pamir. In this context, Asia was mentioned 13 times (since 2011 seven times). Among the most popular countries on this continent one can indicate:

a) China – altogether is appeared 11 times, and since 2011 – 10 times (Beijing and Hong Kong were the main attractions);
b) India – since 2011 appeared 13 times in the NGT (most often as a country, but there were mentions about Mumbai, Kerala, Rajasthan or Bollywood);
c) Japan – it was mentioned eight times, once before 2011 (usually as a country);
d) Indonesia – since 2011 it appeared seven times, including twice in 2015, 2016 and 2017 (it was mainly exposed as a country, but also Bali);
e) Thailand – it was mentioned six times since 2011;
f) Georgia and Burma – since 2011 they were on the covers of "NGT" five times (as countries);
g) Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Nepal – four times since 2011 times (as countries).

Over the past two years, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan were more eagerly exposed. Since 2013, the United Arab Emirates (Dubai, Abu Dhabi), Tibet, Cambodia, Iran and Singapore appeared among destinations. The years 2016 and 2017 are the search for new directions, e.g. Israel (Tel Aviv), Jordan, Colombia (Bogota) and Malaysia (three times).

It can be said that the publisher of NGT attaches greater importance to Central America (this is visible since 2011, before which these directions were mentioned rarely or not at all). What is particularly worth emphasizing is the increase of popularity of Cuba, which appeared in 2008 once, but since 2011 as many as five times (three times as Havana). In 2016, Martinique

was shown on the covers twice; The Caribbean also turned out to be equally popular (three times in the abovementioned research period). NGT also encouraged its readers to visit Panama, Nicaragua, Honduras and Jamaica.

South America enjoys changeable attention of the editors, although since 2011 the number of cover mentions did not fall below three a year. The most common were: Brazil (six times since 2012, with reference to the country or Rio de Janeiro), Chile (six times, including five times since 2010, with attractions such as Torres del Paine, Valparaiso, Rapa Nui), Peru (six times, in 2016 three times). The continent also appears as a whole: either as South America or Patagonia (six times since 2011). The editors also promote unobvious directions, such as Ecuador, Bolivia, Guatemala and Venezuela (since 2011).

Among the destinations of North America, the leader is the USA, which was mentioned 19 times. The magazine refers to states (California, Alaska), cities (New York, San Francisco, Chicago) and specific attractions (Route 66, Yellowstone). Since 2011, Mexico appeared in the magazine eight times and Canada six times since 2007.

The most popular destinations of Australia and Oceania were Australia (six times since 2013), New Zealand (seven times, since 2013 – six) and French Polynesia (six times since 2011, e.g., the Marquesas Islands, Mangareva, Tahiti). The magazine also showed interest in Papua New Guinea (three times until 2014) and exotic Vanuatu (twice until 2014).
Africa is an interesting case. In 2011, there was a clear decline in interest in this continent. Since 2012, it was slowly being rebuilt, although in 2016 the trend collapsed again. Here, NGT most often mentioned Morocco (in total seven times, but since 2012 six times, most often as a country). Since 2013, South Africa appeared six times (mostly as a country), and Ethiopia – three times (since 2008). Until 2011, references were made to Liberia, Nigeria, Somaliland and Mali; however, since 2011 these countries were not mentioned anymore. In recent years, "NGT" exposed Mauritius (three times), Tanzania (three times, including the Seregenti national park), Tunisia, Seychelles, Senegal, Madagascar, Angola, Benin and Gambia. Egypt, once one of the most frequently chosen directions in the past, appeared in NGT once in 2013 while presenting Alexandria.

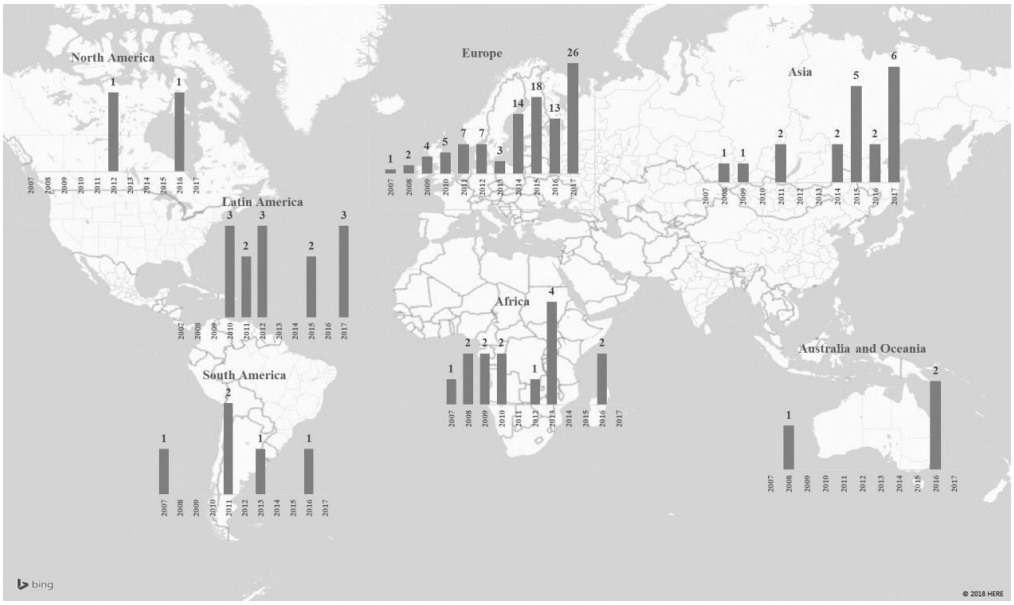
3.1.2 Indications of destinations on the covers of Podróże in 2007 – 2017 - main cover stories

In the case of Podróże, similar trends can be indicated as in NGT (Graph 2). First, there is a systematic increase in support for European trends. Secondly, Asia is gaining

popularity (which did not fall below 5 publications since 2009).

Graph 2

Podróże - number of indications of each destination promoted on the covers of the magazine in 2007 – 2017



Source: Author (for this study)

The countries that were most often mentioned are:

a) Spain – 28 times since 2010 (in 2010 and 2011, 13 times in total); apart from the country itself, references were made to Andalusia, Madrid, Mallorca, Tenerife and Ibiza, Sierra Nevada, Valencia, La Gomera, and Camargue;
b) Italy – 27 times since 2008 (and e.g. in 2017 as many as five times); here as a destination the whole country was recommended, but also Tuscany, Sicily, Marche, Lake Garda and Pantelleria;
c) Portugal – 20 times since 2008; the biggest attractions were the Algarve, Lisbon, Tejo, the Azores and Porto Santo;
d) Poland – 22 times since 2007 (only in 2016 – 2017 eight times); readers were encouraged to visit the country as such, but also Masuria, the coast, Krakow, Świnoujście, Cieszyn (so you can see that the country was supported willingly and more often than by "NGT");
e) Balkan states – since 2011 Croatia appeared 7 times (as a country, Dubrovnik or Zagreb); Albania and Montenegro 3 times; Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina twice; Serbia once (it is worth adding that some countries received

support since 2015, although the Balkans were described as a land since 2012, six times so far).

Destinations such as Greece, France and Turkey were less popular. Since 2009 Hellas appeared on eight covers; France had 10 exposures since 2010 (mainly Paris, Provence and Corsica), and the European part of Turkey – four since 2011 (the Asian part was mentioned five times in years 2012 – 2013). The United Kingdom was in no better situation (five times since 2012, with the promotion of London and Scotland), Cyprus (three times since 2015), the Netherlands and Denmark (twice).

The last three years of research is marked with the growing support for Poland's neighbours: the Czech Republic (twice in 2017, with the previous reference to this country from 2012), Germany (eight times since 2012, most often in the context of Berlin); Belarus (in 2017), Lithuania (in 2014) and Slovakia, which was on the cover of Podróże six times.

Since 2015, the magazine systematically referred to Austria, and more recently to Romania, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, Hungary (mainly Budapest), Sweden and Slovenia (this country regained the magazine's interest in 2015) Thus, it can be seen that the publisher is looking for new destinations and trying to differentiate the content of the main cover stories.

As for Asia, there was an increase in interest in Indonesia (in total seven times, and in 2016 four times; Bali and Java were exposed); China (eight times since 2007, mainly in the context of Shanghai and Hong Kong). To a lesser extent, in recent years, Thailand was referred to (four times since 2011), India (since 2013 three times), Laos (twice), Tibet and Vietnam (each country once since 2011). In the last three years, the publisher also pointed to Taiwan, Nepal, Japan and South Korea.

The situation of Africa is interesting: here too, 2011 was a breakdown of support for this continent. The exception is 2013, when Africa tried to rebuild its presence on the covers; however, as proven in subsequent years, it was not very effective. As an attraction, the Nile appeared, not affiliated to any country (three times until 2010), the Sahara and the savannah. The countries which are worth pointing to are Tunisia and Morocco (three times each, with the trend disappearing since 2013), Tanzania (twice, together with Djerba and Zanzibar) and once: South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia and Mauritius.

In Central America, the places which were promoted most were Cuba (since 2010), the Caribbean and the Dominican Republic (each four times during the entire research period) and Jamaica. South America is Peru (twice since 2011) and Argentina (Buenos Aires).

Considering North America, it was most encouraged to visit Mexico (three times) and the US (five times since 2007, with the emphasis on Florida, California and New York).

Australia and Oceania were presented as islands (the Cook Islands, Papua New Guinea and, generally, the Pacific Islands). It should be noted that for this continent (as well as for the Americas) it is difficult to indicate unambiguous trends due to the small number of publications. It can be concluded that in recent years Latin American or North American destinations were more often presented, but this is assumption needs to be made carefully and requires verification in the future.

3.2 Recommended destinations in supporting cover stories

3.2.1. Indications of destinations on the cover of NGT in years 2007 – 2017 - supporting cover stories

On the covers of NGT a total of 828 supporting stories appeared (in some editions their number reached even 10 – 14 threads). As can be seen in Table 1, Europe and Asia generated the greatest interest; Africa was in the third place. The remaining continents were less frequent on the front pages (a small upward trend can be observed only for North America).

Table 1

Supporting stories in "NGT" years 2006 – 2017 (percentage distribution)

year	Africa	South America	North America	Latin America	Australia and Oceania	Asia	Europe
2006	13%	10%	3%	0%	3%	23%	47%
2007	0%	25%	25%	0%	0%	0%	50%
2008	4%	0%	4%	0%	4%	21%	68%
2009	17%	3%	3%	0%	6%	25%	47%
2010	14%	9%	9%	7%	2%	33%	26%
2011	8%	3%	5%	2%	7%	22%	53%
2012	19%	5%	5%	2%	4%	14%	51%
2013	23%	8%	5%	0%	3%	26%	34%
2014	13%	0%	8%	0%	2%	29%	48%
2015	11%	18%	5%	5%	0%	32%	29%
2016	15%	12%	2%	2%	2%	32%	34%
2017	8%	6%	10%	6%	0%	16%	53%

Source: Author (for this study)

The Old Continent was most often written about, although over the years its

dominance was diversified. It was particularly popular in 2006 – 2009, 2011 – 2012, 2014 and 2017 (in each of these cases, a minimum of 50% of the analysed content was devoted to Europe). Among the most popular destinations were, among others:

a) Poland – 53 publications, which gives the country priority in the ranking (up to 2010, there were 13 references, and since 2011, Poland was described several times a year, e.g. seven times in 2017); the articles promoted cities (Gdańsk, Gdynia, Zakopane, Poznań, Wrocław, Toruń) and geographical areas (Mazowsze, Masuria, Kashubia, the Bieszczady, Roztocze and the Tatras);
b) Italy – 19 publications, including as many as three in 2017, 2013 or 2011; obvious destinations such as Tuscany and Sardinia were presented as attractions, but there were also references to Siena and the Aeolian Islands;
c) Spain – 14 publications mainly with Barcelona, Andalusia, Malaga and Porto;
d) Great Britain – 12 publications (nine of them since 2012); mainly of London and Scotland, although Bristol and Cornwall also appeared;
e) France – 11 publications, mainly since 2011 (Paris, mentioned four times, should be considered the main destination, as well as Costa Rica).

The remaining European countries received support in the range of 5 – 10 publications during the analysed period, with the majority of publications appearing since 2011. These countries are, among others: Cyprus, Portugal (as a country or Lisbon), Germany (Berlin, but also Alsace), Greece (as a country and Greek islands), Sweden (as a country, Stockholm, Bornholm), Hungary (e.g. Budapest) or Austria (Vienna, Carinthia and Innsbruck). It can be seen, therefore, that the authors tried to diversify trends associated with mass tourism and to present in an unusual way, finding places less known to the public.

NGT also reached for extraordinary destinations, such as, for example, Andorra, Luxembourg, Estonia, Latvia and Iceland. And while the first countries occurred sporadically, Iceland was on the pages of NGT several times (five times since 2011).

Again, Russia was scarcely presented (as Petersburg or Moscow) and so were Polish neighbours (until 2014, there were single mentions of Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Ukraine and Belarus). Romania, Malta, the European part of Turkey and Croatia were not popular, either.

Therefore, it can be concluded that, in addition to repeating trends from the main cover stories, NGT treats supporting stories as a complement (i.e., what was intensively exploited in the main stories, can be found to a lesser extent in supporting stories, such as the examples of

Norway, Denmark or The Netherlands).

Among Asian destinations, the leading ones were: the Asian part of Russia (13 times, mainly as Siberia, the Kuril Islands and Lake Baikal); Indonesia (eight times since 2010, as a country, Borneo or the Maluku Islands); Japan (from 2011 seven times); China (in total seven times, but in 2017 it appeared twice, most often as Shanghai) and the Asian part of Turkey (with Cappadocia on top). Popular destinations such as Thailand, India, Israel, Georgia, United Arab Emirates (mainly with Dubai), appeared long ago and with occasional mentions in 2015 or 2016. In return, the monthly reached, for example, for Uzbekistan, Oman, Pakistan, Yemen, Laos, Lebanon (in 2010), Kuwait (in 2008), Qatar (in 2011), Afghanistan (twice in 2010 and 2012), Armenia (2010), Jordan (in 2011 and 2015). While these countries were mentioned sporadically, Iran was written about five times (also in recent years, mainly in the context of the country, but also Isfahan and Persia), and Cambodia – four times (mainly due to Angkor Wat).

Africa is the third most popular continent in the ranking. In addition to recognizable travel destinations, such as Morocco (mentioned seven times), South Africa (six times) or Kenya (four times), non-standard places were promoted in "NGT", such as Ethiopia and South Sudan (each country five times since 2011) and occasionally Mauritania, Uganda, Cameroon, Botswana or Tanzania. It is worth noting that before 2010 the covers also mentioned Syria, Niger, Rwanda, Gabon and Egypt. None of these countries appeared on the front page of "NGT" anymore. Africa was also portrayed in the context of geographical areas, such as the Sahara (three times) and the whole continent (six times). The Atlas mountains and the Zambezi river were presented as attractions.

Although none of the Americas threatened the position of the abovementioned continents, it is worth discussing them briefly. As far as South America is concerned, in recent years, Argentina and Peru (four times), Colombia, Brazil and Bolivia (three times each) were mostly described. Geographical regions were also exposed, e.g. Patagonia, Amazonia and Andes (three times each). In North America, the USA was dominant: the country was referred to in more than 50% of supporting cover stories, usually in the context of states (Alaska, Utah, Nevada, Missouri) and cities (Chicago, San Francisco, Washington, New York, which was written about four times). Canada was mentioned less frequently (five times since 2011) and Mexico was described three times. Latin America was on the covers of NGT since 2010, and it was intensively promoted in 2017 (four times). Since 2015, Cuba, Belize and Jamaica were systematically exposed.

Australia and Oceania were dominated by Australia. Papua New Guinea and New

Zealand ranked second. Mentions were made of Samoa and Hawaii.

3.2.2 Indications of destinations on the cover of Podróże in years 2007 – 2017 - supporting cover stories

The total number of supporting stories amounted to 692. From the second half of 2014, no more than five topics appeared in each issue. In earlier years, usually the number of threads fluctuated between five and eight.

Like the main cover stories, the supporting ones in Podróże focused primarily on Europe and Asia (Table 2).

Table 2

Supporting cover stories in "Podróże", years 2007 – 2017 (percentage distribution)

year	Africa	South America	North America	Latin America	Australia and Oceania	Asia	Europe
2007	11%	0%	2%	0%	4%	18%	64%
2008	9%	4%	0%	2%	2%	27%	57%
2009	15%	4%	8%	1%	3%	20%	48%
2010	6%	3%	5%	1%	0%	21%	64%
2011	7%	1%	7%	1%	3%	22%	59%
2012	10%	7%	6%	1%	0%	24%	52%
2013	5%	5%	2%	0%	0%	34%	53%
2014	7%	11%	7%	2%	0%	19%	54%
2015	0%	8%	6%	4%	4%	22%	56%
2016	3%	12%	3%	2%	0%	26%	53%
2017	9%	7%	6%	4%	4%	17%	54%

Source: Author (for this study)

Since 2010, interest in Africa was decreasing (attempts to rebuild its popularity appeared in 2017), but since 2012 there was more support for South America. The other continents appeared less frequently.

As far as Europe is concerned, it is worth noting that in the entire research period the percentage share of publications on it dropped below 50% only once (48% in 2009). In the remaining years, it was mentioned very often (even 64% of all references in 2009 and 2010). The most popular destinations include:

a) Poland – it was written about 97 times, most frequently in 2010 – 2013 (over ten times) and in 2016 – 2017 (nine times); mainly about cities (Lublin, Warsaw, Tricity, Poznań, Wrocław and Szczecin), resorts (Szczyrk, Ustroń, Szklarska Poręba, Supraśl, Jastarnia) and the lands (the Tatras and Podhale, the Beskids,

Kashubia, Bieszczady, Warmia and Pomerania); there were also unusual destinations, e.g. Rudawy Janowickie and the Milicz Ponds;

b) Spain – 37 publications appeared about it, mainly in the context of the country, cities (Madrid, Barcelona, Seville), islands (the Canary Islands, Tenerife, Minorca) and geographical areas (Costa del Sol, Costa Blanca); it is worth adding that while before 2011 the publisher referred to unobvious destinations, such as Salamanca, La Gomera, recognizable places were of more interest later;
c) Italy – 24 publications were published, including 15 since 2011 (as many as three in 2017), with the greatest emphasis on the country, Rome, Florence, Venice, Sardinia and Como (Trento was the only unusual destination);
d) France – described 17 times, most of it was published until 2011, and since then only occasionally was the country on the pages of "Podróże" (as Paris and Provence, although there were also Burgundy, the Loire Valley or Marseille);
e) Great Britain – mentioned 14 times, nearly 70% of which were published since 2011 (mainly London, and to a lesser extent – Edinburgh and Manchester);
f) Greece – 13 publications appeared about this country, most of them appeared after 2011; they mostly encouraged the readers to visit the islands of Cyclades, Crete and Rhodes;
g) Portugal – 11 publications were published on it since 2010, in the context of the country, Lisbon, Porto, but also Sintra or the coast of Algarve;
h) Austria – 11 publications after 2010 (as a country);
i) Switzerland – 10 publications, eight after 2010 (mainly Geneva, Lucerne, and Zurich).

Podróże, more often than its competitor, refers to Polish neighbours: Germany (17 times, mostly since 2011; the most indications were on Berlin, but also Rügen, Munich, Dresden and Salzburg); Slovakia (eight times), the Czech Republic (seven times with Prague as the highlight), Lithuania (four times in the context of Vilnius), Ukraine (three times, including Lviv) and Belarus in 2014.

Two threads are worth mentioning: first, the tendency to present Europe in a less standard way (e.g. Serbia in 2016, Lapland after 2013, Kosovo in 2011 and 2014, three times Macedonia, Monaco in 2010, Andorra in 2010, Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2016). Secondly, some of the directions, which are considered as mass ones, do not appear in the magazine as often as one would expect; Croatia has been referred to six times (after 2010), Cyprus – three

times (after 2011), and Malta three times (since 2014).

Scandinavian countries are very popular, mainly Norway (eight times since 2010), Sweden (six times since 2010, mainly as Stockholm), Denmark (four times as Copenhagen) and Finland (twice). There was almost no mention of the European part of Russia; Estonia, Bulgaria, the Netherlands and Ireland were described more often.

As part of supporting cover stories, Podróże also promote the Asian continent. This support has a different range, but never falls below 15% of all mentions in a given year. The most-mentioned countries include:

a) India – the country was written about 12 times, with the focus on the country and Goa (Kerala also appeared);
b) Indonesia – obtained 11 publications (most of them since 2013); in addition to the country, Bali and Borneo were referred to;
c) China – they appeared on the covers ten times in the analysed research area, mainly since 2011 (in the form of the country, not selected attractions);
d) the Asian part of Russia – before 2014 it was described 11 times (e.g. about the Lake Baikal, Siberia, Yakutsk): since that time no cover mentions were made about it;
e) Japan – out of 10 publications, nine appeared since 2010 (as a country).

Since 2011, Georgia became more and more popular; it was described eight times already (usually in the context of the country, although Batumi, Abkhazia and Tbilisi were also mentioned). Sri Lanka (six times), Vietnam, the Philippines and Israel (five times each), the United Arab Emirates and Cambodia (four times each) were in a similar situation. In the last two years, countries such as Mongolia, Qatar, Iran, Bhutan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Singapore were also noticed. On the other hand, Afghanistan, Jordan, Laos, the Maldives, Pakistan, Taiwan and Syria were abandoned (no publications since 2013, although they had been mentioned several times earlier).

Table 2 shows that Africa did not maintain its growing support from the years 2007 – 2009, losing it in 2010 and 2011. Since then, the percentage share of publications on the continent has not exceeded 10%. Most often described countries were: Morocco (nine times until 2014), Kenya and Tunisia (four times till 2014), Namibia (three times till 2014). It should be noted that Egypt appeared five times in the years 2008 – 2010, while since 2011 there was not a single publication. It is worth noting that in 2016 and 2017 new destinations appeared on the covers of Podróże, such as Madagascar, Angola, Mozambique, and Zambia.

Among the countries of South America, Brazil was referred to (eight times since 2009, with almost equal division between Rio de Janeiro and the country as such). In the last three years, Bolivia (three publications in total) and Colombia (twice in 2017) aroused interest. Paraguay and Uruguay should also be mentioned, as these are new destinations that did not appear before. Other countries were written about with varying frequency, some returned to the cover after many years, such as Peru, Guatemala and Chile. In North America, the most popular is the USA, which was described 22 times. These publications were dominated by New York (ten stories, including two in 2017), followed by Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Miami and New Orleans. The states (California, Alaska) and attractions (Grand Canyon) were also promoted. Podróże also encouraged its readers to visit Mexico (seven times) and Canada (twice). In Central America, in the years 2015 – 2017, reference was made to Cuba, Nicaragua, the Caribbean and Belize.

