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## **MAKING COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM SUSTAINABLE: EVIDENCE FROM THE FREE STATE PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA**

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**Abstract:** Community-based tourism (CBT) has been promoted as a way of development whereby the socio-cultural, environmental and economic needs of local communities are met through tourism product offerings. CBT is concerned with ensuring that the local community benefits directly from the tourism industry. CBT is known to contribute to social and economic survival of the marginalised communities in developing countries and the preservation of natural resources in the affected areas. In developing countries, tourism has often been observed as the spin around for small-scale enterprises and job creation, and therefore the uplifting of local communities' standard of living. Where CBT is practiced well, there is a potential to provide some exceptional opportunities for communities by offering not only better benefits, but also enhancing their contribution in planning and management of tourism in their communities. The primary goal of the study was to investigate the sustainability of financial investment in community-based tourism projects in the Thabo Mofutsanyana Municipality. Secondary objectives were set, namely: to determine if the projects can sustain themselves after funding support has been terminated, to determine the oversight role played by government on how funding has been utilised, and to formulate guidelines on how to increase the sustainability of CBT projects. CBT projects have the potential of opening up avenues for locals and economically deprived communities to have a meaningful contribution in tourism. The qualitative study sought to investigate the sustainability of financial investments in CBT within the Thabo Mofutsanyane area. The results indicated that financial investments are important for CBT. Financial investments are not an end, as marketing planning and skills development can ensure the success of CBT. This article offers developing destinations will critical

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success factors for CBT projects that are used to create a tourism supply chain for residents and citizens of a tourism destination.

**Keywords:** South Africa, tourism, community-based tourism, Thabo Mofutsanyana, Quality-of-Life

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## INTRODUCTION

The African National Congress (ANC) government elected in 1994 elections adopted the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) as a programme of action to arrest poverty, unemployment and inequality. Tourism was later identified as an engine for growth for the economy as the traditional sectors such as mining and agriculture had a declining share in employment and contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) (Henama, 2014). Tourism is premised on the sharing of the developmental benefits of tourism with economically challenged members of society and their respective communities. South Africa has a high rate of unemployment, which is a leading contributor towards poverty, a growth trap within the economy and a skills mismatch, which keeps millions of South Africans outside of formal employment.

Tourism destinations attract tourists because of the positive economic impacts such as labour-intensive jobs, tourism acting as a catalyst for other industries. Tourism attracts foreign exchange, and foreign direct investment that comes with tourism and stimulates small businesses (Acha-Anyi et al., 2016). According to Henama (2017) tourism has been an economic messiah for South Africa, as perennial job losses have resulted in the increase of poverty. The high rate of unemployment in South Africa, has resulted in unemployment being a structural issue facing the economy. The decline of jobs in mining, has been mitigated by the growth of jobs in the tourism industry.

The tourism industry has more employees than the mining industry. This reflects a change in the economic dynamics of the South African economy, changing from mining (production economy) towards tourism (experience economy). Tourism has been used by countries as a form of economic diversification, as the economies change from primary industries to the services economy. Tourism in South Africa can be regarded as the new gold, as the traditional economic drivers of the economy have been gold mining, with deep vertical and forward linkages. Gold mining has declined, and is no longer the main driver of the South African economy, and it has been replaced by tourism.

The decline in mining production has created widespread unemployment and destroyed the economic prospects of the single industry towns, which depended on mining, as the major economic activity. The tourism industry is associated with small and medium enterprises, which provide the majority of services to tourists. The majority of small firms in tourism continue to create a plethora of job opportunities for thousands of South Africans. Rogerson (2018) noted that informality is a distinct facet of tourism economies in the developing world or global South. The informality of the tourism industry is a character of the small business dominance of this industry. This informality means that the tourism industry can create jobs at the lowest possible cost, and create a plethora of job opportunities. The biggest challenge facing the post-apartheid government is the lack of jobs, which has relegated millions of South Africa to poverty as a result of unemployment. Tourism is a growth industry because of its sustained growth Henama, Mangope and Strydom (2017:2). The fact is that the tourism experience at the tourist destinations creates opportunities for other domestic

enterprises to benefit from the tourism and creates backward linkages in other industries such as agriculture. The majority of the value adding of the tourism product offerings, occur at the destination benefitting local tourism supply chains. Tourism can catalyse other industries such as manufacturing and agriculture when the tourism industry is planned to be pro-poor, and benefit the destination area. Tourism has a direct, indirect and induced impact at the destination economy. Consequently, the effects of tourism can be experienced through the economy of a country. The best-known definition of sustainability or sustainable development comes from the World Commission on Environment and Development and is outlined as: forms of progress that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It is important to acknowledge that sustainability is about more than just looking after our natural environment. It is also about considering the social and economic impact of what we do and how we do it (NC State University, 2010:1). According to Holden and Linnerud (2007:174) sustainable development entails protecting the earth's capacity to support life in all its diversity.

It embraces concerns for environmental protection, social equity, quality of life, cultural diversity and a dynamic, viable economy delivering jobs and prosperity for all. Sustainable tourism requires the entire destination community to recognise the benefits and need for tourism and demonstrate willingness to invest in whatever it takes to make it happen. Tourists are attracted to destinations because of the attractions, and it's important that the attractions are protected, as the resource base that attracts the tourism. Therefore, the principles of sustainability are applied to the tourism industry to protect the resource base for future generations. It is generally accepted that tourists are attracted to tourism destination attractions, and they usually destroy the very same attractions that drew them to the destinations. The resource base for tourism must be protected to sustain the industry for the long term, and use continued tourism revenue as a force for good for a destination country. Sustainable tourism is therefore a business imperative for the long-term sustainability of the tourism industry.

### **COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM**

The tourism industry is supposed to improve the host community, if it is to be sustainable. Therefore, community-based tourism is a means to ensure that the tourism industry benefits the locals, improving their standard of living and Quality-of-Life. Tourism should be developed to cater equally well for both the residents' sense of well-being and the tourists' needs and expectations. Community-based tourism is considered as a tool that integrates the goals of the general concept of sustainable development. CBT has to fulfil the criterion that makes it economically sensible as well as socially, culturally and ecologically compatible with the communities in which it takes place (Zapata et al., 2011:725). It is of little use to implement CBT projects if they are not sustainable. This implies that the implementation of CBT projects must happen in such a way that communities and/or projects, where initial financial investments take place, must be managed in such a way that the projects can eventually be maintained without the investment support (Tango International, 2009:8