In Australia and Oceania, Australia has received support (seven times since 2009: as a country, Sydney, Melbourne and Christmas Island) and New Zealand (three times). Other destinations, such as Papua New Guinea and Tuvalu, were mentioned sporadically.

4. Conclusions

The author accomplished the defined research objectives, proving that tourism is an object of mediatisation. At the same time, however, it fits in and responds to globally important events, thus affecting the content of travel magazines and their covers. Going further, the author examined the scope of popularized travel destinations in the geographical and chronological context, which simultaneously led to showing the scale of differences and similarities between magazines, and also enabled the verification of the hypotheses.

The main cover stories of both NGT and Podróże primarily supported Europe and Asia, Africa appeared in third place, while the remaining continents were outside the podium (at the bottom of the list were Australia and Oceania as well as Arctic and Antarctica, analysed together). In general terms, there is a correlation: supporting stories usually strengthened the trends determined by the main stories, primarily by increasing and diversifying the number of destinations in a given area. Thus, it can be concluded that the messages formulated on the covers, received comprehensively by the readers, were consistent. The years 2010 – 2011 were particularly important in the context of the chronology and its impact on the exposure of destinations in both titles and types of cover stories. As the analysis showed, at that time the number of indications for Africa decreased markedly, while it

increased for Europe and Asia (in the case of NGT also for Central and South America). After several years of stagnation, Africa came back to the magazines, but with less frequency and with the exception of several countries that had been mentioned earlier. It is necessary to explain what should be combined with this fact. The indicated years are the period of the so-called Arab Spring, when massive protests against the rulers went through some parts of Asia Minor and North Africa. The population protested against the deteriorating financial situation, corruption of the authorities, restricting civil liberties, social inequality and nepotism. Demonstrations took various forms, from initially peaceful speeches, through acts of suicide death, to riots, takeovers and civil war. The world was particularly interested in the revolution in Tunisia (the overthrow of the rule of Zayn al-Abidin ibn Ali in 2011), Egypt (the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak's rule in 2011), Libya (the overthrow and the death of Muammar Gaddafi and the civil war in 2011). The Arab Spring swept with no less force through Algeria and Bahrain; there were also protests in Jordan, Yemen, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Mauritania. Demonstrations in Syria were bloodily suppressed, which led to the escalation of violence and became one of the causes of the ongoing civil war. The tragic events of the beginning of the decade had a negative impact on the whole tourist sector of that region. The countries which had previously been popular among travellers (Egypt, Syria, Tunisia) started to be considered dangerous. Józef Sala wrote about the close relationship between geopolitical conditions and tourism, claiming that "for the sake of their own health and safety, tourists prefer trips to politically stabilised countries" and "the development of domestic and international tourism is heavily dependent on political stability of countries and regions" (Sala J., 2012, p. 15). This approach is reflected in the analysed covers of travel magazines: while these countries quite often appeared in magazines until 2009, then there was a marked breakdown in their promotion. The countries where the situation became stable or where the riots were minor (e.g. Morocco, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates) came back to the covers first, but this happened not earlier than 2013. It should be noted that Egypt has not yet restored its media position, let alone Syria.

Thus, the Arab Spring contributed to changes in the destinations displayed on the covers of both magazines. It can be simply stated that Asian countries benefited from it. For example, in 2017, the Polish were more and more keen on travelling to the countries of Southeast Asia, with Thailand and the Philippines being the most popular (alepod, 2018). This choice was justified by the fact that in both countries "you can be sure of beautiful sunny weather and low cost of stay, which undoubtedly allows you to enjoy greater pleasure of traveling" (EA, 2018); however, stable political situation was certainly an important factor

influencing travel decisions. As proved by the analysis, both countries appeared on the covers since 2011 much more often than before the Arab Spring (like, for example, Japan, Sri Lanka and India).

In the context of the exceptional growth of popularity of some countries, one ought to mention the People's Republic of China, which in 2015 – 2017 (especially 2017) systematically appeared both in Podróże and in NGT. On the one hand, this can be considered a manifestation of the intense global economic and PR campaign of this country, and on the other hand it might be the effect of the cooperation agreement on tourism, signed by Poland and China in May 2017 (Aktualnosciturystyczne.pl, 2017). Another meaningful factor is the fact that 2018 was declared the EU China Tourism Year.

Europe also benefited from the Arab Spring. Admittedly, this direction was recommended even before the events of 2010 – 2011, but after this time the frequency of recommendations increased significantly (especially in Podróże, which even more strongly turned to the Old Continent.) It is not a great surprise that in both magazines obvious destinations were very popular, such as Spain, Italy, and Portugal. These countries can be described as "safe bets", which were additionally strengthened with less popular recommendations (not only Rome, Madrid and Lisbon, but also the Aeolian Islands, Segovia and Sintra). There was also a growing interest in Scandinavia – mainly Norway and Iceland.
The above relations between political and social events and the number of mentions of countries on cover pages may, in the author's opinion, be taken as confirmation of the second hypothesis (H2), according to which the front sides are "historical artefacts" reflecting the current political, cultural or economic situation.

Taking first hypothesis (H1) into consideration, the author confirms the incompleteness of this assumption. On the one hand it is correct (in the area of statement “the front covers of NGT and Podróże differ in destinations presented in the main and supporting cover stories. It is assumed that Podróże, due to its affiliation to the Polish publisher, will refer to Poland more often, while NGT will refer to exotic directions and extraordinary areas, not necessarily placed in Europe). For example Poland was on the pages of NGT and Podróże as the main story, with the latter magazine referring to it slightly more often. A huge difference can be seen in supporting stories: in Podróże Poland dominated all other destinations, which did not take place on such a scale in National Geographic Traveler. The magazines also approached Poland's nearest neighbours in different ways (except Germany, which was mentioned in both of them); Podróże was more willing to refer to Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Lithuania than its competitor. Ukraine was described comprehensively

(NGT more as the main story, while Podróże as the supporting one), excluding the years 2013 – 2014, which in turn can be explained by the geopolitical situation of the region, including the Euromaidan and annexing Crimea by Russia (which can also be referred to the third hypothesis).

The years of 2010 and 2011 also influenced the popularisation of South America and Latin America by NGT (Podróże wrote about them less frequently, focusing on Asian and European destinations). It is worth noting that for both titles quite obvious destinations over the years were Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Peru. In 2015 – 2017, Cuba joined them (with Havana as the highlight), which in turn should be analysed in the broader context of the resumption of diplomatic relations between that country and the United States at the end of 2014 (this is yet another positive verification of the third hypothesis). NGT also mentioned North America and Australia and Oceania much more often, both in the main and supporting stories, (the latter seldom appeared in Podróże). So as for the choice of destinations and the frequency of mentioning them, it can be said that despite many common points in displaying destinations, it is clear that "NGT" more readily refers to further and less standard places, while Podróże reach for Europe or tried and tested Asian destinations. This difference can be seen in the approach to Poland, which was more often presented in Podróże than NGT (although, contrary to the author's expectations, Poland quite systematically appeared on the pages of this magazine). Perhaps one of the reasons for the greater diversification of travel destinations in NGT is the globality of this brand, which, like a citizen of the world, encourages its readers to follow the routes which are less taken and inaccessible to the average tourist. Podróże as a Polish brand promotes more willingly not only Poland, but also its closest (Slavic) neighbours.

On the other hand, as mentioned above, there is the incompleteness of the assumption in H1 (in the area of statement, “it can be assumed, that editorial strategy influences on choosing main and supporting cover stories, therefore support of the touristic destinations”). Of course it can also be cautiously concluded that the selection of destinations displayed on the front covers of magazines is related to their editorial policy and at the same time is the way to achieve it. As mentioned, NGT wants to create trends and point out unobvious destinations. Podróże seem to turn to a centralised group of consumers who do not fancy exclusiveness and extremes. It should probably be linked to the fact that travel destinations, such as Australia and Oceania or South Sudan, were more often stories of NGT while Podróże, even referring to exotic countries, reached for popular Thailand and India. The author, however, thinks that not only the covers, but also the content of articles or

communication activities for the brand are responsible for the implementation of the magazine's editorial policy. Thus, full confirmation of the first hypothesis (H1) would require examination of the content of all magazines, not just their covers.

5. References

Abdereck, K.L. (2016). Use of a travel magazine as a tourism information source. *Tourism Travel and Research Association: Advancing Tourism Research Globally*. 39.

Aktualnosciturystyczne.pl (2017). Polska podpisała z Chinami umowę o współpracy w dziedzinie turystyki. Retrieved from: https://www.aktualnosciturystyczne.pl/pot/polska-podpisala-z-chinami-umowe-o-wspolpracy-w-dziedzinie-turystyki

Alepod (2018). Gdzie najlepiej wyjechać na ferie? Oto najpopularniejsze kierunki zimowych podróży. Polacy szczególnie pokochali jeden region. Gazeta.pl. Retrieved from: http://podroze.gazeta.pl/podroze/56,114158,22854966,gdzie-najlepiej-wyjechac-na-ferie-oto-najpopularniejsze-kierunki.html

Farahani, B.M., Mohamed, B. & Mat Som, A.P. (2011). Photograph, Information Search and Tourism Marketing. *Asian Social Science, vol. 7*(no. 7), pp. 94-101.

Brito-Henriques, E. (2014). Visual tourism and post-colonialism: imaginative geographies of Africa in a Portuguese travel magazine. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, vol. 12(no. 4), pp. 320-334.

Brzoza, K. (2016). Człowiek na okładkach wybranych polskich tygodników w 2015 roku. *Rocznik Prasoznawczy*, vol. X, pp. 139-158.

Burdamedia.pl (2018b). Retrieved from: https://www.burdamedia.pl/assets/media-kits/db20f551aa37ebeb8587296abdf8933c37188da0.pdf

Burdamedia.pl (2018a). Retrieved from: https://www.burdamedia.pl/magazyny/magazyn/37/National%20Geographic%20Traveler

Cohen, E. & Cohen, S.A. (2012). Current sociological theories and issues in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research, vol. 39*(no. 4), pp. 2177–2202.

Drozdowska, M. & Duda-Seifert, M. (2016). Turystyczne portale internetowe – wiarygodne źródło informacji. *Turyzm, vol. 26*(no. 2), pp. 7-14. http://dx.doi.org/10.18778/0867-5856.26.2.01

EA (2018). W ferie coraz częściej wyjeżdżamy do ciepłych krajów. W jakich krajach Polacy spędzają ferie najczęściej? *Dziennikbaltycki.pl.* Retrieved from: http://www.dziennikbaltycki.pl/turystyka/a/w-ferie-coraz-czesciej-wyjezdzamy-do-cieplych-krajow-w-jakich-krajach-polacy-spedzaja-ferie-najczesciej-wyjazdy-na-ferie,12836254

Fodness, D. & B. Murray (1998). A Typology of Tourism Information Search Strategies.

Journal of Travel Research, vol. 37(no. 2), pp. 108-119.

Fursich E. & Kavoori, A.P (2001). Mapping a critical framework for the study of travel journalism. *International Journal of Cultural Studies, vol. 4*(no. 2), pp. 149-171.

Gursoy, D. (2011). Destination Information Search Strategies. In: Wang, Y., Pizam, A. (eds.). *Tourism Destination Marketing and Management: Collaborative Stratagies*. Oxford, Cambridge: Cabi International, pp. 67-81.

Grupazpr (2018). Retrieved from: http://www.grupazpr.pl/marka/1039

Folker, H. (2010). The Dimensions of Travel Journalism. *Journalism Studies*, vol. 11(no. 1), pp. 68-82.

Hsu, C.H.C., & Song, H. (2013). Destination image in travel magazines: A textual and pictorial analysis of Hong Kong and Macau. *Journal of Vacation Marketing, vol. 19*(no. 3), pp. 253-268.

Hsu, C.H.C. & Song, H. (2014). A Visual Analysis of Destinations in Travel Magazines. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, vol. 31*(no. 2), pp. 162-177.

IAB Polska (2015). E-konsumenci – consumer journy online. Retrieved from: https://www.iab.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/IABPolska_CJO2015_sport.pdf

Johnson, S. & de Lozano, C.A. (2002). The Art and Science of Magazine Cover Research, *Journal of Magazine & New Media Research, vol. 5* (no.1).

Jupowicz-Ginalska, A. (2017 a). Zadania okładek współczesnych magazynów drukowanych, *Rocznik Bibliologiczno-Prasoznawczy, vol. 9* (no. 20), pp. 71-89.

Jupowicz-Ginalska, A. (2017 b). Tematy okładkowe polskich magazynów – elementy składowe i preferencje odbiorców. Kultura – Media – Teologia, vol. 28, pp. 196-205.

Kłopotowska, E. (2015). Czasopisma dla podróżników. *Rynekprasowy.pl*. Retrieved from: http://www.rynekprasowy.pl/czasopisma-dla-podroznikow/

Kruczek, Z. & Walas, B. (2004). *Promocja i informacja turystyczna*. Kraków: Proksenia.

Lizzi, G., Cantoni, L. & Inversini, A. (2011). When a Magazine Goes Online: A Case Study in the Tourism Field. In: Law, R., Fuchs, M. & Ricci, F. (eds.). *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2011: Proceedings of the International Conference. 26-26 January, Vienna.* Vienna: Springer Verlag.

McWha, M.R., Frost, W., Laing, J. & Best, G. (2016). Writing for the anti-tourist? Imagining the contemporary travel magazine reader as an authentic experience seeker. *Current Issues in Tourism, vol. 19*(no. 1), pp. 85-99.

Mack, R.W., Blose, J.E. & Pan B. (2007). Believe it or not: Credibility of blogs in tourism. *Journal of Vacation Marketing, vol. 14*(no. 2), pp. 133-144.

Marek, R. (2009). *Determinanty rozwoju polskich biur podróży w Internecie.* Warszawa:

Promotor.

Molina, A. & Esteban, A. (2006). Tourism brochures: Usefulness and image. *Annals of Tourism Research, vol. 33*(np. 4), pp. 1036-1056. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2006.05.003

National-geographic.pl (2018). Retrieved from: http://www.national-geographic.pl/magazines/traveler/2006/

Oniszczuk, Z. (2011). Mediatyzacja polityki i polityzacja mediów. Dwa wymiary wzajemnych relacji. *Studia Medioznawcze*, vol. 47(no. 4), pp. 11-22.

PBC (2018). Retrieved from: http://www.pbc.pl/rynek-prasowy/

PBC (2018). Retrieved from: http://www.pbc.pl/rynek-prasowy/raporty-pbc/miesieczniki/

Podroze.pl (2018). Retrieved from: http://podroze.se.pl/miesiecznik/covers/1/

Sarma, K.M, (2007). Influence of Information Sources on Tourists: A Segment-wise Analysis with Special Focus on Destination Image. *Vision: The Journal of Business Perspective, vol. 11*(no. 1), pp. 35-45.

Sumner D. E. & Rhoades S. (2016). *Magazines: A complete guide to the industry*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Szypuła, G. (2017). Rośnie rola internetu w turystyce. *Wp.pl.* Retrieved from: http://turystyka.rp.pl/artykul/1344467.html

Teleskop.org.pl (2018). Retrieved from: https://www.teleskop.org.pl/zkdp/index.jsp?p=publicDataNoReg

Tjostheim, I., Tussyadiah, I.P. & Hoem S.O. (2007). Combination of Information Sources in Travel Planning A Cross-national Study. In: Sigala, M., Mich, L. & Murphy, J. (eds.). *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism*. Vienna: Springer.

VMG PR (2014). Polska na wakacjach, czyli o promocji miejsc oczami turystów. Retrieved from: https://swresearch.pl/pdf/Polska_na_wakacjach,_czyli_o_promocji_miejsc_oczami_turystow__raport

Vogt, C.A. & Fesenmaier, D.R. (1998). Expanding the functional information search model. Annals of Tourism Research. *Annals of Tourism Research, vol. 25*(no. 3), pp. 551-578.

Volo, S. (2010). Bloggers' reported tourist experiences: Their utility as a tourism data source and their effect on prospective tourists. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, vol. 16(no. 4), pp. 297–311.

Wasike. B. (2017). Jocks versus jockettes: An analysis of the visual portrayal of male and female cover models on sports magazines. *Journalism*, pp. 1-18.

White, J.V. (1982). *Designing for magazines.* New York-London: R.R. Bowker Company.

Wolny, R. (2015). Internet jako źródło informacji e-konsumentów o ofercie handlowej i usługowej przedsiębiorstw. T*he Wroclaw School of Banking Research Journal, vol.15* (no. 3), pp. 413-414.

Woojin, L. & Andereck, K. (2016). The Effect of Travel Magazine Features and Photos on Tourist Decision Making. *Tourism Travel and Research Association: Advancing Tourism Research Globally.* 5. Retrieved from: http://scholarworks.umass.edu/ttra/2010/Visual/5

Anna Jupowicz-Ginalska, Ph.D.
Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies
University of Warsaw
Bednarska 2/4, 00-310 Warsaw
www.wdib.uw.edu.pl
a.ginalska@uw.edu.pl

Anna Jupowicz-Ginalska specializes in media marketing. Her current scientific interests also include contemporary trends in marketing communication (especially the transmedia storytelling and multiscreening), VR, AR and pop culture. She is the author of numerous scientific publications on media marketing. For over 15 years she has been also professionally active in the practical sphere (in PR agencies and media corporations).

DOI: https://doi.org/10.29036/jots.v9i17.25

The Impacts of Perceived Crowding, and Atmospherics on Visitor Satisfaction at Cultural Heritage Sites: A Comparison of Turkish and British Visitors to Topkapi Palace, Istanbul

Doğuş Kılıçarslan
Akdeniz University, Antalya

Meltem Caber
Akdeniz University, Antalya

Received January 17 2018; received in revised form 17 November 2018; accepted 10 December 2018

Abstract

Cultural heritage sites impress the visitors by their 'worth-to-see' architectural characteristics, and historical or cultural importance. Visitor experiences at cultural areas are also influenced by site atmospherics, and crowd, that form visitors' overall satisfaction with site. The main objectives of this study, therefore, are: (1) to reveal perceived crowding, atmospherics, and visitor satisfaction relationships at a cultural heritage site; and (2) to compare the cross-national differences in the sample of Turkish and British visitors. With this purpose, a survey was conducted at one of the most popular heritage sites of Turkey; Topkapi Palace, Istanbul. Data collected from 261 Turkish and 236 British visitors, who have seen the interior and exterior parts of the Palace. By factor analysis, atmospherics is found to have two dimensions, namely; service and spatial. Analyses results exhibit that both atmospherics dimensions positively affect visitor satisfaction, although perceived crowding has a negative impact or both nationalities. Findings of this study indicate that cultural heritage sites are the areas where domestic and foreign visitors may have similar kinds of perceptions and evaluations.

Keywords: Cultural tourism, heritage site, atmospherics, perceived crowding, satisfaction, Topkapi Palace, Istanbul.

JEL Classification: Z3

1. Introduction

In parallel to increasing competition, tourism destinations began to attempt to strengthen their positions in the global market by promoting unique or distinguishing attributes and assets that they have in comparison to others (Ayala, 1996). At this point, cultural assets may be particularly emphasized in order to highlight the attractiveness of a destination. In particular, cultural heritage sites may generate memorable visitor experiences. In this context, site atmospherics and its additional components such as good lighting, signage, audio tours, etc. should be designed and controlled by professional perspectives. If these factors are managed effectively, visitor experiences and overall satisfaction are expected to be increased (Bonn et al., 2007; Dietsch, 1997). Likewise, previous studies in the tourism and travel literature show that atmospherics is a determinant of both visitor satisfaction (Yildirim & Akalin-Baskaya, 2007), and brand image (Baker, 1986; Bitner, 1992). Moreover, measurement attempts of overall visitor satisfaction have importance for the management of cultural assets (Kuo, 2002; McArthur, 1994; Moscardo, 1999; Orams, 1996). Although, atmospherics is important both for visitors' satisfaction and cultural site managers' success, existing literature consists a few number of studies that have investigated this topic.

Crowd perception is another determinant of overall satisfaction and behavioural intention of cultural heritage site visitors. The perception of crowding mostly varies depending on the location, activity, and number of the people (Desor, 1972). While the perception of crowding in bars and stadiums is found to affect people in a positive way, in some other locations, such as shopping malls, people are negatively affected by crowds in their purchasing decisions or length of stay at a shop (Hui & Bateson, 1991; Machleit et al., 2000). In the literature, only a limited number of studies examine the relationship between crowd perception and visitor satisfaction (Lee, 1977; Shelby, 1980; Tseng et al., 2009). In those studies, some researchers have linked crowding with carrying capacity in recreational areas (Manning, 1999), and visitor experiences in wilderness (Cole, 2001). However, the relationship between cultural site visitors' crowd perceptions and their satisfactions has scarcely been examined in the tourism and travel literature.

The main objectives of this study, therefore, are: (1) to reveal perceived crowding, atmospherics, and visitor satisfaction relationships at a cultural heritage site; and (2) to compare the cross-national differences in the sample of Turkish and British visitors. By a survey performed at Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, Turkey, those objectives are examined and the obtained results are discussed by the authors. Findings of this study have the potential of

contribution to the limited literature particularly on crowding perception, which is considered an important element of visitor management at cultural heritage areas. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this study is also one of the early attempts that examine the relationships among the research variables. In the next section, a literature review is presented about the constructs of atmospherics, crowding perception, and visitor satisfaction. Following this, the research setting of Topkapi Palace is briefly introduced. Afterwards, research methodology is introduced, and analysis results are summarized. The paper concludes with a discussion of findings, limitations, and future research recommendations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Atmospherics

The atmospherics phenomenon, which metaphorically alludes to the Earth's atmosphere, was first applied to the area of marketing by Kotler (1973). According to marketing point-of-view, people are influenced by some environmental factors called as atmospherics such as colours, sounds, other people, forms of exhibition, etc. in the process of purchasing decisions. Those factors affect people's purchasing and decision making behaviour either positively or negatively. In the field of marketing, researchers mostly focus on identifying the environmental factors that affect business atmosphere or examining the impact of atmosphere on customer behaviour. A study by Baker (1986) was a starting point for determining the factors that form atmospherics. In her study, Baker defined atmospherics as the 'service environment' and categorized the factors that generate atmospherics (layout, colours, complexity, etc.) as the social (employees), and ambience factors (lighting, voices, and smells). In another study, Bitner (1992) suggested that atmospherics can be measured by the evaluation of environmental conditions such as spatial order and functionality. In addition to these factors offered by Bitner (1992), Evans and Berman (1995) proposed the inclusion of external environment of a place (e.g., entrance, windows, exterior architecture). Tombs and McColl-Kennedy (2003) argued that studies on atmospherics generally involved the elements of physical environment, but ignored employees. They, therefore, recommended the inclusion of employee factor into atmospherics concept.

In the context of cultural tourism, physical environment that covers the cultural assets has a very wide scope (Bonn et al., 2007). Previous studies have shown that for visitors, who

have a positive attitude towards the physical assets at a cultural site, revisit intention is usually high (Obermiller & Bitner, 1984). According to Bonn et al. (2007), atmosphere of the cultural assets has influence both on visitor perception, and host destination's cultural entity. To sum up, atmospherics of cultural assets play a role on visitor behaviour and should be considered as a determinant of cultural tourist experiences.

2.2. Crowding Perception

The crowding concept is mainly examined theoretically in the context of environmental and behavioural psychology (Neuts & Nijkamp, 2012). There are two basic theories in this context. One suggests that an individual's crowding perception is a kind of behavioural restraint and stimulus load (Kaya & Weber, 2003), which is an inappropriate or unwanted social communication. According to this perspective, crowding perception emerges when an individual is overwhelmed by the presence of others, resulting in an increase in social interest and environmental intensity (Desor, 1972). According to second perspective, crowding is perceived, when other people intervene an individual's experience (Stokols, 1972). Neuts and Nijkamp (2012) associated the crowding construct with carrying capacity and sustainability issues. For these researchers, the perception of crowding originates by exceeding socio-cultural carrying capacity. However, crowd perception does not simply occur because of human density. There are also other factors that play decisive roles on people's crowding perception (Stokols et al., 1973). For example, Stokols (1972) noted that perceived crowding is related to physical congestion in the environment, which psychologically affects people. Stokols et al. (1973) also underlined that perception level varies depending on the size, breadth, and ambience of objects in the environment, as well as on some social factors.

Other researchers have stated that perceived crowding is not formed only by human density and congestion, but also by preferences, anticipation, area types, and environmental characteristics (Graefe et al., 1984; Manning et al., 2000). Eventually, perceived crowding is a behavioural variable that is supposed to have influence on cultural site visitors' quality of experience; this in turn is closely related to visitor management strategies regarding carrying capacity and sustainability issues.

2.3. Visitor Satisfaction

Visitor satisfaction is one of the most investigated research topics in the tourism and travel literature. In previous studies, scholars generally have aimed to explore overall satisfaction with a destination, whereas few studies to date have examined visitor satisfaction with cultural assets (Prayag & Chiappa, 2016). While customer satisfaction in the marketing field indicates a general assessment of products and services, depending on purchasing and consumption experiences (Anderson et al., 1994), visitor satisfaction in the context of tourism and travel involves an emotional response to a specific visit experience (Bosque & Martín, 2008).

Some researchers have suggested that satisfaction means the meeting of needs, while others have argued that it is a process influenced by psychological conditions (Tian-Cole & Cromption, 2003). Researchers in the second group, therefore, benefit from the psychological states and habits of individuals while addressing the socio-psychological processes that represent satisfaction (Mannell & Kleiber, 1977). Brown (1988) suggested that satisfaction consists of experiences that people willingly feel under any obligation.

Nykiel (1997) stated that visitor satisfaction is influenced by many service encounters during the period of an experience. However, Kozak and Rimmington (2000) argued that visitor satisfaction is a general evaluation about the features in a destination. In many studies, visitor satisfaction has been found to contribute to management success and strategies (e.g., Kuo, 2002; McArthur, 1994; Moscardo, 1999; Orams, 1996). Thus, destination authorities should try to evaluate and increase visitors' satisfaction (Wu & Li, 2015)

3. Research Setting: Topkapi Palace, Istanbul

Construction of Topkapi Palace began in 1460 and was completed in 1478. The palace was built upon an area of 700,000 square meters on an Eastern Roman Acropolis located on the Istanbul Peninsula between the Sea of Marmara, the Bosphorus, and the Golden Horn. Topkapi Palace was the administrative, educational, and art centre of the Ottoman Empire for nearly four hundred years, from the age of Mehmed until Sultan Abdulmecid, who was the thirty-first of the sultans. Although the palace was abandoned by the Ottoman Dynasty after the establishment of Dolmabahce Palace in the middle of the 19th century, Topkapi Palace prolonged its importance and attraction for local and foreign visitors (Topkapı Palace Museum Directorate 2016).

Topkapi Palace was transformed into a museum on April 3, 1924 after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. It thus became the first museum of the new country. Today, the palace occupies an area of approximately 400,000 square meters and is one of the largest palace museums in the world, with architectural structures, collections, and 300,000 archival documents. It is the second most visited museum in Turkey, following the Haghia Sophia Museum. Topkapi Palace is also registered and protected as one of the UNESCO World Heritage sites in Turkey.

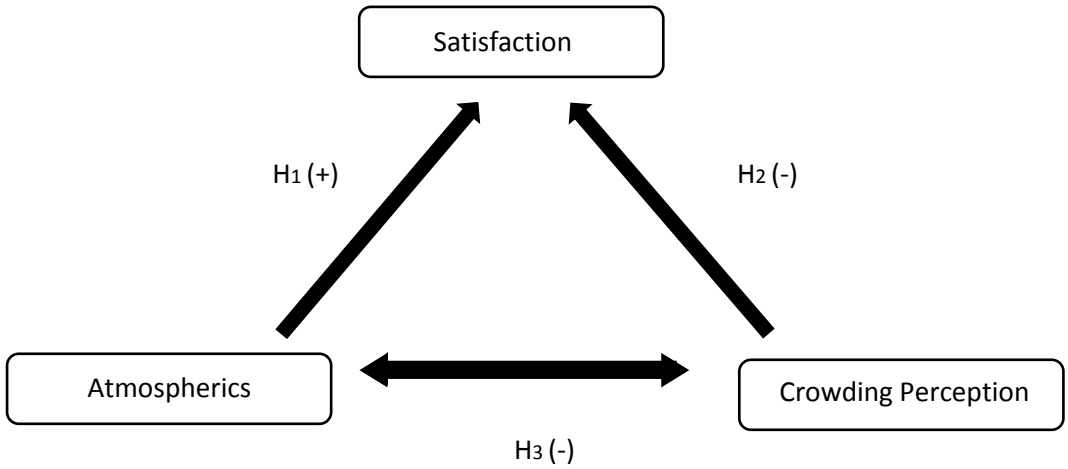
4. Methodology

In this study, a research model is proposed that aims to test the relationships among atmospherics, visitor crowding perception, and visitor satisfaction. In the model, although atmospherics are suggested to have a positive effect on visitor satisfaction, the relationship between crowding perception and satisfaction is proposed to be negative. A correlative and negative relationship is also presumed between atmospherics and crowding perception as illustrated by Figure 1.

H_1: Atmospherics have a positive impact on visitor satisfaction.
H_2: Crowding perception has a negative impact on visitor satisfaction.
H_3: Crowding perception and atmospherics are negatively correlated.

Figure 1

Research Model



Source: Authors

4.1. Sample and Data Collection

Survey technique is preferred by the authors to identify the statistical relationships among the research variables, in which the data were collected from Turkish and British visitors to Topkapi Palace, Istanbul. The original questionnaire in English was translated into Turkish so that it could be answered by both participant groups. A back translation was additionally performed to check the comprehensiveness of the items and to detect any translation mistakes. The final version of the questionnaire (see Appendix 1) is structured in four parts, which identify and measure participant demographics, crowding perceptions, atmospherics, and satisfactions. In the first part, demographic characteristics of the participants are determined by 12 questions. In the second part, items that measure atmospherics are obtained from Bonn et al.'s (2007) study, and in the third part, visitor satisfaction is measured by a five-item semantic differential scale adapted from a study conducted by Rojas and Camarero (2007). Finally, crowding perception is measured by two items obtained from the studies of Shelby, Vaske, and Heberlein (1989), and Neuts and Nijkamp (2012).

Convenience sampling method is preferred in data collection, since it enables researchers to select the units that can be reached with the least cost in the shortest time (Özmen, 2006). The target sample consisted of Turkish and British visitors who visited the interior and exterior parts of the Palace. Data were collected from 512 individuals (242 British and 270 Turkish visitors) in August–September 2016. After the elimination of incomplete questionnaires, the final sample comprised 497 responses, of whom 236 were from British and 261 were from Turkish visitors.

4.2. Normality and Reliability Analysis

In the analysis of the reliability, skewness and kurtosis values were firstly examined to determine whether the data show a normal distribution. Skewness and kurtosis values ranged between -1.393 and +1.543. Thus, the data were considered to be normally distributed, while Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), and George and Mallery (2010) recommend the skewness and kurtosis values between -2.0 and +2.0 for a normal data distribution.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients were then calculated for each of the variables with the aim of determining individual reliabilities. The coefficient was 0.92 for atmospherics, and 0.94 for satisfaction constructs. These values were higher than the recommended cut off value of 0.70, and thus, the used scales were reliable. Cronbach's alpha coefficient belongs to

perceived crowding was found as 0.58. Although, this is a relatively low value than the other constructs', it was considered as reliable, since the value was close to Cronbach's alpha value of 0.60 which was suggested acceptable by Churchill (1979). The results of the reliability analysis for each of the variables showed that collected data were appropriate for further analyses.

5. Results

5.1. Participant Demographics

Demographic characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 1. Of the total sample (497), 261 (52.5%) were Turkish and 236 (47.5%) were British. Gender distribution showed nearly equal shares for males and females: 51.7% of Turkish participants were males and 48.3% were females, although among British participants 55.5% were males and 44.5% were females.

Table 1

Demographic characteristics of the participants

Demographics	Turkish		British		General	
	Frequency (f)	%	Frequency (f)	%	Frequency (f)	%
Gender						
Male	135	51.7	131	55.5	266	53.5
Female	126	48.3	105	44.5	231	46.5
Age						
20 and younger	45	17.2	19	8.1	64	12.9
21 – 30	115	44.1	113	47.9	228	45.9
31 – 40	54	20.7	59	25.0	113	22.7
41 – 50	37	14.2	24	10.2	61	12.3
51 and older	10	3.8	21	8.9	31	6.2
Marital Status						
Married	114	43.7	110	46.6	224	45.1
Single	147	56.3	126	53.4	273	54.9
Profession/Job						
Private Company Employee	64	24.5	86	36.4	150	30.2
Employer	40	15.3	30	12.7	70	14.1
Student	77	29.5	50	21.2	127	25.6
Public Officer	31	11.9	22	9.3	53	10.7
Unemployed	11	4.2	13	5.5	24	4.8
Other	38	14.6	35	14.8	73	14.7

Education Level						
Primary School	2	0.8	0	0.0	2	0.4
Middle School	8	3.1	2	0.8	10	2.0
High School	71	27.2	14	5.9	85	17.1
University	172	65.9	201	85.2	373	75.1
Other	8	3.1	19	8.1	27	5.4
Total	261	52.5	236	47.5	497	100

Source: Authors

The age group of 21–30 was represented by 44.1% of Turkish participants and 47.9% of British participants. In general, 54.9% of the respondents were single and 45.1% were married. The marital status ratio was similar for both groups (56.3% of Turkish-53.4% of British visitors were single; 43.7% of Turkish-46.6% of British visitors were married).

5.2. Factor Analysis Results for Atmospherics

In the analysis of atmospherics factorial structure, firstly, the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) value was used to determine the sufficiency of data. The value of 0.915 showed that data were suitable for analysis, compared to the value of 0.60 or greater recommended by Büyüköztürk (2016). Bartlett Sphericity Test ($p = 0.00$) results also showed that there was a significant relationship between the construct dimensions. Secondly, for obtaining the dimensions of atmospherics, 11 items were included in the explanatory factor analysis by using Varimax rotation method. The variance explanation ratio was 66.93%, with two factors having eigenvalues above than the recommended value of 1.00. The analysis results are shown in Table 2. Although, earlier studies (Baker, 1986; Bonn et. al., 2007) had offered three factors to explain cultural assets' atmospherics, the present study's results offered a two-factorial solution. The dimensions of ambiance and design-classification, from the original scale, were grouped under a single dimension in this study and named as 'spatial atmosphere'. Another factor was renamed, from 'social service environment' in the original scale to 'service atmosphere' in the present study.

Service atmosphere consisted of four items as shown in Table 2. Eigenvalue of the service factor was 3.682, and the explained variance ratio was 57.30%. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient, used to test the internal consistency of this factor, was found to be 0.90. Spatial atmosphere contained seven items as presented in Table 2. Eigenvalue of the spatial factor

was 3.680, the explained variance ratio was 9.62%, and Cronbach's alpha was 0.87 which is above the recommended cut-off value.

Table 2

Factorial structure of atmospherics

Factors/Items	Factor Loading	Eigen-value	Means (M)	Cronbach's Alpha
Factor 1: Service Atmosphere		3.682	4.85	0.90
Topkapi Palace has a good staff	0.866			
The staff at the Topkapi Palace is courteous	0.835			
The staff at the Topkapi Palace are very knowledgeable	0.826			
Topkapi Palace offers good service	0.756			
Factor 2: Spatial Atmosphere		3.680	6.21	0.87
Topkapi Palace has a good color scheme	0.824			
Topkapi Palace has good lighting	0.791			
Topkapi Palace has good signage and availability of information	0.693			
Topkapi Palace has a good functional layout	0.680			
Topkapi Palace has a good use of open space	0.624			
Topkapi Palace has a good flow of customer traffic	0.591			
It is easy to find the way around the Topkapi Palace	0.558			

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin: 0.915 Total Average Variance Extracted (AVE) 66.93%
Bartlett Sphericity Test: 3484.274 df= 55 Sig. 0.000
Source: Authors

5.3. Test of the Hypotheses

For testing the study hypotheses, regression and correlation analyses were performed between the constructs, starting with atmospherics and satisfaction. In the first regression analysis, visitor satisfaction was the dependent variable, and the dimensions of atmospherics (spatial and service) were the independent variables.

Table 3

The impact of atmospherics on satisfaction

Independent Variables	Unstandardized Beta Coefficient	Standard Error	Standardized Beta Coefficient	*p*
Constant	1.66	0,22	-	0.00*
Service Atmosphere	0.17	0,05	0.17	0.00*
Spatial Atmosphere	0.58	0,06	0.49	0.00*

*p<0.01; R=0,63; R^2=0,39; F=159,064; p=0.00
Source: Authors

Results (Table 3) indicated that the regression model was significant at the 0.01 level. The dimension of atmospherics explained 39% of visitor satisfaction, with positive and significant effects shown for service atmosphere and spatial atmosphere. Standardized beta values showed that the spatial atmosphere dimension (β = 0.49) had a higher effect on visitor satisfaction than the service atmosphere dimension (β = 0.17). Thus, the first hypothesis (H_1: Atmospherics have a positive impact on visitor satisfaction) was accepted.

Results for the regression model showing the impact of the perception of crowding on visitor satisfaction are shown in Table 4. In this analysis, satisfaction was used as the dependent variable, and crowding perception was used as the independent variable.

The model was statistically significant at the 0.01 level, with the perception of crowding explaining 2% of satisfaction, and a negative impact on satisfaction (β= -0.14). Therefore, the second hypothesis (H_2: Crowding perception has a negative impact on visitor satisfaction) was accepted.

Table 4

The impact of crowding perception on satisfaction

Independent Variables	**Unstandardized Beta Coefficient**	**Standard Error**	**Standardized Beta Coefficient**	***p***
Constant	5.97	0.17	-	0.00*
Crowding perception	-0.12	0.04	-0.14	0.00*

*p<0.01; R=0,14; R^2=0,02; F=9,853; p=0.00
Source: Authors

To test the last hypothesis (H_3: Crowding perception and atmospherics are negatively correlated), a correlation analysis was used. Results showed that a negative and low (-0.17) correlation exists between crowding perception and atmospherics. Thus, the third hypothesis was accepted.

5.4. Test of the Group Differences

After determining the impact of atmospherics on visitor perceptions, we aimed to understand whether there was a significant difference between Turkish and British visitors' perceptions. A t-test was used to examine any statistical differences, and the results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Perception differences in atmospherics

Dependent Variables	Groups	Frequency (F)	Standard Deviation	Means (M)	t	df	Sig.(*p*)
Service Atmosphere	Turkish	261	1.51	4,83	-.31	495	0.76
	British	236	1.55	4,88			
Spatial Atmosphere	Turkish	261	1.27	5,21	.57	495	0.57
	British	236	1.26	5,14			
General Atmosphere	Turkish	261	1.26	5,07	.22	495	0.82
	British	236	1.27	5,05			

Source: Authors

While analysing the differences, the arithmetic means of both atmospherics dimensions (spatial and service) and general atmospherics were used as the dependent variable; nationalities were used as the independent variable. The t-test results showed no statistically significant difference between Turkish and British visitors' perceptions ($p > 0.05$). For this reason, it was not necessary to examine the impact of atmospherics perception on satisfaction by nationality. We also investigated whether there was a difference between Turkish and British visitors with regard to the perception of crowding. The t-test results indicated a statistically significant difference between the two groups (Table 6).

Table 6

Crowding perception differences

Dependent Variable	Groups	Frequency (F)	Standard Deviation (Std. Dev.)	Means (M)	t	df	Sig.(*p*)
Crowding perception	Turkish	261	1.79	4,26	2.79	495	0.01*
	British	236	1.61	3,83			

*p<0.05
Source: Authors

The statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) showed that Turkish visitors' perception of crowding (M=4.26) was higher than that of British visitors (M=3.83). Consequently, a regression analysis was performed to examine the impact of crowding perception on satisfaction by nationality, with results shown in Table 7. The model indicated that the perception of crowding for Turkish participants had no statistical significance on satisfaction ($p = 0.29$), but it did have such significance for British participants ($p=0.00$), for whom the perception of crowding explained 7% of satisfaction, with a negative and significant effect ($\beta = -0.23$).

Table 7

The impact of crowding perception on satisfaction by groups

Nationality	Independent Variables	Unstandardized Beta Coefficient	Standard Error	Standardized Beta Coefficient	Sig. (*p*)
Turkish	Constant	5.852	0.242	-	0.00*
	Crowding Perception	-0.056	0.052	-0.66	0.29
	* p <0.01; R=0.07; R²=0.00; F=1.145;				
British	Constant	6.236	0.236	-	0.00*
	Crowding Perception	-0.239	0.057	-0.265	0.00*
	* p <0.01; R=0.27; R²=0.07; F=17.725;				

Source: Authors

In sum, results showed no significant difference in the perception of atmospherics between the groups. On the other hand, the perception of crowding differed by nationality: for British visitors, crowding had a negative impact on satisfaction, and for Turkish visitors there was no impact.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

In the present study, cultural heritage site atmospherics, the perception of crowding, and overall visitor satisfaction relationships were examined, which have been the focus of few studies yet in the literature. Researchers have examined in previous studies either to atmospherics or perceived crowding (e.g., Moon et al., 2017; Zehrer & Raich, 2016). However, to the best of our knowledge, in none of these studies site atmospherics and perceived crowding as well as their impacts on visitors' overall satisfaction have been investigated simultaneously. In addition, in most studies, research settings were the specific touristic areas or destinations rather than cultural heritage sites (e.g., Fakharyan et al., 2014; Rathnayake, 2015). In this context, this study and its findings have the potential of contributing to the existing literature by the clarification of the relationships among these variables with data obtained from a survey conducted in a UNESCO World Heritage site in Turkey. In many studies, visitor satisfaction was identified to contribute the success of site management plans and strategies (e.g., Kuo, 2002; McArthur, 1994; Moscardo, 1999; Orams, 1996). Thus, exploring the dimensions of atmospherics that satisfy or dissatisfy visitors may assist cultural site authorities' managerial decisions about the interior and exterior designs.

The results of this study showed that site atmospherics have a two sub-dimensions (service atmosphere and spatial atmosphere), despite the fact that earlier studies (Baker, 1986; Bonn et al., 2007) generally offered a three-dimensional structure (ambiance service environment, design and layout service environment, and social service environment). The dimensions, suggested as ambiance and design-classification in the original scale, were grouped under a single dimension in this study, which was named as 'spatial atmosphere'. The second dimension, which was originally named 'social service environment', called in this study as 'service atmosphere'.

The results obtained by regression analysis both for Turkish and British visitors of Topkapi Palace showed that service and spatial atmospherics had a positive effect on overall visitor satisfaction. Moreover, spatial atmosphere had a higher effect on satisfaction than service atmosphere, for both groups. These findings show similarity with Bonn et al.'s (2007) findings. Based on these results, heritage site authorities may be recommended to give importance to the use of colour scheme, functional layout, lighting, signage issues with the aim of enhancing quality of visitor experience and level of overall satisfaction. It was also suggested in the literature that site atmospherics and its additional components such as good lighting, signage, audio tours, etc. should be designed and controlled by professional perspectives. If these factors are managed effectively, visitor experiences and overall satisfaction are expected to be increased (Bonn et al., 2007; Dietsch, 1997)

In addition, crowding perceptions of both groups were found to have a negative effect on satisfaction, albeit not strongly. In an earlier study on retail crowding and customer satisfaction, Eroglu et al. (2005) obtained similar findings. However, in another study about crowding perceptions and visitor satisfaction at festivals, Kim et al. (2016) exhibited that perceived crowding had a positive effect on satisfaction. Therefore, it can be concluded that the effect of crowding on visitor satisfaction may vary depending on research settings, examined tourism types, and nationalities of the visitors. Although, crowding perceptions of Turkish and British visitors were shown similarity in this study, in the future studies, researchers are recommended to investigate visitors' crowding perceptions at different cultural heritage sites and to measure its impact on behavioural intentions.

The research model was verified by regression and correlation analyses. This study has made a contribution to improve prediction models and relationship research models of visitor satisfaction in cultural areas. It was explored that atmospherics have a positive impact on visitor satisfaction while perception of crowding have a negative impact. Besides, crowding perception and atmospherics are negatively correlated.

There are also some limitations to this study that should be mentioned. Firstly, targeting just Turkish and British visitors as the research sample can be considered as a limitation, while visitors from the other countries were ignored. That fact limits the generalization of the obtained findings. Secondly, field research was performed in the period of August-September, 2016 when Topkapi Palace reach to its highest monthly visitor numbers. It was, therefore, impossible for the authors to make high and low tourism season comparisons in terms of perceived site atmospherics and crowding. In the future studies, researchers are encouraged to investigate site-related perceptions of visitors coming from different countries, and to compare the results of this study with their findings that they may obtain at other cultural sites.

Acknowledgement

This article is based on a master's thesis completed in December, 2016 by Doğuş Kılıçarslan at Akdeniz University in Antalya-Turkey, at Social Sciences Institute, Tourism Management Programme under the direction of Meltem Caber.

References

Anderson, E. W., Fornell, C., & Lehmann, D. R. (1994). Customer satisfaction, market share, and profitability: Findings from Sweden. *Journal of Marketing, 58*(3), 53-66.

Ayala, H. (1996). Resort ecotourism: A paradigm for the 21st century. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administrative Quarterly, 37*(5).

Baker, J. (1986). The role of environment in marketing services: The consumer perspective. J. A. Czpeil, C. Congam, & J. Shanaham (Edts), In *The Services Marketing Challenge: Integrated for Competitive Advantage* (pp. 79-84). Chicago: American Marketing Association.

Bitner, M. J. (1992). Servicescapes: the impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees. *Journal of Marketing, 56*, 57-71.

Bonn, M. A., Joseph-Mathews, S. M., Dai, M., Hayes, S., & Cave, J. (2007). Heritage/cultural attraction atmospherics: Creating the right environment for the heritage/cultural visitor. *Journal of Travel Research, 45*, 345-354.

Bosque, I. R., & Martín, H. S. (2008). Tourist satisfaction: A cognitive-affective model. *Annals of Tourism Research, 35*(2), 551–573.

Brown, P. J. (1988). Quality in recreation experience. A. H. Watson (Edts), In *Outdoor recreation benchmark: Proceedings of the National Recreation Forum* (pp. 412–421). Asheville: US Forest Service.

Büyüköztürk, Ş. (2016). *Handbook for Data Analysis in Social Sciences* Ankara: Pegem.

Churchill, G. (1979). A paradigm for developing better measures for marketing contrasts, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 16, 64-73.

Cole, D. (2001). Visitor use density and wilderness experiences: A historical review of research. W. Freimund, & D. Cole (Edts) In *Proceedings of the visitor use density and wilderness experience* (pp. 11-20). Ogden: US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station.

Desor, J. (1972). Toward a psychological theory of crowding. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 21*(1), 79–83.

Dietsch, D. K. (1997). Museum boom. *Architecture, 86*(12), 11-12.

Eroglu, S., Machleit, K., & Barr, T. (2005). Perceived retail crowding and shopping satisfaction: the role of shopping values. Journal of Business Research, 58(8), 1146-1153.

Evans, J. R., & Berman, B. (1995). *Principles of Marketing* (1th Edition). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Fakharyan, M., Omidvar, S., Khodadadian, M. R., & Vosta, L. N. (2014). Examining the effect of customer-to-customer interactions on satisfaction, loyalty, and word-ofmouth behaviors in the hospitality industry: The mediating role of personal interaction quality and service atmospherics. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 31*(5), 610-626.

George, D., & Mallery, P. (2010). *SPSS for Windows Step by Step: A Simple Guide and Reference, 17.0 Update.* Allyn & Bacon.

Graefe, A. R., Vaske, J. J., & Kuss, F. R. (1984). Social carrying capacity: An integration and synthesis of twenty years of research. *Leisure Sciences: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 6*(4), 395-431.

Hui, M., & Bateson, J. (1991). Perceived control and the effects of crowding and consumer choice on the service encounter. *Journal of Consumer Research, 14*, 404–420.

Kaya, N., & Weber, M. J. (2003). Cross-cultural differences in the perception of crowding and privacy regulation: American and Turkish students. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 23*, 301–309.

Kim, D., Lee, C.-K., & Sirgy, M. J. (2016). Examining the Differential Impact of Human Crowding Versus Spatial Crowding on Visitor Satisfaction at a Festival. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 33*(3), 293-312.

Kotler, P. (1973). Atmospherics as a marketing tool. *Journal of Retailing, 49*(4), 48-64.

Kozak, M., & Rimmington, M. (2000). Tourist satisfaction with Mallorca, Spain, as an off-season holiday destination. *Journal of Travel Research, 38*, 260-269.

Kuo, I.-L. (2002). The effectiveness of environmental interpretation at resource-sensitive tourism destinations. *International Journal of Tourism Research, 4*, 87-101.

Lee, R. G. (1977). Alone with others: The paradox of privacy in wilderness. *Leisure Sciences, 1*(1), 3-19.

Machleit, K., Eroglu, S., & Mantel, S. (2000). Perceived retail crowding and shopping satisfaction: What modifies this relationship? *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 9*(1), 29-42.

Mannell, R. C., & Kleiber, D. (1977). *A Social Psychology of Leisure.* Pennsylvania: Venture Publication.

Manning, R. (1999). *Studies in Outdoor Recreation: Search and Research* (2th Edition). Corvallis: Oregon State University Press.

Manning, R., Valliere, W., Minteer, B., Wang, B., & Jacobi, C. (2000). Crowding in parks and outdoor recreation. *Journal of Park and Recreation, 18*, 57–72.

McArthur, S. (1994). Acknowledging a symbiotic relationship: better heritage management via better visitor management. *Australian Parks and Recreation, 30*(3), 12-17.

Moon, H., Yoon, H. J., & Han, H. (2017). The effect of airport atmospherics on satisfaction and behavioral intentions: Testing the moderating role of perceived safety. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 34*(6), 749-763.

Moscardo, G. (1999). *Making Visitors Mindful: Principles for Creating Quality Sustainable Visitor Experiences through Effective Communication.* Urbana: Sagamore.

Neuts, B., & Nijkamp, P. (2012). Tourist crowding perception and acceptability in cities: An Applied modelling study on Bruges. *Annals of Tourism Research, 39*(4), 2133–2153.

Nykiel, R. (1997). Enhancing quality through diversity. *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing, 4*(4), 65-70.

Obermiller, C., & Bitner, M. (1984). Store atmosphere: A peripheral cue for product evaluation. *In American Psychological Association Annual Conference Proceedings* (pp. 52-53). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Orams, M. (1996). A conceptual model of tourist-wildlife interaction: The case for education as a management strategy. *Australian Geographer, 27*(1), 39-51.

Özmen, A. (2006). Sampling– Unit 7. 7. In the Statistics, A. F. Yüzer (Edts) (p. 177). Eskisehir: Anadolu University.

Prayag, G., & Chiappa, G. D. (2016). Antecedents of heritage tourists' satisfaction: The role of motivation, discrete emotions and place attachment. In University of Massachusetts 2016-

Conference Proceedings (pp. 1-4). Amherst: The Canadian Chapter of the Travel and Tourism Research Association.

Rathnayake, R. M. (2015). How does ‘crowding’ affect visitor satisfaction at the Horton Plains National Park in Sri Lanka? *Tourism Management Perspectives, 16*, 129-138.

Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism Topkapı Palace Museum Directorate (2016). Retrieved from http://www.topkapisarayi.gov.tr/tr/tarih%C3%A7e, in 20 November, 2016.

Rojas, C. d., & Camarero, C. (2007). Visitors' expreience, mood and satisfaction in a heritage context: Evidence from an interpretation center. *Tourism Management, 29*, 525-537.

Shelby, B. (1980). Crowding models for backcountry recreation. *Land Economics, 56*(1), 43-55.

Shelby, B., Vaske, J., & Heberlein, T. (1989). Comparative analysis of crowding in multiple locations: Results from fifteen years of research. *Leisure Sciences, 11*, 269–291.

Stokols, D. (1972). On the distinction between density and crowding: Some implications for future research. *Psychological Review, 79*(3), 275–278.

Stokols, D., Rall, M., Pinner, B., & Schopler, J. (1973). Physical, social, and personal determinants of the perception of crowding. *Environment and Behavior, 5*, 87-115.

Tabachnick, B., & Fidell , L. (2003). *Using Multivariate Statistics* (6 b.). Boston: Pearson.

Tian-Cole, S., & Cromption, J. (2003). A conceptualization of the relationships between service quality and visitor satisfaction, and their links to destination selection. *Leisure Studies, 22*(1), 65-80.

Tombs, A., & McColl-Kennedy, J. R. (2003). Social-servicescape conceptual model. *Marketing Theory, 3*(4), 447-475.

Tseng, Y.-P., Kyle, G. T., Shafer, C. S., Graefe, A. R., Bradle, T. A., & Schuett, M. A. (2009). Exploring the crowding–satisfaction relationship in recreational boating. *Environmental Management, 43*, 496–507.

Wu, H.-C., & Li, T. (2015). An empirical study of the effects of service quality, visitor satisfaction, and emotions on behavioral intentions of visitors to the museums of Macau. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism, 16*(1), 80-102.

Yildirim, K., & Akalin-Baskaya, A. (2007). Perceived crowding in a cafe/restaurant with different seating densities. *Building and Environment, 42*, 3410.

Zehrer, A., & Raich, F. (2016). The impact of perceived crowding on customer satisfaction. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 29*, 88-98.

Doğuş Kiliçarslan

Akdeniz University, Social Sciences Institute, Doctoral Student at Tourism Management Programme. Postal address: Dumlupinar Boulevard-Campus. Antalya-Turkey.
doguskilicarslan@akdeniz.edu.tr
Doğuş Kılıçarslan was awarded a Master of Science degree at Akdeniz University, Social Sciences Institute, Tourism Management and Hospitality Programme. He is currently a PhD candidate at the same programme. His research interests are tourism marketing, tourist guidance, heritage tourism, destination marketing, service quality, and tourism experience. He has published conference papers and articles in tourism and travel journals.

Dr. Meltem Caber

Akdeniz University, Faculty of Tourism, Tourism Guidance Programm, Dumlupinar Boulevard-Campus. Antalya-Turkey.
meltemcaber@akdeniz.edu.tr
Dr. Meltem Caber works as an associate professor at Akdeniz University, Tourism Faculty, Tourism Guidance Department. She completed her PhD from Akdeniz University, Social Sciences Institute, Tourism Management Programme. Her research interests are tourist behaviour, e-CRM, service quality, and destination management. In some of the well-known scientific journals, she is currently taking part as a reviewer. In previous years, she had also the co-editor and guest editor experiences in the some journals. She has several published international conference papers and refereed articles about tourism marketing and management.

Appendix 1. Survey Form

Dear participants,

This survey is carried out to investigate the relationship between perceptions of visited places and visitor satisfaction in the context of cultural tourism. The information you have given, is only to be used for scientific purposes, it will be reserved against third parties. Thank you for your attention.

Gender	[ ] Male	[ ] Female	
Nationality	.....	Age	.....
Marital status	[ ] Married	[ ] Single	
Profession (Job)	[ ] Private company employee [ ] Officer	[ ] Employer [ ] unemployed	[ ] Student [ ] Other.....
Education level	[ ] Primary school [ ] High school	[ ] Middle School [ ] University	[ ] Other.....
Average household income (Monthly)	[ ] 1-1000£ [ ] 1001-2000£ [ ] 2001-3000£	[ ] 3001-4000£ [ ] 4001-5000£ [ ] 5001 £ and higher	
The source of information that you used for plan your trip (You can select more than one option)	[ ] Travel agency [ ] Friends [ ] Internet	[ ] Newspaper [ ] Past experiences [ ] Other.....	[ ] Television [ ] Journal
How many times have you visited Turkey? (Including this one)	.....	How many times have you visited İstanbul? (Including this one)	.....
Your total stay in Turkey	[ ] ..... days	How many times have you visited Topkapi Palace? (Including this one)	[ ] .....
Your information resource about Topkapi Palace (You can select more than one option)	[ ] Travel agency [ ] Friends [ ] Internet	[ ] Newspaper [ ] Past experiences [ ] Other.....	[ ] Television [ ] Journal

General atmosphere of Topkapi Palace							
	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
Topkapi Palace has good lighting.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
Topkapi Palace has a good color scheme.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
Topkapi Palace has good signage and availability of information.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
Topkapi Palace has a good functional layout.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
Topkapi Palace has a good use of open space.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
Topkapi Palace has a good flow of customer traffic.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
It is easy to find the way around the Topkapi Palace .	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
The staff at the Topkapi Palace are very knowledgeable.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
Topkapi Palace offers good service.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
The staff at the Topkapi Palace is courteous.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
Topkapi Palace has a good staff.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]

Overall satisfaction of your visit to Topkapi Palace							
	Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
Topkapi Palace is one of the best palace I could have visited.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
I am pleased with my decision to visit Topkapi Palace.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
I have really had a good time, I have had fun in this center	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
I will recommend someone to visit Topkapi Palace.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
I will say positive things about Topkapi Palace.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]

Your general perception of crowd							
	Very crowded					Not crowded at all	
In your opinion, to what extent is the Topkapi Palace crowded?	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
	Too negative					Very positive	
Do you experience this amount of crowding as something positive or negative?	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]

Source: Authors

DOI: https://doi.org/10.29036/jots.v9i17.54

A New Measure of the Quality of Tourism Product

Maria do Rosário Campos Mira
Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra, Higher School of Education
Andreia Filipa Antunes Moura
Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra, Higher School of Education
Lisete dos Santos Mónico
University of Coimbra, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences

Received July 7 2018; received in revised form 16 November 2015; accepted 10 December 2018

Abstract

Tourism product competitiveness depends on innovation and quality levels and on its capacity to reflect the destinations' identity. For these reasons and inspired by the EC and UNWTO recommendations we developed a tourism quality scale, adapted to the Portuguese reality, which is supported by 5 subscales. This paper focuses on the validation of the tourism product subscale, which was tested among local public stakeholders, specifically Portuguese municipalities. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were performed, and three factors supported quality measurement regarding the tourism product: (1) services; (2) resources and attractions; and (3) accessibilities and infrastructures. Results demonstrate there are theoretical and practical implications and the conclusions provide useful insights for future research.

Key Words: Quality, Product, Scale, Tourism

JEL Classification: L15, C3

1. Introduction

This article is the last of a series of five. The series aims to validate the psychometric properties of a measuring instrument, adapted to the Portuguese reality, which evaluates the perception of local public decision-makers about the quality of tourism. 125 Portuguese counties participated, totalling 134 respondents. The questionnaire built for this study

(‘Quality of tourist destinations' - QTD) is organized into subscales or quality dimensions, namely: economic, development, human resources, marketing, and product. As a whole, this project aims to endow the Portuguese Destination Management Organization (DMO) of instruments that are adapted to the local reality and of easy application, collection, and data processing. This said, the main intention is to assure DMOs possess tools that allow them to easily monitor their counties’ touristy activity. Instruments with these characteristics are scarce and none-existing adapted to the Portuguese reality at the local level. The different subscales of QD-TUR can be applied together or separately accordingly to the objectives and necessities of each organization. For this reason, each of these subscales were treated as an autonomous instrument.

This works’ objective is to present the results related to the validation of the ‘product’ subscale. It is shown that ‘services’, ‘resources and attraction’, and ‘accessibilities and structures’ are the dimensions that respondents take into consideration in regard to the conception of competitive and differentiated tourism products.

In Portugal, creating conditions that make tourism competitive at a local level come mostly from the initiative of local public power such as Town Halls. Therefore, the Town Halls become the DMO with responsible for the promoting of tourism destinations identity at the Town level. They also play a major role in: (Stylidis, Sit, & Biran, 2016): (i) planning of local tourism; (ii) supporting business initiative; (iii) promotion of the tourism destinations and fomenting networking; (iv) coordination between public and private sectors; (v) attracting funding, business, target markets, and specialized knowledge in the region under their supervision. For these reasons, it is important to understand which factors to consider when developing tourism products are and how these will be reflected in the quality of the offer from the perspective of someone who has a broad vision of the local level destinations.

2. Literature Review

Undoubtedly, the tourist profile is changing. Tourists are increasingly demanding and selective and are becoming progressively captivated by endogenous and authentic attractions that portray the uniqueness of destinations (Badulescu, Hoffman, Badulescu & Simut, 2016). The new context of international tourism stresses that tourism products evolve towards the tourism experience, which arises from the activation of cultural and natural resources of a certain region (Bernabé & Hernández, 2016).

For these authors, the tourism experience relies on stakeholders' partnerships, which, in turn, support political strategies that promote the incorporation of all dimensions of the cultural and natural patrimony, in order to transform local wealth into competitive tourism resources. Within this context, emphasis is given to tourism products and services management. in that placing tourists in the centre of the initial development stage of products and tourism markets in the final stage of this process, aiming to increase exportation earnings (Blasco, Guia & Prats, 2014; Bohlin, Brandt & Elbe, 2016). To Booyens and Rogerson (2016), it is also necessary to combine local and non-local, tangible and intangible resources, such as: knowledge (tacit, technical and scientific), technology, professional experience and other personal and professional skills, fundamental for the innovation of products and services. Offering a tourism experience relies on a type of creative tourism that sets innovation at the centre of product development, thus responding to changing demand motivations.

Creative tourism stimulates variety and product differentiation by reinventing them and adding them value (Bohlin et al., 2016; Sanz-Ibáñez & Clavé, 2016). Products and services competitiveness depend on their innovation and quality levels and on their capacity to reflect the destinations' identity. Developing tourism products and services under this perspective ensures destination attractiveness. In new economies driven by creativity, knowledge and technological development, innovation is considered to be the success key to achieve competitiveness (Booyens, 2016; Sarasa, 2015; Kiráľová, 2016).

Innovative tourism products are often associated with authenticity. In this spectrum, innovation means circumscribing the focus on what is unique and authentic in the local culture, as well as on the means to present these experiences to visitors (Bohlin et al., 2016; Sanz-Ibáñez & Clavé, 2016). Creating, better said co-creating, promotes knowledge transfer between local stakeholders and communities, thus increasing mutual skills to deal with competition, access to new niche markets and therefore leading to tourist's loyalty (Booyens & Rogerson, 2015).

In this sense, it's important to create a consistent tourism supply based on a solid product strategy that highlights the differentiating characteristics of products as well as other conditions for attractiveness (Badulescu et al., 2016; Booyens & Rogerson, 2015, 2016; De Noni, Orsi & Zanderighi, 2014; Rovira, 2016). In synthesis, these are the premises that promote meaningful tourism experiences in a given region. Under these conditions, territories tend to be attractive for tourists and for highly qualified workers. It's this dynamic and ability to attract that leads to a higher index of product competitiveness. But there's no

competitiveness without quality, meaning that tourists may feel attracted and motivated to go to certain destinations, but territories' ability to consolidate a rentable search volume, from an economic point of view, also depends on the quality of products and services provided to the costumer.

In this context, there are some topics to consider, namely:

a) the sustainability of the destinations' brand, in the long term, depends on the quality of client service, products, suppliers, and productive capacity (Nilsson, Eskilsson & Ek, 2010; Kiráľová, 2015);
b) the basic element to transform a given space into a tourism destination is a quality environment (Sarasa, 2015);
c) there are no quality tourism destinations without high qualifications in the hospitality business (Soares, Baidal & Gândar, 2015);
d) the product's quality is usually evaluated by its value for money perception and by its level of innovation (Weidenfeld, 2013);
e) the higher quality of social and communicational skills the tourist has, greater the need for the destination to exhibit high quality patterns (Volgger & Pechlaner, 2015).

In summary, the consulted authors defend that the tourism product must have quality to be internationally attractive and competitive. For such it needs: (i) cultural and natural diversity; (ii) external promotion and internal cohesion; (ii) accessible transport network; (iv) being inserted in a network that assures political support as well as the fundamental natural resources for its sustainability (Bernabé & Hernández, 2016; Bohlin et al., 2016; Ferdinand & Williams, 2013; Getz & Page, 2016; Rovira, 2016; Timothy, Saarinen & Viken, 2016; Wieckowski & Cerić, 2013).

3. Methodology

3.1 The sample

The proposed "Tourism product subscale" was tested among one hundred and twenty five municipalities, corresponding to 40.6% of the total Portuguese municipalities (N = 308). From the participating municipalities, answered the survey 134 participants (see Table 1).

Most of the respondents were aged from 35 to 49 years old (65.7%) and there were more female (57.5%) than male (42.5%). The majority occupies the position of Senior Technician (59.7%), above 80% work in the tourism department of municipalities (81.3%) and have been working at the institution for more than 10 years (56.7%). Most of them hold a tenure position (63.4%) and have higher education qualifications at the undergraduate level (50.0%), followed by a master's (20.1%) or a postgraduate degree (21.6%) (Table 1).

Table 1

Characteristic of participants from the 125 Portuguese municipalities [N = 134 participants]

Sample	*n*	*%*
Sex:		
Male	57	42.5
Female	77	57.5
Age:		
Between 18 and 24 years	1	0.7
Between 25 and 34 years	24	17.9
Between 35 and 49 years	88	65.7
Between 50 and 64 years	20	14.9
Over 64 years	1	0.7
Working time in the Municipality:		
Up to 1 year	4	3.0
From 1 to 5 years	22	16.4
From 5 to 10 years	32	23.9
More than 10 years	76	56.7
Positions in the Municipality:		
Technical position	109	68.6
Political position	25	15.7
Mayor	3	1.89
Alderman	9	5.66
Vice President	4	2.52
Other	9	5.66
Hiring regime of workers in the Municipality:		
Term employment contract	4	0.8
Permanent employment contract	85	10.5
Individual work contract	7	0.8
Consultant	6	4.5
Other	7	5.2
Missing-values	25	18.7
Professional category:		
Director of services and equivalent positions	1	0.7
Head of Division	14	10.4
Sub director, Director General and equivalent positions	1	0.7
Senior Technician	80	59.7
Other	13	9.7
Missing-values	25	18.7
Qualifications:		
Basic education (9th year)	1	0.8
Secondary Education (12th year)	5	3.7
Bachelor's degree	4	3.0
Graduation	67	50.0
Postgraduate studies	29	21.6
Master	27	20.2
PhD	1	0.8

Source: Own source based on the SPSS software output (version 22.0)

Local public stakeholders were considered as the target study population; since literature suggests that tourism competitiveness involves the active participation of stakeholders in the definition of policies, planning and strategic orientation for destinations. For this reason, it is emphasised the importance of assessing the quality of destinations,

through indicators that reflect the concerns of DMO's at the local level. Portuguese municipalities have many of these responsibilities in the territories they manage, including in the tourism sector. Knowing their perception about indicators that assess of the tourism product was the foundation for building this questionnaire.

3.2 Questionnaire construction

The entitled "Tourism product subscale" was designed considering the European Commission (Comissão Europeia, 2000, 2003, 2013, 2016) and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2007, 2010, 2012) recommendations. These entities defend that the tourism products should guarantee some conditions, namely: (i) attraction; (ii) access; (iii) activity; (iv) services; (v) qualified personnel; and (vi) promotion. The questions related to the qualification of human resources and promotion was previously treated in the subscales 'human resources in tourism' and 'destination marketing strategy' (Mira, Mónico & Moura, 2017). The subscale presented in this article highlights the attraction, access and services dimensions. The activity dimension, when related to the tourism experience, becomes part of the services component.

Moreover, the presented questionnaire was also supported by the previous research on the analysis of competitiveness indicators of destinations adapted to the Portuguese reality (Mira, Breda, Moura & Cabral, 2017; Mira, Mónico, Moura, & Breda, 2017; Mira, Mónico & Moura, 2017; Mira, Moura & Breda, 2016).

The results of these different studies and publications allowed the definitions of the items presented in this questionnaire (Table 2).

The main procedures in the construction of a measurement scale were followed, including the design and execution of different studies for development and improvement of the questionnaire, which led to the creation of the final version of the scale (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Netemeyer, Bearden & Sharma, 2003). Likert's recommendations (1932) in the construction of scales (see Lima, 2000) were also followed. Thus, based on the literature review, a set of items that expressed opinions about the product dimension of quality in tourism were created, having been selected 25 that showed a favourable or unfavourable position (see Table 2). Then a sample described on Table 1 were asked to evaluate each of them using a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The questionnaire also included a set of questions to determine the sociodemographic profile of the respondents.

Table 2

Tourism product subscale

Instructions
This questionnaire intends to collect data on the quality of tourism destinations. Your participation is voluntary and, in case you accept to participate, we kindly ask you to answer all the questions. If you leave some blank, it compromises the inclusion of your questionnaire in the study. The questionnaire is confidential, and your answers will be anonymous. There are no right or wrong answers. It is expected sincerity in the responses, not needing to spend time reflecting to give your answer. Thank you very much for your participation!
The following list contains statements regarding the product dimension of quality in tourism. Please select your answer according to the scale below: **1** = I strongly disagree **2** = I disagree **3**= I do not agree or disagree **4** = I agree **5**= I totally agree 1.1 According to my municipality, I consider that:

1. Rich in natural resources	**1 2 3 4 5**
2. Rich in heritage resources	**1 2 3 4 5**
3. Rich in cultural resources	**1 2 3 4 5**
4*. There local transportation service is efficient	**1 2 3 4 5**
5. It has a good climate.	**1 2 3 4 5**
6*. It is a clean place.	**1 2 3 4 5**
7. Our traditional festivities are unique.	**1 2 3 4 5**
8*. Welcoming people.	**1 2 3 4 5**
9*. There are designated places that are prepared for the practice of water sports.	**1 2 3 4 5**
10*. We have attractive	**1 2 3 4 5**
11*. Our regional products are exclusive to the county.	**1 2 3 4 5**
12. It is a good shopping place.	**1 2 3 4 5**
13. Diversity of good quality accommodation services	**1 2 3 4 5**
14. The touristy sites are well signalized.	**1. 2 3 4 5**
15.. Having trendy and different things makes it distinct when compared with the nearest tourism destinations.	**1 2 3 4 5**
16. It offers good quality food.	**1 2 3 4 5**
17. It has health and well-being tourism projects of quality.	**1 2 3 4 5**
18*. Wine, fruits and other agricultural goods are a tourism attraction.	**1 2 3 4 5**
19. The quality of its cuisine, makes it a distinct destination.	**1 2 3 4 5**
20. It has good connection routes from and to the airports.	**1. 2 3 4 5**
21. It has good road access.	**1 2 3 4 5**
22. It offers a diverse array of entertainment options.	**1 2 3 4 5**
23. There are various viewpoints.	**1 2 3 4 5**
24. It has the necessary infrastructures to enable the practice of tourism.	**1 2 3 4 5**
25*. There are databases with the characterization of the county's tourism agents (businesses, artisans, associations, etc.).	**1 2 3 4 5**

Source: Authors
Note: (*) Items deleted after exploratory factor analysis

3.3 Procedures

The data used in this study were collected taking into account ethical issues such as participants' anonymity, data confidentiality, and as well for avoiding biases.

An online version of the questionnaire was built using Google Forms and sent by e-mail to all Portuguese municipalities. The average time of response was 12 minutes. The control of the responses was carried out monthly through the variable 'Municipality', being

sent a reminder to the municipalities that had not yet responded, reinforcing the importance of their participation in the study. The questionnaire had the instruction that it should be filled in by representatives of the municipality with responsibilities in tourism. Information on the objectives of the study, completion instructions, and the voluntary and anonymous nature of the participation and the guarantee of data confidentiality were also included in the beginning of the questionnaire.

4. Data analysis

All the analyses were completed using the statistical program SPSS and AMOS 22.0 for Windows operative system. Outliers were analysed according to Mahalanobis squared distance (Tabachnick & Fidell 2007), not having been found values relevant. The normality of the variables was assessed by the coefficients of skewness (*Sk*) and kurtosis (*Ku*), showing that no variable presented values violating normal distribution, $|Sk| \leq 1.49$ ($SE = .209$) and $|Ku| \leq 3.16$ ($SE = .416$).

Exploratory factor analysis was performed using SPSS by Principal Component Analysis (PCA). The PCA assumptions were tested through the sample size (ratio of 5 subjects per item and at least 100 participants; Gorsuch, 1983), the normality and linearity of the variables, factorability of *R*, and sample adequacy (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Since we expected to obtain correlated factors, we have chosen Direct Oblimin rotation method with Kaiser's normalization.

Confirmatory factorial analysis was performed with AMOS (v. 22.0, SPSS Inc, Chicago, IL; Arbuckle, 2013), estimation method by maximum likelihood (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2004). Goodness of fit was analysed by the indexes of NFI (Normed of fit index; good fit > .80; Schumacker and Lomax 1996), SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual; appropriate fit<.08; Brown 2006), CFI (Comparative fit index; good fit > .90; Bentler, 1990), RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; good fit < .05; Kline 2011; Schumacker & Lomax, 2010), and X^2/df (acceptable fit < 5; good fit < 2; Marôco, 2011; Schumacker & Lomax, 2010). The improvement of model fit was evaluated by the modification indices (MI; Bollen, 1989), and we considered liberating the parameters with higher MI. We followed Arbuckle's proposal (2013), which consists in analyzing the MIs by their statistical significance ($\alpha < 0.05$). Inside each factor, the correlation of the residual variability between variables with MI > 11 was performed (Marôco, 2011).

Reliability was calculated by Cronbach's alpha (Nunally, 1978). Despite reliability coefficients higher than .70 were considered acceptable for convergence and reliability (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2009), we've chosen the value of .80 as a good reliability indicator. The composite reliability and the average variance extracted for each factor were evaluated as described in Fornell and Larcker (1981).

5. Results

Exploratory factor analysis was initially carried out because the scale items were developed based o literature review (see Table 3 for PCA main results). After the factors' extraction, the factorial solution was analysed by a confirmatory factor analysis. The goodness-of-fit statistics indicated that the structural model fit was acceptable (see Table 4 for fit indices and Figure 1 for the structural model).

5.1 Exploratory factor analysis

The requirements for a reliable interpretation of PCA were analysed. Since the questionnaire we used has 25 items, the ratio found was 134 subjects/25 items = 5.36 subjects/item, which enables, according to Gorsuch (1983), a reliable use of PCA. The inter-correlation matrix and the identity matrix were different, $X^2(136) = 779.22$, $p < .001$ for the Bartlett's test, and the sampling was higher than the required value of .70, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) = .723.

Eight factors emerged according to the eigenvalue criteria over one, explaining 66.90% of the total variance. This factorial solution was not interpretable, and it is not in accordance to the Scree plot, which discriminates a maximum of 4 factors. Attending to the factorial loadings (*s*), we found an amount of items with scores lower than .50 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013) and others with similar factorial loadings in more than one factor. Additionally, excluding these items leads to an improvement of the Cronbach's alpha. These situations lead us to the exclusion to the eight items: 8 – 'People are hospitable'; 10 – 'Our regional products are attractive'; 6 – 'It is a clean place'; 9 – 'There are places prepared for the practice of water sports'; 25 – 'There are databases with the characterization of local tourist agents (companies, artisans, associations, etc.)'; 11 – 'Our regional products are exclusive to the municipality'; 18 – 'Wine, fruit and other agricultural products are a tourist attraction'; and 4 – 'There is an efficient local transportation service'.

With the remaining 17 items three factors emerged as more distinctive both attending the eigenvalues score and the scree plot. These factors explain 49.83% of the total variance, with the first factor explaining 25.79%, the second factor 13.81%, and the third 10.24%. Factorial loadings (s) are above .38 and the majority are higher than than .50 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013; see Table 3). Factor 1 is composed of seven items related to the variety and quality of tourism enterprises, accommodation, gastronomy, shopping, and tourism information. These were the most valued aspects by the respondents concerning the creation of a tourism product that assures the quality and competitive differentiation of Portuguese destinations. Reason why this factor has been designated 'Services'.

Factor 2 also comprises seven items concerning endogenous resources, climate, traditions and entertainment and was called 'Resources and attractions'. At last, the third factor was named 'Accessibilities and infrastructures', since it is comprised by 3 items concerning to connections and tourism infrastructure.

Table 3

PCA of the Tourism product dimension measure: Factorial loadings of F1, F2, and F3, communalities (h2), eigenvalues, and shared variance of the Pattern matrix

	F1 Services	F2 Resources and attractions	F3 Accessibilities and infrastrutures	*h2*
19. It is distinguished by the quality of its gastronomy.	**.743**	-.021	-.101	*.515*
16. It has quality food.	**.726**	-.012	.135	*.595*
17. It has quality tourism enterprises of health and well-being.	**.722**	-.174	-.047	*.475*
13. It has quality diversity of accommodation.	**.654**	.157	-.084	*.477*
14. The tourist sites are well signposted.	**.646**	.040	.017	*.439*
12. It is a good place to shop.	**.641**	-.036	.071	*.430*
15. It is distinguished by having things new and different from the nearest tourist destinations.	**.495**	.206	.054	*.358*
2. It is rich in assets.	.066	**.752**	-.033	*.589*
3. It is rich in cultural resources.	.104	**.742**	.066	*.619*
1. It is rich in natural resources.	-.099	**.698**	-.164	*.474*
23. It has a variety of landscape observation points.	-.029	**.652**	-.065	*.412*
7. His traditional festivities are unique.	-.007	**.595**	.114	*.379*
5. It has a good climate.	.020	**.394**	.023	*.163*
22. It has variety of entertainment.	.255	**.387**	.280	*.404*
21. It has good road access.	.017	-.089	**.896**	*.801*
20. It has good accessibility from the airports.	.027	-.185	**.872**	*.771*
24. It has infrastructures for tourism practice.	-.063	.234	**.713**	*.573*
Eigenvalues	4.38	2.2834	1.74	
% of explained variance	25.79	13.81	10.24	

Source Own source based on the SPSS software output (version 22.0)

5.2 Confirmatory factor analysis

CFA was performed in order to test the fit of the factorial solution found by EFA (see fit indices for model 1 in Table 3, no error terms correlated). For model 1, only the χ^2/df showed an acceptable fit. In model 2 error terms were correlated between the items belonging

to the same factor, based on the higher modification indices (see Figure 1). This covariation might indicate non-random measurement errors, which can result from some semantic redundancy between items, sequential positioning in the scale, as well as the specific characteristics of the respondents (Aish & Jöreskog, 1990). Model 2 showed a good fit for CFI and χ^2/df, an acceptable fit for SRMR and RMSEA (see Table 4, model 2).

Table 4

Fit statistics of the three-factor model for 'Tourism product' dimension measure

Model	*NFI*	*SRMR*	*CFI*	χ^2/df	*RMSEA*	*RMSEA 90% CI*
1	.659	.089	.774	2.18* (*df* = 116)	.095	.079 - .110*
2	.771	.075	.904	1.52* (*df* = 113)	.063	.043 - .081*

Source: Own source based on the AMOS software output (version 22.0)
Note: X2 chi-square, df degrees of freedom, NFI normed fit index, CFI comparative fit index, PNFI parsimony normed fit index, SRMR standardized root mean square residual, RMSEA root mean square error of approximation, CI confidence interval, * $p < .05$

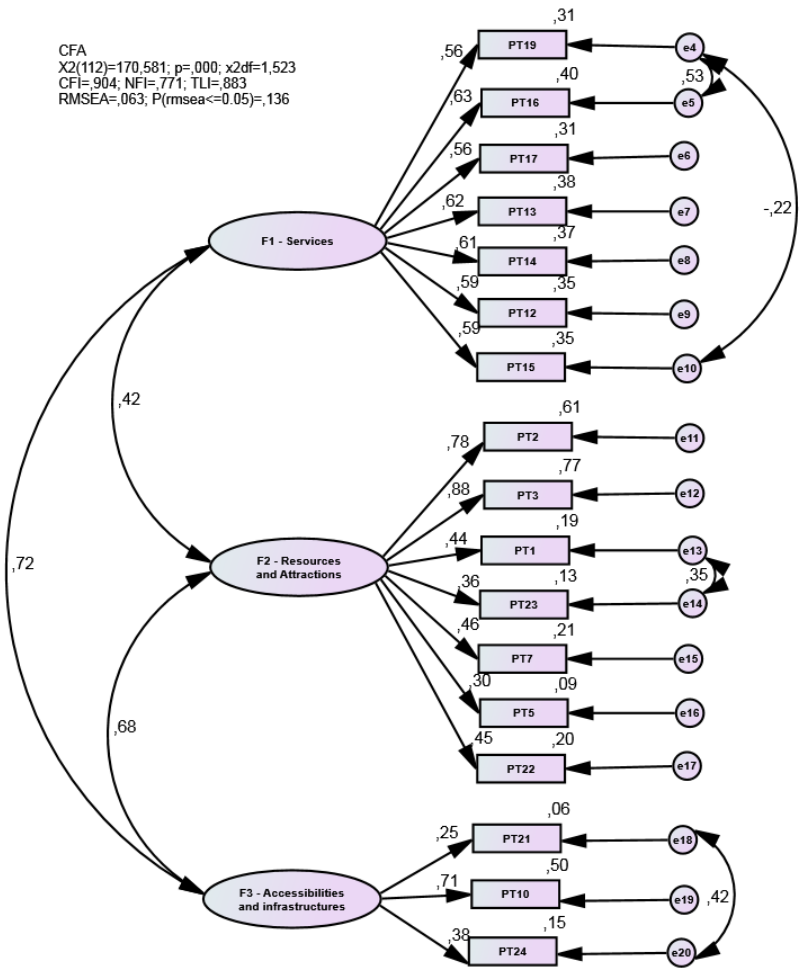
In Figure 1 can be seen the standardized regression weights (ranged from .25 to .88) and the squared multiple correlations (ranged from 6 to 77%) of model 2. Despite item 21 has the lower regression weight, the communality in EFA is high and we consider this item as an important one in Factor 3, attending its content.

Cronbach alpha for the global scale are good (α> .80; see Table 4), and acceptable for factors 1 and 2 (α> .70). Factor 3 reached a low reliability, which can be due to its small number of items (3 items), among other reasons. This score is near .60, alpha's value accepted by DeVellis (2003) and items 21 and 24 have a corrected item-total correlation above the .30 reference value suggested by Field (2009).

Composite reliability showed good scores only for factors 1 and 2, since higher than .70. Concerning the average variance extracted (AVE), none of the factors exceed the cut-off value of .40 that is indicator of an acceptable convergent validity (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000), which points out the need to revise the items regarding the issue of convergent validity. Discriminant validity should also be revised, given that, excluding the $R^2_{F1,F2}$ score, the AVE corresponding to each factor is not higher than the squared correlations (R^2) between the three factors (Fornell & Larcker 1981).

Figure 1

CFA for 'Tourism product' dimension measure (model 2): standardized regression weights and squared multiple correlations



Source: Own source based on the AMOSSPSS software output (version 22.0)

Mean score for the Global scale showed a value near the 4th point of the Likert scale. The scores for both factors were similar, receiving the F1 the lower score and the F2 the highest score (Table 5).

Table 5

Composite reliability (*CR*), average variance extracted (*AVE*), Cronbach's Alpha (*α*), means (*M*), standard-deviations (*SD*), and inter-correlations among factors (R^2 between brackets) for 'Tourism product' Subscale

	CR	*AVE*	*α*	*mín*	*máx*	*M*	*SD*	R^2		
								F1	*F2*	*F3*
Global scale	-	-	.822	2.94	5.00	3.91	0.43			
F1- Services	.792	.352	.786	1.57	5.00	3.62	0.61	-	.176	.518
F2 - Resources and attractions	.738	.316	.748	2.43	5.00	4.11	0.49		-	.462
F3 - Accessibilities and infrastructures	.442	.238	.583	2.33	5.00	4.09	0.57			-

Source: Own source based on the AMOS software output (version 22.0)

* $p < .001$

6. Discussion and Implications

The results highlight three dimensions that should be considered when structuring a tourism product in order to assure its quality. These are: services, resources and attractions, and accessibilities and infrastructures. As referred to previously, the promotion dimension is a fundamental component for the structuring of the tourism product.

Tourism requires activities. The activities most valued by the respondents were gastronomy, shopping, and wellness. These need to be complemented with quality accommodation and tourism information services (Bohlin et al., 2016; Ferdinand & Williams, 2013; Getz & Page, 2016; Soares et al., 2015). These aspects were defined as qualifying or emerging assets in the Portuguese tourism strategy, defined by the 'Government' for 2027 (Turismo de Portugal, 2017). In this document the greatest challenges tourism will face, in Portugal, in the next decade are presented. Strategic markets for future investment are also defined, from which stand out Asia Pacific and Brazil. The primary motivations for these markets to visit Portugal are precisely: gastronomy, shopping, and wellness.

These tourists also highly appreciate quality accommodation. However, promotion services, as well as tourism information, are essential to make Portugal known as a tourism destination, as well as help tourists take the most out of their visit without wasting unnecessary time. Services are responsible for aggregating in an organized fashion all the activities tourists might, or not, be able to find on their own (Blasco et al., 2014; Bohlin et al., 2016). They also facilitate the combination of different activities that enrich the tourism experience (Booyens & Rogerson, 2016). They include tourism information services which are a fundamental tool for travel planning and in the divulgation of all the fundamental

activities to the tourism activity. These are the ones that make it possible to know which products exist, as well as indicate how to access them.

These results suggest that participants of this study are aware of the challenges proposed by the Government and that they share the same objectives. They also indicate that this can be a strategy to make Portugal a tourism destination different from the destinations of proximity and, therefore, competitive and attractive internationally. This combination of interests and objectives between the public and private sectors, regarding the 'services' is a positive sign in the development of tourism in Portugal. And it can be one of the most important differentiating assets in the organization of quality and competitive tourism.

There is also an association between item 19. 'It is distinguished by the quality of its gastronomy' and item 15. ‘It is distinguished by having things new and different from the nearest tourist destinations.’ This result suggests that one of the distinguishing assets of tourism attractiveness in Portugal is its gastronomy. This is one of the products that can contribute to increase the competitiveness of this destination in relation to destinations of proximity.

The high ratio of factor 1 'Services' to factor 3 'Accessibilities and infrastructures' reinforces what was said earlier. Without getting the tourists to the destination there is no tourism. Access to activities is key. There are many activities that are quite attractive, but the difficulties associated with travel are so many that they make tourists give up (Gretzel, Hwang & Fesenmaier, 2012; Pearce & Schänzel, 2013). Access is key to exploring the attractions. These are the ideas that stand out in factor 3 ('Accessibilities and infrastructures'). It also appears that at the level of connections, rather than road networks, are the good accessibility of airports that contribute most to the quality and competitiveness of destinations. This assertion is supported by the low correlation between items 21. 'It has good road access' and factor 3, meaning that this item contributes little to the explanation of this construct (see Figure 1). In summary, tourism infrastructures and airways are the most important elements in attractiveness of the tourism product at the international level because they allow tourists to reach the destination and increase their stay rate (Brouder & Ioannides, 2014, Leiper, 1979, 2000, 2004). In other words, it is the infrastructures and attractions that allow carrying out a set of activities that fix the tourists in the territories.

Factor 3 ('Accessibilities and infrastructures') reflects what has been defended by Turismo de Portugal, regarding the goals that tourism has already reached, at national level. The diversity of the offer and the freedom to travel within the destination has been accompanied by the increase of the air accessibilities. These are also the conditions that the

Portuguese municipalities defend as central to the development of tourism at the local level, especially in inland tourism. And these are the necessary requirements to stimulate the creation of competitive and quality tourism products, in the opinion of the Guardianship and the local agents.

Finally, we need to address the content reflected by factor 2 ('Resources and attractions'). The tourism experience depends on the type and combination of activities experienced. As well as, the selected activities are adequate to the profile, tastes, motivations and age of the tourists, among others (Badulescu, et al., 2016). The differentiation of products is an added value in the experience of unforgettable tourism experiences, because it is different from everything that people have ever lived. The richness and diversity of natural and cultural resources ensure the attractiveness of tourists as long as they are transformed into competitive tourism products (Bernabé & Hernández, 2016). Hence, it is extremely important to reflect local traditions on local traditions and customs in entertainment activities. Innovation in tourism products from endogenous resources adds value and competitive capacity to destinations (Bohlin et al., 2016; Sanz-Ibáñez & Clavé, 2016). It is also this strategy that emphasizes the differentiating characteristics of the territories and contributes to increase their attractiveness (Badulescu et al., 2016; Booyens & Rogerson, 2015, 2016; De Noni et al., 2014; Rovira, 2016). It is also worth mentioning that 'having a good climate' (item 5) and 'variety of landscape observation points' (item 23) were also considered by the respondents as attractive assets, around which the Portuguese tourism products should be structured. However, attention is drawn to the fact that item 5. 'It has a good climate' is what least contributes to explain Factor 2 ('Resources and attractions').

The correlation between factors 2 (‘Resources and attractions’) and 3 (‘Accessibilities and infrastructures’) has been explained previously. It’s important to have resources, but even more important is for these to inspire the design of tourism products able to translate the culture and traditions. It’s fundamental to have infrastructure that supports and stimulates product innovation, promotion and commercialization. It is equally fundamental to get tourists to destinations.

7. Conclusion

The premises that facilitate the attractiveness and competitiveness of tourism products, defended by the authors of the specialty identified in these results are verified (Bernabé & Hernández, 2016; Bohlin et al., 2016; Ferdinand & Williams, 2013; Getz & Page, 2016;

Rovira, 2016; Timothy et al., 2016; Wieckowski & Cerić, 2013). Cultural and natural wealth, variety of attractions and entertainment associated with infrastructure and connections are the factors that Portuguese counties value the most so that products differentiate from one another and maintain the level of quality expected by tourists. Once again, the coherence between 'Government' and local entities is observed, when it comes to development of tourism products in Portugal, because the results analysed here show that local leaders are aware of the tourism potential of the country. It also shows that these actors value what converges the most to: (i) differentiation of tourism destination and its competitiveness; (ii) association between product quality and the authenticity of the tourism experience; (iii) the necessity to invest in infrastructure; and (iv) the consolidation of air ways and airports expansion to facilitate the arrival of tourists to destinations. These points are expressed in the Governments' strategy for tourism in Portugal until 2027 (Turismo de Portugal, 2017) and are part of the speech of local public decision makers, such as shown by the results.

Attention is drawn to some frailties of this measuring instrument, which leads us, in future studies, to rethink the contribution of each item to the studied instrument, following the recommendations of DeVellis (2012) e Netemeyer et al. (2003). We're referring to the internal consistency coefficient of factor 3 ('Accessibilities and infrastructures') and to the value of intercorrelations of items 5 ('It has a good climate') and 21 ('It has good road access'). These results suggest the need for further studies that allow the improvement of some adjustment indexes obtained in the confirmatory factorial analysis. However, this theme's importance and the fact that the items constituting the three factors represent what is defended by the Portuguese Government as being the Portuguese tourism strategy for the next decade, when it comes to developing products, led to further reflection on this data, not excluding any of the items that the round factor solution retained. The association verified between items 19 ('It is distinguished by the quality of its gastronomy') and 16 ('It has quality food') suggests some semantical redundancy between these two questions, indicating that this instrument may improve with the suppression of one of them. Future studies based on the application of the subscale to other contexts may contribute to a better explanation of this result.

For the above reasons, the longitudinal application of the proposed instrument is suggested, as well as in other international contexts to make comparative analyses and to establish temporal evolutions or similarities and differences between countries. In addition, it is essential to deepen the knowledge in this area, imposing the continuation of the study of this theme and the other dimensions of quality that make up this scale, namely: development,

economics, human resources and marketing.

7. Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the participation of the Portuguese public decision-makers at the local level that contributed with their experience and knowledge to the present research.

8. References

Aish, A., & Jöreskog, K. (1990). A panel model for political efficacy and responsiveness: An application of LISREL 7 with weighted least squares. *Quality and Quantity, 19,* 716-723.

Arbuckle, J. L. (2013). *Amos 22 user's guide*. Chicago, IL: SPSS.

Badulescu, D., Hoffman, I., Badulescu, A, & Simut, R. (2016). Local authorities' involvement in fostering Hungarian-Romanian cross-border cooperation in tourism. *Lex Localis, Journal of Local Self-Government, 14*(3), 337-358. doi:10.4335/14.3.337-358(2016).

Bagozzi, R., & Yi, Y. (1988). On the evaluation of structural equation models. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 16 (1), 74-94.

Bentler, P. (1990). Quantitative methods in psychology: Comparative fit indexes in structural models. *Psychological Bulletin, 107,* 238-246.

Bernabé, C., & Hernández, M. (2016). Turismo en Albarracín y Comarca: Acción pública local y dinâmica reciente en clave de desarrollo turístico sostenible. *Anales de Geografía de la Universidad Complutense, 36*(1), 173-194. doi:10.5209/rev_AGUC.2016.v36.n1.52718.

Blasco, D., Guia, J., & Prats, L. (2014). Tourism destination zoning in mountain regions: A consumer-based approach. *Tourism Geographies, 16*(3), 512-528. doi:10.1080/14616688.2013.851267.

Bohlin, M., Brandt, D., & Elbe, J. (2016). Tourism as a vehicle for regional development in peripheral areas: Myth or reality? A longitudinal case study of Swedish regions. *European Planning Studies, 24*(10), 1788-1805. doi: 10.1080/09654313.2016.1194807.

Bollen, K. A. (1989). *Structural equations with latent variables*. New York: Wiley.
Booyens, I. (2016). Global–local trajectories for regional competitiveness: Tourism innovation in the Western Cape. *Local Economy, 31*(1–2), 142–157. doi: 10.1177/0269094215618598.

Booyens, I., & Rogerson, C. M. (2015). Creative tourism in Cape Town: An innovation perspective. *Urban Forum, 26,* 405–424. doi: 10.1007/s12132-015-9251-y.

Booyens, I., & Rogerson, C. M. (2016). Unpacking the geography of tourism innovation in Western Cape Province, South Africa. *Bulletin of Geography, Socio-economic Series, 31*, 19–36. doi: 10.1515/bog-2016-0002.

Brouder, P., Ioannides, D. (2014). Urban tourism and evolutionary economic geography: Complexity and co-evolution in contested spaces. *Urban Forum, 25*, 419-430. doi: 10.1007/s12132-014-9239-z.

Brown, T. A. (2015). *Confirmatory factor analysis for applied research* (2ndEd.). NewYork: Guilford Press.

Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioural sciences* (2nd Ed.). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Comissão Europeia (2000). *Para um turismo urbano de qualidade: Gestão integrada da qualidade (GIQ) dos destinos turísticos urbanos*. Luxemburgo, Serviço das Publicações Oficiais das Comunidades Europeias.

Comissão Europeia (2003). *A manual for evaluating the quality performance of tourist destinations and services*. Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

Comissão Europeia (2013). *Caixa de ferramentas do sistema europeu de indicadores de turismo para destinos sustentáveis*. Luxemburgo, Serviço de Publicações da União Europeia.

Comissão Europeia (2016). *The European tourism indicator system: ETIS toolkit for sustainable destination management*. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/sustainable/indicators/index_en.htm.

De Noni, I., Orsi, L., & Zanderighi, L. (2014). Attributes of Milan influencing city brand attractiveness. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, 3*, 218–226. doi: 10.1016/j.jdmm.2014.06.001

DeVellis, R. (2003). *Scale development: Theory and applications* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Diamantopoulos, A., & Siguaw, J. A. (2000). *Introducing to Lisrel: a guide for the uninitiated*. London: Sage.

Ferdinand, N., & Williams, N. (2013). International festivals as experience production systems. *Tourism Management, 34*, 202-210. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2012.05.001.

Field, A. (2005). *Discovering statistics using SPSS* (3rd Ed.). London: Sage.

Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research, 18*(1), 39-50.

Getz, D., & Page, S. (2016). Progress and prospects for event tourism research. *Tourism Management, 52*, 593-631. doi: 10.1016/j.tourman.2015.03.007.

Gorsuch, R. (1983). *Factor analysis*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Gretzel, U., Hwang, Y. H., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2012). Informing destination recommender systems design and evaluation through quantitative research. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research, 6*(4), 297-315.

Hair, J. F., Black, W.C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R.E. (2009). *Multivariate data analysis* (7th Ed.). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Jöreskog, K. G., & Sörbom, D. (2004). *LISREL 8.7 for Windows* [Computer Software]. Lincolnwood, IL: Scientific Software International, Inc.

Kiráľová, A. (2015). Sustainable Tourism Marketing Strategy: Competitive Advantage of Destination, In N. Ray (Ed.) *Emerging Innovative Marketing Strategies in the Tourism Industry* (pp. 54-81), Hershey: IGI Global.

Kiráľová, A. (2016). Creativity as a Tool of Tourism Development. In A. Kiráľová (Ed.) *Driving Tourism through Creative Destinations and Activities* pp. 67-93, Hershey: IGI Global.

Kline, R. (2011). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling* (3rd Ed.). New York: The Guilford Press.

Leiper, N. (1979). The framework of tourism: Towards definitions of tourism, tourists and the tourism industry. *Annals of Tourism Research, 6*, 390-407.

Leiper, N. (2000). Are destinations 'the heart of tourism'? The advantages of an alternative description. *Current Issues in Tourism, 3*(4), 364-368.

Leiper, N. (2004). *Tourism management* (3rd Ed.). Frenchs Forest: Pearson Education Australia.

Marôco, J. (2011). *Análise de equações estruturais: Fundamentos teóricos, software & aplicações*. Pêro Pinheiro: Report Number.

Mira, M. R., Breda, Z., Moura, A., & Cabral, M. (2017). O papel das DMO na gestão dos destinos turísticos: Abordagem conceptual (1999-2014). *Observatório de Inovação do Turismo - Revista Acadêmica, 11*(1), 53-70.

Mira, M. R., Mónico, L., & Moura, A. (2017). Qualidade dos recursos humanos em turismo: A opinião dos decisores públicos portugueses. *Revista Psicologia: Organizações e Trabalho, 17(*4), 1-10. doi: 10.17652/rpot/2017.4.13746.

Mira, M. R., Moura, A., & Breda, Z. (2016). Destination competitiveness and competitiveness indicators: Illustration of the Portuguese reality. *TÉKHNE - Review of Applied Management Studies, 14*, 90-103. doi.org/10.1016/j.tekhne.2016.06.002.

Mira, M. R.; Mónico, L.; Moura, A. & Breda, Z. (2017). Qualidade do desenvolvimento turístico na perspetiva dos decisores públicos locais Portugueses: Uma proposta de medida. *Revista Turismo & Desenvolvimento, 27/28*(1), 1675 – 1687.

Netemeyer, R. G., Bearden, W. O., & Sharma, S. (2003). *Scale development in the social sciences: Issues and applications* (1st Ed.). Palo Alto CA: Sage.

Nilsson, J. H., Eskilsson, L., & Ek, R. (2010). Creating cross-border destinations: Interreg programmes and regionalisation in the Baltic Sea Area. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism, 10*(2), 153-172. doi: 10.1080/15022250903561978.

Nunnally, J. C. (1978). *Psychometric theory*. New York, McGraw-Hill.

Pearce, D., & Schänzel, H. (2013). Destination management: The tourists' perspective. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, 2*, 137–145. doi: /10.1016/j.jdmm.2013.06.001.

Rovira, N. (2016). ¿Ciudades en el mapa o en la guía turística? Venta de la ciudad y sentido del lugar. *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals*, *113*, 89-105.

Sanz-Ibáñez, C., & Clavé, S. (2016). Strategic coupling evolution and destination upgrading. *Annals of Tourism Research, 56*, 1–15. doi: 10.1016/j.annals.2015.10.010.

Sarasa, J. (2015). Mito y estrategias para un destino romántico: La ciudad de Teruel. *Cuadernos de Turismo, 36*, 39-54.

Schumacker, R. E., & Lomax, R. G. (2010). *A beginner's guide to structural equation modeling* (3rd Ed.). Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Soares, J., Baidal, J., & Gândar, J. (2015). La evolución de destinos turísticos litorales consolidados: Análisis comparado de balneario Camboriú (Brasil) y Benidorm (España). *Anales de Geografía, 35*(2), 143-166. doi.org/10.5209/rev_AGUC.2015.v35.n2.50118.

Stylidis, D., Sit, J., & Biran, A. (2016). An exploratory study of residents' perception of place image: The case of Kavala. *Journal of Travel Research, 55*(5), 659-674. doi:10.1177/0047287514563163.

Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2013). Using multivariate statistics (6th Ed.) New Jersey: Pearson Education.

Timothy, D., Saarinen, J., & Viken, A. (2016). Editorial: Tourism issues and international borders in the Nordic Region. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism, 16*(1), 1-13, doi: 10.1080/15022250.2016.1244504.

Turismo de Portugal (2017). *Estratégia de turismo 2017: Liderar o turismo do futuro*. Available at: http://estrategia.turismodeportugal.pt/lista-documentos.

UNWTO (2007). *A practical guide to tourism destination management*. Madrid: World Tourism Organization.

UNWTO (2010). *Survey on destination governance: Evaluation report*. Madrid: World Tourism Organization.

UNWTO (2012). *Tourism, success, stories and rising stars*. World Tourism Conference Proccedings, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia, 4-6 October 2010. Madrid: World Tourism Organization.

Volgger, M., & Pechlaner, H. (2015). Governing networks in tourism: What have we achieved, what is still to be done and learned?. *Tourism Review*, *70*(4), 298-312. doi: 10.1108/TR-04-2015-0013.

Weidenfeld, A. (2013). Tourism and cross border regional innovation systems. *Annals of Tourism Research, 42*, 191-213.

Więckowski, M., & Cerić, D. (2016). Evolving tourism on the Baltic Sea coast: Perspectives on change in the Polish maritime borderland. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, *16*(1), 98-111. doi: 10.1080/15022250.2016.1244598

Maria do Rosário Campos Mira
She has a Specialist Professor degree in Tourism at the Higher School of Education, Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra, Rua D. João III, Solum, 3030-329 Coimbra, Portugal mrmira@esec.pt
Her research interests relate to quality, human resources and internationalization of tourism destinations.

Andreia Filipa Antunes Moura
She has a Ph.D. in Tourism and is Invited Adjunct Professor at the Higher School of Education, Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra, Rua D. João III - Solum, 3030-329 Coimbra, Portugal
andreiamoura@esec.pt
Her research interests relate to accessible and social tourism; tourism planning and destination competitiveness, and human capital in tourism.

Lisete dos Santos Mendes Mónico
She has a Ph.D. in Social Psychology, European Diploma of Advanced Studies in Social Psychology, and Assistant Professor at the University of Coimbra, Rua Colégio Novo, 3000-115 Coimbra, Portugal
lisete.monico@fpce.uc.pt
She dedicates her professional activity to research in the field of Social Sciences and Methods of research.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.29036/jots.v9i17.74

Enterprise Performance Analysis of the Selected Service Sector by Applying Modern Methods with an Emphasis on the Creation and Application of the Modified Creditworthy Model (MCWM)

Erika Onuferová
University of Prešov in Prešov
Veronika Čabinová
University of Prešov in Prešov

Received September 9 2018; received in revised form 14 November 2018; accepted 10 December 2018

Abstract

The aim of presented paper was to create and subsequently apply the Modified 3D Creditworthy Model (MCWM) of performance reflecting sectoral characteristics and financial specificities of the selected sample of Slovak tour operators over the years 2013 – 2017. The intention of this research study was to implement the key financial indicators and appropriate prediction models into both dimensions of the traditional 2D Creditworthy Model of performance and to supplement its third dimension applying the selected modern assessment methods – the Economic Value Added and the Return On Net Assets as we consider them to be one of the most important indicators of future success and company's financial growth. This modification will help to better identify the current financial position of tour operators and more accurately identify causes that hinder the development of financial performance of the selected sample of enterprises. However, after adjusting the upper and lower quartile averages of a particular industry, this methodology is applicable in the wider context of enterprises, not only those operating in the tourism sector.

Key words: Creditworthy model, Business performance, Tour operators, Financial indicators, Prediction models.

JEL Classification: C50, C51, M21

1. Introduction

The enterprise performance is determined by rising financial entitlements, which are (to some extent) the result of globalization, interdependence and internationalization. According to Kiráľová, Pavlíček (2014), the globalization increases the level of competition that already requires applying new strategies. However, the degree of economic disparities of individual enterprises also plays an important role in the business environment. In this regard, there is a growing effort to continually develop new, modern financial performance assessment tools that can access the financial situation as accurately as possible, identify future risks, forecast business performance with the intention of determining the starting position of the business to streamline strategic management decisions. The European Commission launched the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) in 2013 with the aim helping destinations to monitor and measure their sustainable tourism performance, by using a common comparable approach. ETIS is a voluntary management tool. ETIS does not set minimum values to be achieved and it does not provide any certification. The ETIS was based on 27 core indicators and 40 optional indicators, subdivided into four categories: destination management, social and cultural impact, economic value and environmental impact (European Union, 2016). For these reasons, we focused on creating a new modified financial performance model for tour operators to provide a comprehensive reflection of the sectoral economic and financial situation, indicating possible future threats and thus helping to achieve business goals. In this paper, we focused on the analysis of a selected sample of Slovak tour operators, which significantly contribute not only to the development of domestic and foreign tourism, but also to the development of the entire Slovak and European service sector as well.
Establishment of tour operators in the Slovak Republic was mainly due to the enormous development of tourism. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2018) defines tourism as the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes, not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited. Tourism is essential in achieving the general objectives of the European Union, namely the promotion of the European citizen's interests, growth and employment, regional development, the management of the cultural and natural heritage and the strengthening of a European identity. The importance that is attached to urban areas can be seen from the communication from the Commission "Sustainable urban development in the European Union" which aims in particular to enhance economic prosperity and employment in towns and cities. (European

Commission, 2000). A joint effort of UNWTO and other partners, "Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals – Journey to 2030" aims to build knowledge, and empower and inspire tourism stakeholders to take necessary action to accelerate the shift towards a more sustainable tourism sector by aligning policies, business operations and investments (UNWTO, 2017). Sarvašová, Kiráľová (2018) state that tourism has a positive impact on the economic growth and employment and it is an essential aspect of the life of people around the world. However, as reported by Kiráľová, Hamarneh (2016), tourism can also disrupt the original lifestyle of the residents and cause environmental deterioration, so it is important to find the right balance between these economic benefits and undesirable impacts. Due to everyday stressful lifestyle, the short-break vacations are becoming global phenomenon. Although Slovakia is not well known on the international tourism market yet, regional specificity and variability predetermine the Slovak area for the development of tourism, which has become increasingly popular in recent years (Štefko, Vašaničová, Litavcová, Jenčová, 2018). So, we can assume the number of Slovak tour operators will be growing. Sarancha (2015) concludes that tour operator is one of the basic components of the formation and development of the tourism sector of the country. According to Sysela (2010), the tour operator can be defined as an enterprise organizing tours and providing tourism services for direct sale to passengers or sale via intermediaries. Since 1991, the activity of tour operators in the Slovak Republic has been supported by the Slovak Association of Tour Operators and Travel Agencies, considered to be the most voluntary association of these operators involved in travel and related service activities. Its mission is to represent and protect the economic and other legitimate interests of its members and to create better conditions contributing to the development of tourism in the Slovak Republic. This association is a collective member of the Association of Entrepreneurs of Slovakia, the Association of Trade and Tourism of the Slovak Republic and the European Association of Tour Operators and Travel Agencies established in Brussels (SACKA, 2018).

2. Literature review

Business environment and global market competition is constantly changing. In some periods, these changes are very slow and therefore can make an impression of stability, vice-versa, they can have another pace, i. e. rapid or even hitting (Tvaronavičiene, 2018). From the

macroeconomic as well as microeconomic point of view, the enterprise performance measurement is a key topic of many researchers.

2.1 Enterprise performance measurement

For each enterprise, it is very important to be well-performing, successful and competitive, because otherwise, its future may be at risk (Pribeanu, Toader, 2016). Mursalim, Mallisa, Kusuma (2017) state that success depends on financial decisions that are affected by many factors. These choices may influence the capital structure and improve the performance of enterprises. The results showed that capital structure of firms was significantly related to the enterprise performance. The enterprise's profitability, size and volatility have dominant and consistent roles in explaining the variation of the capital structure. Furthermore, the variables of growth opportunity, gross domestic product, inflation rate and corporate governance influence the capital structure variation. Štefko, Gavurova, Korony (2016) emphasise just the importance of financial aspects as key factors in a process of company's development.

As described by Stříteská, Zapletal, Jelínková (2016), there is a growing number of companies that have realized that improving performance and increasing competitiveness can be achieved by developing effective performance measurement and management. Many scientific papers are devoted to analysis of tour operators' performance from different point of view (Picazo, Moreno-Gil, 2018; Bruni, Cassia, Magno, 2017). The purpose of study presented by Xin, Chan (2014) was to explore the tour operators' perspectives and performance in relation to responsible sustainable tourism indicators. Authors used four main groups of sustainable tourism metrics included ecological, economic, cultural and social indicators. The findings of this paper confirmed the meaning and importance of all tourism indicators in process of tour operators' development. Other view for examining tour operators' performance is provided by Yap, Cheng, Hussain, Ahmad (2018). This study examines the effect of market intelligence practices on the firm performance in the small and medium-sized tour operators. The findings indicate that firm performance is positively related to market intelligence practices both in terms of market intelligence acquisition and market intelligence utilization. Hedija, Fiala (2015) investigated, if the firm performance is independent on company size in the area of tour operators. When they investigated smaller sample, there was no statistically significant relationship between the size and performance of the selected companies. Otherwise, in the case of bigger sample (118 firms) there was confirmed medium

correlation between firm size and its performance. However, increasing the implementation of performance measurement systems in companies is linked to many problems in need of answering. Each model for measuring performance and prediction is according to Hyránek, Grell, Nagy, Ďurinová (2018) different, it uses different mathematical approaches, it works with different indicators; however, the models also have some common features. In the era of rapidly changing economic environment, the standard methods for measuring financial performance and assessing financial health are less adequate. Most authors are focused on enhancing the predictive ability of original models by responding appropriately to the existing changed economic environment.

2.2 Creditworthy Model of performance

One of modern models of enterprise performance assessment is the Creditworthy Model (CWM) of performance, which was created by modifying the creditworthiness model as part of the grant scheme VEGA no. 1/0596/14 – "Creditworthy model formation with the use of financial and sectoral indicators in the energy industry of the European Union and forecasting the indicators development".

As reported by Horváthová, Mokrišová, Suhányiová (2016), the CWM was created by combination of the selected financial ratio indicators (the ex-post analysis) and prediction models (the ex-ante analysis). However, other modern indicators representing key performance indicators can also be incorporated into it. This model analyses and graphically illustrates the position of the enterprise in individual portfolios in terms of two dimensions – the financial performance and company's success. It is the most suitable model for financial performance comparison and development of two or more enterprises over the years. The position of the enterprise is determined by cross point of the values that are plotted along the x-axis and the y-axis. The company's success is plotted along the y-axis and it is determined by the recalculation of prediction models' values using a scoring table. Each chosen prediction model can get a maximum of 20 points, thus the maximum number of points that an enterprise can obtain is 80 points. The authors included the following prediction models: Quick Test, Altman's Model, Taffler's Model, Creditworthiness Index. The results of financial performance indicators converted into points by using the transformation table are plotted along the x-axis. In this dimension, 10 financial ratio indicators were chosen, whereas each of them can get a maximum of 8 points (80 points in total). The following financial indicators were selected: Days Receivable Outstanding, Days Short-term Payable Outstanding, Days

Inventory Outstanding, Degree of Over-capitalization, Total Indebtedness, Share of Short-term Liabilities, Return On Equity, Return On Sales, Total Liquidity, Current Liquidity.

Point evaluation of financial indicators can be realized on the basis of the transformation table created. However, in order to achieve more accurate results, it is more appropriate to use the scoring method according to Rejnuš (2014). Each indicator from a given dimension can get a maximum of 8 points; if the maximum is not reached, points are assigned as follows:

a) in the case of indicators whose development is *going to be growing*, we calculate the point rating by substituting the highest value of the indicator into the denominator:

$$b_{ij} = \frac{x_{ij}}{x_{imax}} \cdot 8$$

b) in the case of indicators whose development is *going to be decreasing*, we calculate the point rating by substituting the lowest value of the indicator into the numerator:

$$b_{ij} = \frac{x_{imin}}{x_{ij}} \cdot 8$$

x_{ij} – value of the j-th indicator in the i-th enterprise,

x_{jmax} – the maximum value of the j-th indicator evaluated by 8 points, in case of indicator's character + 1,

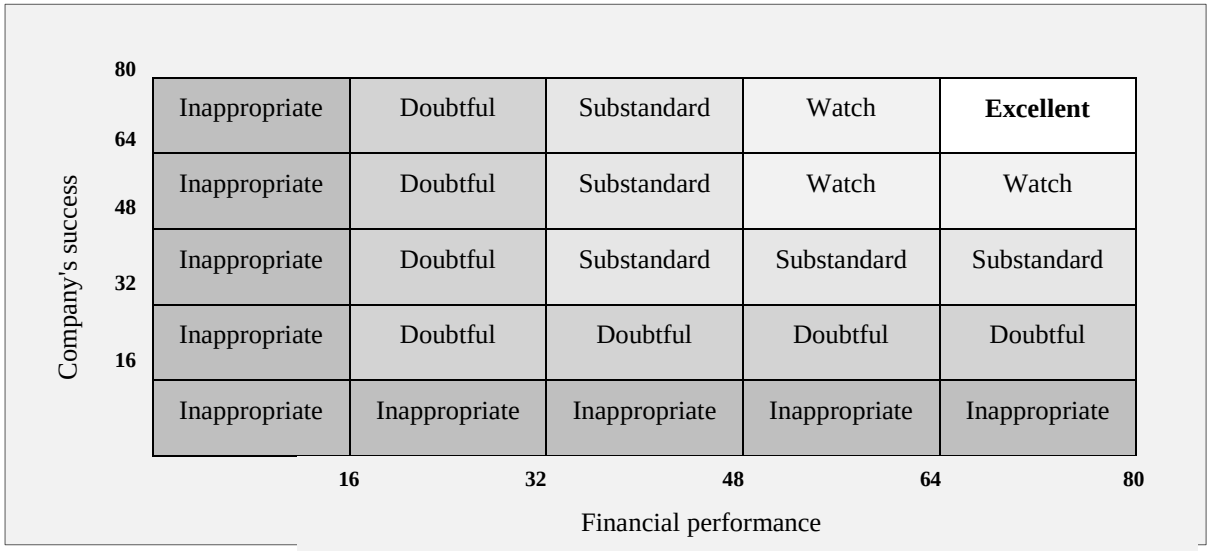
x_{imin} – the minimum value of the j-th indicator evaluated by 8 points, in case of indicator's character – 1,

b_{ij} – point evaluation of the i-th enterprise for the j-th indicator.

Overall, the integral indicator is calculated as the weighted average of the number of points achieved per indicator. However, the practical application of this method may be problematic if the selected group of indicators contains negative values (typical examples are profitability indicators). Therefore, Hutera (2013) recommends applying own alternative in the form of a modified scoring method that we have chosen to apply for the third dimension of the MCWM (see Methodology). However, the selection of indicators can be chosen according to our own needs and taking into account the purpose of the evaluation and the necessary analysis. Based on the cross point of the values achieved, we can determine the position of the enterprise within the five performance fields (Inappropriate, Doubtful, Substandard, Watch, Excellent) that are presented in the following Figure 1 (Horváthová, Mokrišová, 2014).

Figure 1

The Creditworthy model of performance



Source: own processing according to Horváthová, Mokrišová, Suhányiová 2016

As reported by Horváthová, Mokrišová, Suhányiová (2016), the best results that an enterprise can achieve are situated in the performance field of "Excellent". This position should be a goal for all enterprises and it is defined by a score of more than 64 points achieved in financial performance and more than 52 points within the company's success. The average performance value is located in the field of "Substandard" where the financial performance is below 52 points but higher than 32 points and the company's success may not be lower than 26 points. The worst position is located in the performance field of "Doubtful" and "Inappropriate" with financial performance defined by a score of 32 points and less. It is important for these enterprises to improve their results as they are threatened by bankruptcy in the near future.

The Creditworthy model demonstrates a combination of various financial indicators, early warning models as well as the performance and success of business entities. Horváthová, Mokrišová (2014) emphasize the following benefits and other possibilities of using this model:

- the possibility of modifying the model according to the requirements of analysts,
- the ability to combine internal/external factors affecting enterprise performance,
- the possibility of creating a three-dimensional Creditworthy model by applying internal/external risks, financial performance factors and business success patterns,

- space for applications unlimited number of indicators from all areas of financial health that are subsequently expressed as a single score graphically illustrated in the final performance field.

The Creditworthy model of performance is not the subject of many empirical studies. Its application and various modifications were mainly addressed by the authors Horváthová, Šofranková (2012) who pointed to the use of traditional methods of enterprise performance through the Creditworthy model in terms of its two basic dimensions – financial performance and success. The authors applied this new performance evaluation method on the example of a selected business enterprise, demonstrated its calculation and graphically displayed the position of the enterprise within the final performance fields. Horváthová, Mokrišová (2014) analyzed the performance of the selected transport companies operating in the Slovak Republic using different diagnostic methods, including a Creditworthy model of performance. Horváthová, Mokrišová, Suhányiová, Suhányi (2015) focused on creating a modified Creditworthy model of performance with the application of key performance indicators and risk factors within the selected industry. Therefore, this model can influence and quantify the performance of selected industry in terms of key performance indicators (KPI) as well as eliminate specific risks for the sector concerned. The importance of KPI in order to improve the overall business performance stressed also Rajnoha, Lesníková, Krajčík (2017). Research findings showed KPI have a demonstrable impact on the business performance which means that through its use can be achieved an above-average performance. Another enterprise performance assessment model that accepts the results of selected financial indicators, ex-ante models and risks was designed by Šofranková, Kiseľáková, Horváthová (2017). Based on the application of these approaches, it was possible to identify the impact of internal, external risks, systematic and non-systematic risks on the enterprise performance. Authors constructed new 3D Enterprise Risk Model (ERM) that is a suitable risk management tool for assessing and predicting the risk impact on the enterprise performance. As reported by Yang, Ishtiaq, Anwar (2018), ERM has a significant influence on competitive advantage and increase of performance. Kiseľáková, Horváthová, Šofranková, Šoltés (2015) conclude that the most significant impact on performance of the enterprises has just financial risk. It was also confirmed that the unsystematic risks have a higher impact on the enterprise performance as systematic risks.

3. Methodology

The aim of presented paper was to create and subsequently apply a Modified 3D Creditworthy Model (MCWM) of performance reflecting sectoral characteristics and financial specificities of the selected sample of Slovak tour operators over the years 2013 – 2017. The intention of this research study was to implement the key financial indicators and appropriate prediction models into both dimensions of the traditional 2D Creditworthy Model of performance and to supplement its third dimension applying the selected modern assessment methods – the Economic Value Added and the Return On Net Assets. This modification will help to better identify the current financial position of tour operators and more accurately identify causes that hinder the development of financial performance of the selected sample of enterprises.

The input data (financial statements over the years 2013 – 2017) needed to create the MCWM focused on assessing the financial performance of 57 tour operators operating in the SK NACE 79 120 sector (Tour operator activities) were drawn from accessible internet portal managed by a company DataSpot, Ltd. The median, top and bottom quartiles of the relevant sector (SK NACE 79 120) were provided by a company CRIF – Slovak Credit Bureau, Ltd. When selecting tour operators, we focused on Inc. and Ltd. enterprises with the positive value of equity which employ more than 5 employees. As a result of these criteria, microenterprises were excluded from the entire sector. The key financial indicators reflecting the financial health dimension of the MCWM were selected by determining the strength of dependence with the modern EVA indicator based on the results of the Kendall Tau statistical test, which was processed in STATISTICA and MS EXCEL.

In order to take into account the financial characteristics and specifics of the selected industry, we decided to modify the original Creditworthy model of performance through several adjustments, including, but not limited to, a different choice of input financial ratio indicators, prediction models, modifying the scoring tables, methodology used and defining new performance fields. The main difference between the new MCWM and original Creditworthy model is that MCWM is compiled from three dimensions:

- the dimension of financial health,
- the dimension of prediction analysis,
- the dimension of shareholder wealth creation.

To assess the dimension of financial health, 10 selected ex-post ratio indicators were applied (indicators of liquidity, activity, profitability and indebtedness). Their selection was based on the statistically significant dependence with the modern EVA indicator using the statistical test Kendall Tau (see Results) – Current Liquidity, Total Liquidity, Days Short-term Receivable Outstanding, Days Short-term Payable Outstanding, Total Indebtedness, Interest Coverage Ratio, Total Credit Indebtedness, Return On Assets, Return On Equity, Return On Sales. The conversion of the original financial indicator values entering into dimension of financial health was carried out on the basis of a compiled transformation table according to the median, top and bottom quartiles of the SK NACE 79 120 sector. Each financial indicator could get 0 – 10 points, thus the maximum number of points that an enterprise could obtain was 100 points.

In order to evaluate the dimension of prediction analysis, a total of 10 selected ex-ante prediction models were used, focusing on the selection of credit and bankruptcy models developed and applied in European business environment – Quick Test, Douch's Balance Analysis, Aspect Global Rating Model, Altman's $\text{Model}_{(SR)}$, Taffler's Model, Creditworthiness Index, Beerman's Model, Index IN05, Bilderbeek's Model, Poznański's Model. The conversion of the original financial indicator values entering into dimension of prediction analysis was performed on the basis of a transformation table compiled from generally recommended and multilevel rating scales and within the individual credit and bankruptcy models. Each prediction model could get also 0 – 10 points, thus the maximum number of points that an enterprise could obtain in this dimension was 100 points.

The last dimension of the MCWM reflecting financial performance consisted of two modern methods – the EVA and RONA indicator. The conversion of their original values was made on the basis of the modified scoring method according to Rejnuš (2014) (see Literature review). As there are no generally recommended values for EVA and RONA indicator, it is important to achieve their highest positive value and thus generate added value for shareholders.

A summary of points within the individual MCWM dimensions was then plotted along the x-axis (the dimension of financial health), the y-axis (the dimension of prediction analysis) and the z-axis (the dimension of shareholder wealth creation). Based on the cross point of the values achieved, we can determine the position of particular tour operator within the five performance fields:

- < 0 – 20 > Insufficient performance field,
- < 20 – 40 > Problematic performance field,

- < 40 – 60 > Standard performance field,
- < 60 – 80 > Monitored performance field,
- < 80 – 100 > Outstanding performance field.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Dimension of financial health

The following partial analyses were focused on the assessment of individual MCWM dimensions. To reveal the impact of financial indicators on the EVA indicator, the non-parametric test Kendall tau in Statistica software was applied for the period of 2013 – 2017. Its results were used to identify key indicators representing the financial health dimension of MCWM of the selected tour operators. A summary of Kendall Tau correlation coefficient results is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

The results of correlation analysis

Kendall Tau correlations between the EVA indicator and ex – post indicators Marked correlations are significant at p < 0.05, N = 57			
	Variables	**EVA indicator**	**p (value)**
Liquidity	Prompt-cash Liquidity	0.2574	0.0583
	Current Liquidity	**0.3444**	**0.0464**
	Total Liquidity	**0.5083**	**0.0239**
	Net Prompt Cash	0.3423	0.1739
	Net Cash Assets	0.3198	0.0636
	Net Working Capital	0.2797	0.0524
Activity	**Days Short-term Receivable Outstanding**	**-0.3069**	**0.0159**
	Days Inventory Outstanding	0.0476	0.4153
	Days Short-term Payable Outstanding	**-0.3923**	**0.0127**
	Days Cash Outstanding	-0.2841	0.1716
	Total Assets Turnover Ratio	0.3008	0.4664
	Non-current Assets Turnover Ratio	0.1658	0.3513
Indebtedness	**Total Indebtedness**	**-0.4052**	**0.0454**
	Rate of Financial Independence	0.3771	0.5669

	Degree of Under-capitalization	0.2537	0.4224
	Interest Coverage Ratio	**0.4978**	**0.0286**
	Total Credit Indebtedness	**-0.4167**	**0.0189**
	Repayment of the loans	-0.3487	0.0619
Profitability	**Return On Assets**	**0.8663**	**0.0230**
	Return On Equity	**0.8121**	**0.0116**
	Return On Sales	**0.7552**	**0.0238**
	Return On Costs	0.3954	0.1667
	Return On Capital Employed	0.1875	0.1053

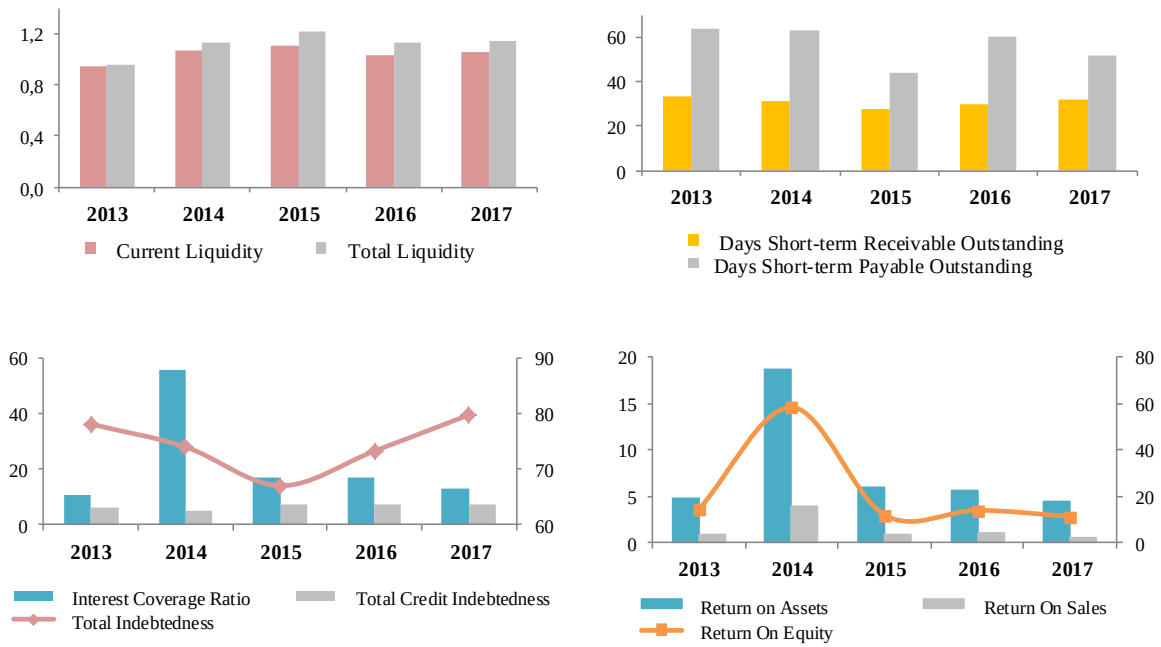
Source: Authors´ processing in programme STATISTICA

Based on the correlation analysis between the EVA indicator and ex – post indicators, a statistically significant dependence was confirmed in the case of 10 indicators: Current Liquidity, Total Liquidity, Days Short-term Receivable Outstanding, Days Short-term Payable Outstanding, Total Indebtedness, Interest Coverage Ratio, Total Credit Indebtedness, Return On Assets, Return On Equity, Return On Sales. All correlation coefficients were identified at the significance level of $p < 0.05$. The most significant dependence (0.8112 on average) was identified in the case of Profitability indicators. The statistically significant positive EVA indicator dependence in relation to Liquidity indicators with medium intensity was proved. In the case of Activity indicators, the medium negative dependence intensity was revealed. According to Cohen scale, we also detected significant positive dependence between the EVA indicator and Interest Coverage Ratio (at the level of 0.4978) and negative statistical dependence in relation to Total Indebtedness and Total Credit Indebtedness indicator. In the case of other indicators, the correlation coefficients were identified, but not confirmed at the significance level of $p < 0.05$.

The development of average indicators' values reflecting the financial health of Slovak tour operators is shown in the following Figure 2.

Figure 2

The development of ex-post financial indicators over the years 2013 – 2017



Source: Authors´ processing based on the financial statements of analysed enterprises

Based on the results of Kendall Tau statistical test, the Current and Total Liquidity can be considered as key performance indicators of Slovak tour operators within the generally known Liquidity indicators. Over the years 2013 – 2017, the Current Liquidity moved around the recommended range above 1, except in 2013 (0.94). According to Horváthová, Mokrišová, Suhányiová (2016), this situation indicated the illiquidity of analysed tour operators which were consequently rated by financial risk at the level of 10%. Over the following period, the favourable development of this indicator was mainly due to a faster growth rate of current assets excluding inventories (by an index of 1.2362), compared with short-term current liabilities with the increasing pace of 1.0189. When assessing the Total Liquidity development, the selected group of enterprises did not reach the recommended values in any year of the period analysed. However, taking into account the level of other Liquidity indicators, the cause of this result arises from the insufficient value of inventories within the current assets which are needed to cover the above-mentioned short-term current liabilities.

The analysis of Days Short-term Receivable Outstanding indicator confirmed the ideal payment discipline of tour operator customers, as receivables were received once in 30 days (on average). Similarly, the tour operator's payment discipline also achieved the desired

results and development. The Days Short-term Payable Outstanding indicator ranged from 45 to 65 days, so the analysed enterprises attempted to avoid drawing the long-term business loans.

Based on the average value of the Total Indebtedness indicator (74.45%) reached over the years 2013 – 2017, the Slovak tour operators may have serious problems with the long-term functionality and financial stability in the future. The cause of this development can be attributed to enterprise financing mostly by foreign capital (€ 1,209,508 on average), which demonstrates their financial independency. The Interest Coverage Ratio indicator was identified as another key performance indicator of Slovak tour operators. Over the analysed period, the selected group of enterprises were able to pay the cost of foreign capital with no obstacles, as the above-mentioned indicator ranged above the recommended value of 8. This positive development was influenced by the fact that the average Earnings Before Interest & Taxes (EBIT) were 22.66 times higher than the interest expense. The last key indicator within the Indebtedness indicators was the Total Credit Indebtedness which recorded the recommended value in each year of the period analysed. In this regard, the selected enterprises were able to use their total assets for covering the overall loans drawn.

Over the years 2013 – 2015, the tour operators did not reach profitability at a favourable level. The Return On Assets, as another key performance indicator, reached the average value of 7.88%, indicating the weak production power of the selected sample of enterprises. When evaluating the Return On Equity development, optimal results above the recommended level of 20 – 25% was not achieved with one exception in 2014, when overall profitability increased by an index of 4.0668 to 58.38% compared to 2013. The main reason for this positive result is the increase in tour operator's net profit by € 254,173. However, it is worthy to note that the Return On Equity reached the higher average value than the Return on Assets, which indicated that the selected enterprises utilized liabilities and debts efficiently. A set of key indicators that enter into the financial health dimension caps the Return On Sales. The results of the indicator reflected positive but inadequate values as their level ranged only from 0.51% to 3.94%.

4.2 Dimension of prediction analysis

The following partial analysis was aimed at evaluating the results of the 10 predictive models that formed the second dimension of the MCWM model. The average values of credit and bankruptcy models applied to selected Slovak tour operators are presented in Table 2.

Over the monitored period, the average values of selected prediction models applied to analysed group of tour operators varied mildly. According to the Quick test results, Slovak tour operators were situated in "red zone" in 2013, 2016 and 2017. The financial situation in "red zone" is characterized as unsatisfactory and future prospects are unfavourable. The unfavourable financial evaluation was determined mainly by low level of cash flow in revenues and inefficient Return On Assets caused by decreasing value of EBIT. According to above mentioned prediction model, the financial position was indicated as the best performing in 2014 with positive development in the following period¨. However, the achieved results did not match the expectations. The main reason consisted in significant year-on-year decrease of EBIT indicator by 73.39% in 2015. The expected development of analysed enterprises was also quantified using the Douch's Balance Analysis, which demonstrated much better results in comparison with the Quick test. The financial situation was favourable and the future prospects of analysed enterprises were identified as very positive with exception in 2013 and 2017, as Slovak tour agents were located in uncertain "grey zone". Despite this fact, the financial situation was identified as acceptable because of the point rating just below the "green zone". The last and less known credit model applied within the prediction analysis was Aspect Global Rating Model. Over the entire reviewed period, all tour operators achieved AAA rating that reflects optimal business management approaching to ideal balance.

Table 2

The development of ex-ante prediction models over the years 2013 – 2017 (coefficients)

Ex – ante Analysis		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Credit Models	Quick Test	15*	9***	13**	15*	15*
	Douch's Balance Analysis	0.93**	2.49***	1.01***	1.01***	0.97**
	Aspekt Global Rating Model	9.02***	9.27***	9.86***	9.37***	10.64***
Bankruptcy Models	Altman's Model$_{(SR)}$	2.42**	2.47**	2.78***	2.24**	2.62***
	Taffler's Model	0.96***	1.07***	1.07***	0.91***	1.00***
	Creditworthiness Index	1.11***	2.95***	1.38***	1.23***	1.11***
	Beerman's Model	0.79*	1.17*	1.42*	1.15*	1.35
	Index IN05	1.75***	4.15***	2.23***	2.00***	1.91***
	Bilderbeek's Model	-2.21***	-1.87***	-2.68***	-2.40***	-2.25***
	Poznański's Model	0.57***	1.03***	0.79***	0.58***	0.47***

The Legend:

*** favorable financial situation and stable environment, future prospects are very good (so called "green zone");

** zone of neutral results, zone of potential threats, future situation is indeterminate (so called "grey zone");

* unfavorable financial situation, an enterprise is threatened by bankruptcy (so called "red zone").

Source: Authors´ processing based on the financial statements of analysed enterprises

During the years 2013 – 2017, the selected bankruptcy models recorded desirable point evaluation. The bankruptcy probability of Slovak tour operators reached the minimum level, so their financial situation was characterized as favourable. A stable development is expected in the future as well. Based on the Altman's Z-score Model compiled for the conditions of Slovak enterprises, the analysed group of tour operators was situated in the potential threat zone. These evaluations require improving financial metrics control system and in the case of any risks, it is necessary to implement preventive measures immediately. Considerably less favourable results were detected within the Beerman's model. The financial situation was evaluated as insufficient with negative prospects for development. A deeper analysis revealed problems with high value of external financial resources, the insufficient level of cash flow and limited ability of enterprises to generate profit.

4.3 Dimension of shareholder wealth creation

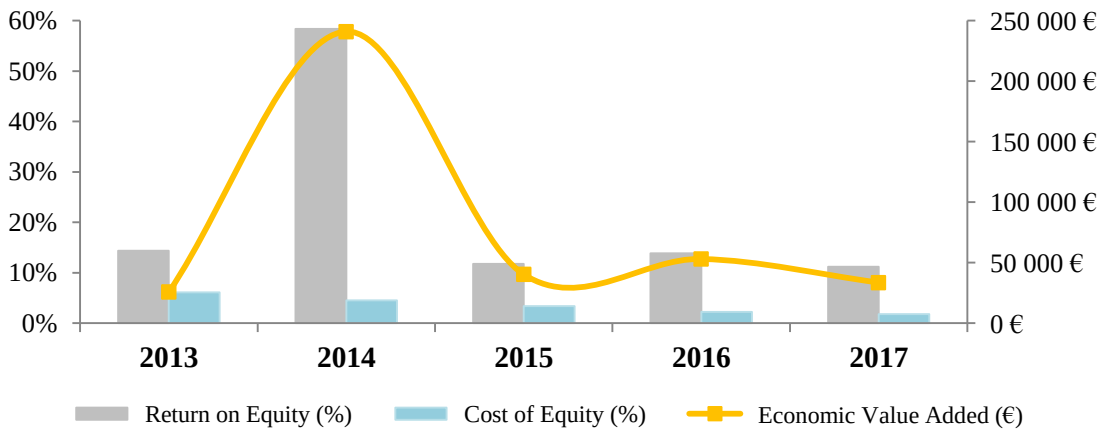
In order to meet the research goal, the next part of paper was focused on evaluating the third performance dimension of MCWM (added to original 2D CWM). The dimension of shareholder wealth creation reflects the tour operators' performance using two modern indicators, namely the EVA and RONA indicator. At first, we analysed financial performance using the EVA indicator over the period of 2013 – 2017. The development of indicators' values (on average) is presented in the following Figure 3.

In the first analysed year, the selected Slovak tour operators recorded the lowest value of the EVA indicator at all, since the average net profit of enterprises ranged only around € 31,502. On the contrary, the value of the cost of equity reached the highest level (6.11%), mainly due to the high risk-free rate of return (4.55%). Overall, year 2014 was identified as the best-performing one within the whole period analysed. A key determinant of this positive year-on-year performance change was a significant increase in net profit by € 1,153,671 compared to cost growth by € 937,567 and the fact that the value of the cost of equity dropped to 4.50%. The decrease in total revenues (by an index of 0.9820) in combination with the total cost growth (by an index of 1.0101) was the main reason for reducing the net profit to the level of € 56,779 in 2015. Despite the continuing decline in cost of equity and an increase in the enterprises' equity by an index of 1.0769, this significant decline in net profit influenced

the achievement of low Return On Equity values and subsequently the indicator EVA. In the following year 2016, Slovak tour operators again succeeded in increasing net profit while lowering cost of equity, which, despite the decline in equity, led to an increase in EVA indicator value to the level of € 53,085. The analysed group of enterprises was also able to generate added value for their shareholders in the last year of the monitored period, however, with a year-on-year decline of 36.68%. This development was mainly due to a decrease in profit by € 23,392 as well as a decrease in equity by € 99,328 (on average). Moreover, the cost of equity reached the lowest level at all (1.80%).

Figure 3

The EVA indicator development of Slovak tour operators over the years 2013 – 2017 (in €)

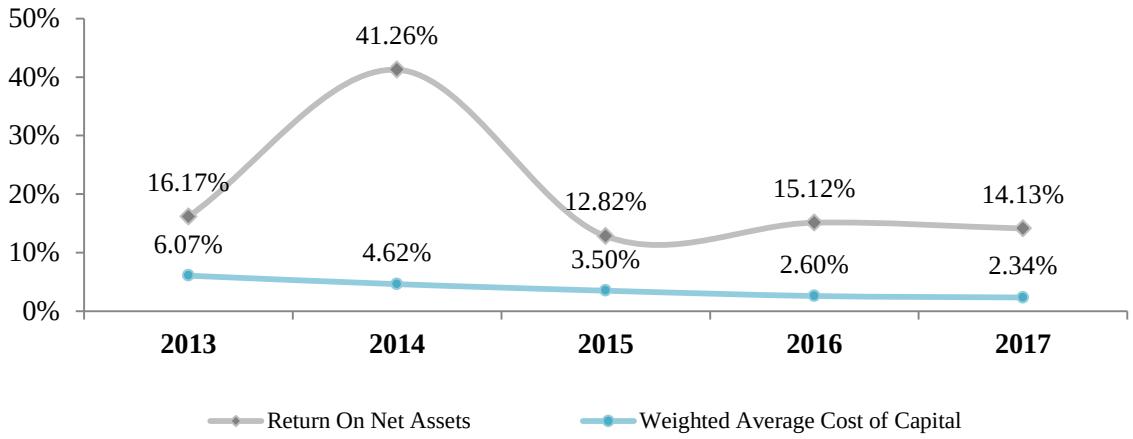


Source: Authors´ processing based on the financial statements of analysed enterprises

The second indicator applied to evaluate the performance of the selected sample of Slovak tour operators within the third dimension of MCWM (the dimension of shareholder wealth creation) is the RONA indicator. It is a relative ratio indicator that measures enterprise performance not in %. However, much more important than quantification of the RONA indicator value is to quantify the difference between the profitability measured by the RONA and the Weighted Average Cost of Capital (WACC). The average financial performance development of the Slovak spa enterprises quantified on the basis of the comparison of the RONA with WACC indicator values is presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4

The RONA and WACC indicator development of the Slovak tour operators (in %)



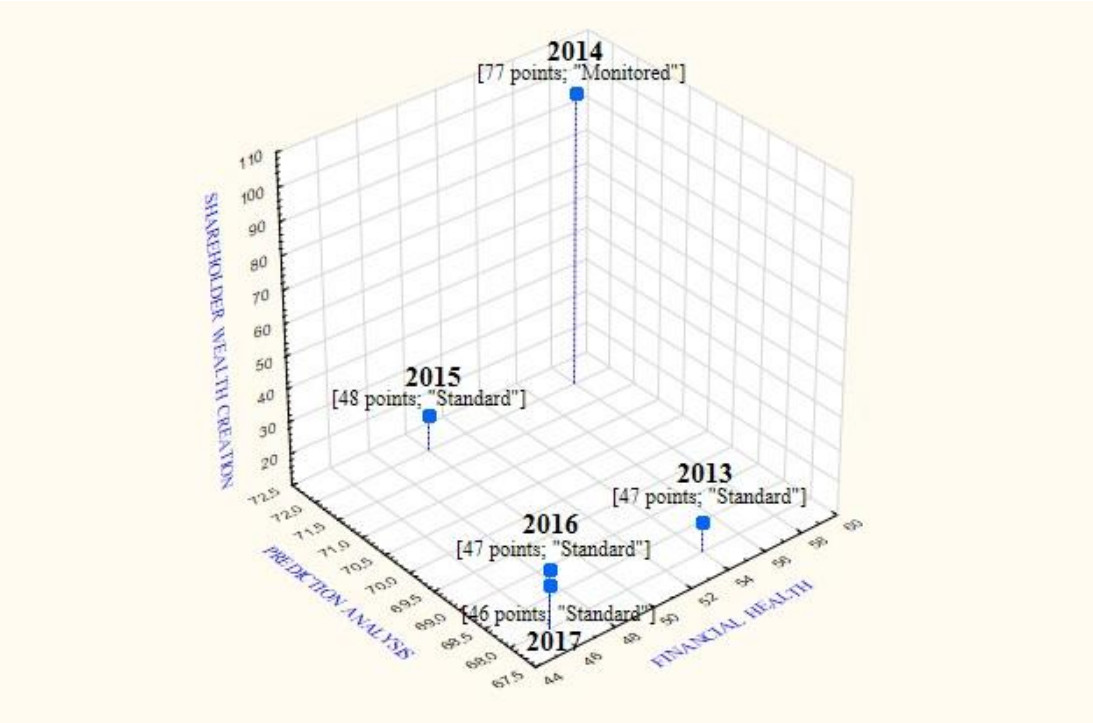
Source: Authors´ processing based on the financial statements of analysed enterprises

Over the whole period analysed, the RONA indicator recorded the same development like EVA indicator. Thus, results confirmed assertion, that both indicators provide identical findings, but from different point of view. In 2013, Slovak tour operators achieved the second highest value of the RONA at the level of 16.17%, but the WACC indicator achieved its maximum (6.07%) that consequently led to negative decrease in difference between these indicators. In the following year, the most favourable result was detected, as difference between indicators ranged around 36.64%. The Net Operating Profit After Taxes growth by an index of 4.4647 resulted in increase of the RONA value by 25.09% and the decline of the equity cost and debt (by an index of 0.8085) affected the drop in the WACC indicator by 23.86%. Despite of decreasing the WACC value in 2015, Slovak tour operators did not reach such a positive result as in previous year, since the fall in profit by € 181,638 on average significantly affected this negative development. In the following period, the desirable development was recorded, as the average value of the RONA indicator increased by 2.31% as a result of increasing Net Operating Profit and declining value of fixed assets. The positive development trend was recorded also in the case of WACC indicator, since its value decreased by 25.81% compared to the previous year. As a result of this, the desired relation "RONA > WACC" was respected and the difference between indicators ranged around 12.53%. The decrease in tour operators' net profit by € 14,277 compared to 2016 caused the drop in the difference between the RONA and WACC indicator by 11.79%. Thus, in 2017 the enterprise performance was almost identical as in 2013. To conclude, Slovak tour operators' performance was favourable, as they were able to generate value added for shareholders.

In the last part of presented paper by applying individual dimensions' results, we created the MCWM of performance for the period of 2013 – 2017 that reflect sectoral characteristics and financial specificities of the selected Slovak tour operators. The methodology of calculating the original values of financial indicators, predictive models and modern indicators into point rating of the individual MCWM dimensions is defined in the Data and Methodology section. The average performance development of Slovak tour by means of the MCWM is presented in the following Figure 5.

Figure 5

The development of Slovak tour operators' performance based on the MCWM application



Source: Authors´ processing in programme STATISTICA

Over the whole analyzed period, the tour operators were located in the performance field of “Standard” and “Monitor”. In this regard, the best-performing year was 2014, as all three dimensions reached the highest values. The dimension of financial health achieved 58 points, dimension of prediction analysis achieved 72 points and newly added dimension of shareholder wealth creation reached the maximum (100 points). This positive development was caused mainly by year-on-year increase in net profit by 581.10%, which led to achieving more favourable values of ratio indicators, prediction models and desirable values of modern indicators. This result also effected that the analysed enterprises were placed in the

performance field of "Monitor". In the following years, the negative development trend was recorded and financial performance ranged constantly in performance field of "Standard". The most significant decrease of all dimensions within the MCWM was identified in 2017 in comparison to 2014. The dimension of shareholder wealth creation determined unfavourable MCWM's evaluation in 2017, as Slovak tour operators reached only 23 points due to sharply decreasing Return On Equity (by 47.21%) and the value of equity by an index of 0.7832.

The evaluation of financial health dimension recorded a decreasing trend since 2014 that subsequently led to declining point assessment to the level of 46 points. Based on results we also found out that the dimension of prediction analysis grew worse only by 4 points and it is considered the most stable. Moreover, if we evaluate dimensions of the MCWM separately, the financial health dimension would be located in the performance field of "Standard", dimension of prediction analysis would be situated in the performance field of "Monitor" and the last dimension of shareholder wealth creation achieved the worst results (except in 2014) so it would be situated in the performance field of "Insufficient" or "Problematic".

5. Conclusion

The tour operators represent one of the most influential bodies in the tourism sector that are established with aim to control, book and devise the whole trip for customers. They create a package holiday by combining all elements such as hotel, airport transfers, activities, restaurants, tours and so on. As reported by Goncharuk, Lazareva, Alsharf (2015), the main objective of management (not only tour operators) is to ensure continuous and sustainable growth of the enterprise performance.

The main aim of this research study was to create and subsequently apply a Modified 3D Creditworthy Model (MCWM) of performance reflecting sectoral characteristics and financial specificities of the selected sample of Slovak tour operators over the review period of 2013 – 2017. The purpose of this paper was to identify key financial indicators and appropriate prediction models and to implement them into both dimensions of the traditional Creditworthy Model of performance. In order to assess actual financial position of tour operators more exactly, attention was paid to creating the third dimension into original model by applying the selected modern evaluation methods – the Economic Value Added and the Return On Net Assets. However, this 3D model is applicable in the wider context of enterprises, even though this research study is presented on a sample of Slovak travel

agencies. By adjusting the upper and lower quartiles of the average values of a particular sector, it can be modified for enterprises not only operating in the field of tourism.

To assess the first dimension of the MCWM (the dimension of financial health), the following 10 key ex-post financial indicators were selected: Current Liquidity, Total Liquidity, Days Short-term Receivable Outstanding, Days Short-term Payable Outstanding, Total Indebtedness, Interest Coverage Ratio, Total Credit Indebtedness, Return On Equity, Return On Assets and Return On Sales. Their selection was based on the statistically significant dependence with the modern EVA indicator using the statistical test Kendall Tau. In order to evaluate the second dimension of the MCWM (the dimension of prediction analysis), a total of 10 selected ex-ante prediction models were used, focusing on the selection of credit and bankruptcy models developed and applied in European business environment: Quick Test, Douch's Balance Analysis, Aspect Global Rating Model, Altman's $\text{Model}_{(SR)}$, Taffler's Model, Creditworthiness Index, Beerman's Model, Index IN05, Bilderbeek's Model, Poznański's Model. The last dimension of the MCWM (the dimension of shareholder wealth creation) consisted of two modern indicators: the Economic Value Added and Return On Net Assets as we consider them to be one of the most important and leading indicators of future success and company's financial growth. The conversion of the original indicator values entering into individual MCWM dimension (into points) was carried out on the basis of a compiled transformation tables and multilevel rating scales.

As results of MCWM application over the years 2013 – 2017, Slovak tour operators were located in the performance field of "Standard" and "Monitor" (on average). In this regard, year 2014 was identified as the best-performing one, as all dimensions achieved the highest point rating. In the following years, the negative development trend was recorded and financial performance ranged constantly in the standard performance field, mainly due to decreasing Return On Equity. As a result, year 2017 was considered the worst-performing one within the whole period analysed. However, if we focus on average evaluation of individual dimensions of the MCWM separately, the financial health dimension was located in the performance field of "Standard", dimension of prediction analysis was situated in the performance field of "Monitor" and the last dimension of shareholder wealth creation achieved the worst results (except in 2014), therefore, it was situated in the performance field of "Insufficient" or "Problematic".

The presented study offers another effective financial tool for performance evaluation of Slovak tour operators (but not only for them) by applying modern methods into traditional 2D Creditworthy model. Despite the fact that these indicators and methods assess financial

enterprise performance from different point of view, each dimension of the Modified 3D Creditworthy Model has its added informative value. In this regard, the above-mentioned tourism service sector should try to apply comprehensive modern methods for the purpose of effective performance measurement and improvement of strategic financial management processes leading to an improvement in financial growth.

Acknowledgements

Scientific Paper was elaborated within the framework of the project GaPU 41/2018 "Enterprise performance analysis of the selected service sector by applying modern methods with an emphasis on the creation and application of the Modified Creditworthy Model (MCWM)".

References

Bruni, A., Cassia, F., & Magno, F. (2017). Marketing performance measurement in hotels, travel agencies and tour operators: a study of current practices. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 20(4), 339-345. https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2014.982521.

European Commission. (2000). *Towards quality urban tourism: Integrated quality management (IQM) of urban tourist destinations*. Brussels: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/growth/content/towards-quality-urban-tourism-integrated-quality-management-iqm-urban-tourist-destinations-0_en?fbclid=IwAR2kB5YocQfcCsYSBl_Ol3qHC18tGr5KUFRHjvKYdxZ_Rlw5fQs7h70FY34.

European Union. (2016). *The European Tourism Indicator System.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved from http://uni-sz.bg/truni11/wp-content/uploads/biblioteka/file/TUNI10015968.pdf.

Goncharuk, A. G., Lazareva, N. O., & Alsharf, I. A. M. (2015). Benchmarking as a performance management method. *Polish Journal of Mangement Studies*, 11(2), 27-36. Retrieved from: https://pjms.zim.pcz.pl/resources/html/article/details?id=167334.

Hedija, V., & Fiala, R. (2015). The relationship between size and growth of travel agencies and tour operators in the Czech Republic. *10th International Conference on Topical Issues of Tourism: Development – Transformation – Future Prospects*, 93-103.

Horváthová, J., & Mokrišová, M. (2014). Business performance diagnostics with the application of modern financial performance evaluation methods. *EMI: Economics – Management – Innovation*, 6(3), 46-60. Retrieved from: http://emijournal.cz/?page_id=169.

Horváthová, J., Mokrišová, M., & Suhányiová, A. (2016). *Financial controlling for managers.* Prešov: Bookman, s. r. o.

Horváthová, J., Mokrišová, M., Suhányiová, A., & Suhányi, L. (2015). Selection of key performance indicators of chosen industry and their application in formation of Creditworthy model. *10th International Scientific Conference on Economic and Social Development, Miami*, 34(2015), 360-367. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(15)01641-X.

Horváthová, J., & Šofranková, B. (2012). Evaluation of the financial performance and the success of the business. *International Scientific Correspondence Conference EAEP 2012*, Prešov, 84-93. Retrieved from https://www.pulib.sk/web/kniznica/elpub/dokument/Kotulic18.
Hutera, M. (2013). Scoring method and its modification. *Economic Review*, 42(3), 397-404. Retrieved from https://old.euba.sk/department-for-research-and-doctoral-studies/economic-review/preview-file/er3_2013_hutera_abstract-13485.pdf.

Hyránek, E., Grell, M., Nagy, L., & Ďurinová, I. (2018). The economic-mathematical nature of the HGN model concept as a tool for measuring performance of enterprises. *Journal of Economics*, 66(3), 309-325. Retrieved from https://www.sav.sk/journals/uploads/0308131603%2018%20Hyr%C3%A1nek%20+%20RS.pdf.

Kiráľová, A., & Hamarneh, I. (2016). Riverside tourism in an urban area – How can it work? *Geographical Information*, 20(2), 507-522. doi: 10.17846/GI.2016.20.2.507-522.

Kiráľová, A., & Pavlíček, A. (2015). Development of social media strategies in tourism destination. *International Conference on Strategic Innovative Marketing, Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 175(2015), 358-366. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.01.1211.

Kiseľáková, D., Horváthová, J., Šofranková, B., & Šoltés, M. (2015). Analysis of risks and their impact on enterprise performance by creating Enterprise Risk Model. *Polish Journal of Management Studies*, 11(2), 50-60. Retrieved from https://pjms.zim.pcz.pl/resources/html/articlesList?issueId=11088.

Mursalim, Mallisa, M., & Kusuma, H. (2017). Capital structure determinants and firms´ performance: Empirical evidence from Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia. *Polish Journal of Management Studies*, 16(1), 154-164. doi: 10.17512/pjms.2017.16.1.13.

Picazo, P., & Moreno-Gil, S. (2018). Tour operators' marketing strategies and their impact on prices of sun and beach package holidays. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 35(2018), 17-28. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2018.02.004.

Pribeanu, G., & Toader, C. (2016). The success in business in the context of sustainable development. *Agricultural Management / Lucrari Stiinfifice Seria I, Management Agricol*, 18(2), 99-102. Retrieved from: http://lsma.ro/index.php/lsma/article/view/938/pdf.

Rajnoha, R., Lesníková, P., & Krajčík, V. (2017). Influence of business performance measurement systems and corporate sustainability concept to overal business performance: "Save the planet and keep your performance". *E + M Economics and Management*, 20(1), 111-128. https://dx.doi.org/10.15240/tul/001/2017-1-008.

Rejnuš, O. (2014). *Financial markets.* Praha: Grada Publishing, a. s.

Sarancha, M. (2015). The problem of bankruptcies tour operators in Russia: The dynamics of the current situation and prospects of development. *2nd International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conferences on Social Sciences and Arts*, 3(2015), 907-913. doi:10.5593/SGEMSOCIAL2015/B23/S7.116.

Sarvašová, I., & Kiráľová, A. (2018). Educational tourism in arboretum – The case of Borová Hora. *Journal of Tourism and Services*, 9(16), 31-44. doi: 10.29036/jots.v9i16.53
Slovak Association of Tour Operators and Trave Agents. (2018). Retrieved from: https://www.sacka.eu/.

Stříteská, M., Zapletal, D., & Jelínková L. (2016). Performance management systems in Czech Companies: Findings from a questionnaire survey. *E + M Economics and Management*, 19(4), 44-55. http://dx.doi.org/10.15240/tul/001/2016-4-004.

Sysel, J. (2010). *Tour operator, travel agency and information center in tourism*. Praha: VŠH.
Šofranková, B., Kiseľáková, D., & Horváthová, J. (2017). Actual questions of risk management in models affecting enterprise performance. *Journal of Economics*, 65(7), 644-667. Retrieved from http://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.cejsh-049d9fb9-7f44-4982-8f03-9eb88479099e.

Štefko, R., Gavurova, B., & Korony, S. (2016). Efficiency measurement in healthcare work management using Malmquist indices. *Polish Journal of Management Studies*, 13(1), 168-180. doi: 10.17512/pjms.2016.13.1.16.

Štefko, R., Vašaničová, P., Litavcová, E., & Jenčová, S. (2018). Tourism intensity in the NUTS III Regions of Slovakia. *Journal of Tourism and Services*, 9(16), 45-59. doi: https://doi.org/10.29036/jots.v9i16.43.

Tvaronavičiene, M. (2018). Preconditions of sustainable entrepreneurship: Estimating of Brexit scenarious impact on macroeconomic environment. *Polish Journal of Management Studies*, 17(2), 222-234. doi: 10.17512/pjms.2018.17.2.19.

UNWTO. (2018). *Tourism Towards 2030/Global Overview*. Retrieved from https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284414024.

UNWTO. (2017). *Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals – Journey to 2030*. Retrieved from http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Sustainable%20Development/UNWTO_UNDP_Tourism%20and%20the%20SDGs.pdf.

Xin, T. K., & Chan, J. K. L. (2014). Tour operator perspectives on responsible tourism indicators of Kinabalu National Park. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences, 5th Asia-Euro Conference on Tourism, Hospitality and Gastronomy*, 144(2014), 25-34. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.07.270.

Yang, S., Ishtiaq, M., & Anwar, M. (2018). Enterprise Risk Management Practices and Firm Performance, the Mediating Role of Competitive Advantage and the Moderating Role of Financial Literacy. *Journal of Risk and Financial Management*, 11(35), 1-17. doi:10.3390/jrfm11030035.

Yap, CS., Cheng, BL., Hussain, NM., & Ahmad, R. (2018). Innovativeness, market intelligence practices, and firm performance of small- and medium-sized tour operators. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 18(2), 143-151. https://doi.org/10.1177/1467358416636931.

Mgr. Erika Onuferová
Department of Finance
Faculty of Management, University of Prešov in Prešov
Konštantínova 16, 080 01 Prešov, Slovakia
http://www.unipo.sk/fm
erika.onuferova@smail.unipo.sk

Erika Onuferová is a PhD. student at the Department of Finance, Faculty of Management, University of Prešov in Prešov. Her dissertation thesis is focused on managerial approaches to improving enterprise performance and competitiveness using to streamline strategic management decision-making processes. She is currently the member of scientific projects VEGA number 1/0791/16 and APVV-15-0322 with cooperation of University of Economics in Bratislava.

Mgr. Veronika Čabinová
Department of Finance

Faculty of Management, University of Prešov in Prešov
Konštantínova 16, 080 01 Prešov, Slovakia
http://www.unipo.sk/fm
veronika.cabinova@smail.unipo.sk

Veronika Čabinová is a PhD. student at the Department of Finance, Faculty of Management, University of Prešov in Prešov. Her dissertation thesis is focused on modern approaches of improving enterprise performance to streamline management decision – making processes. She is currently the member of scientific projects VEGA number 1/0791/16 and APVV-15-0322 with cooperation of University of Economics in Bratislava.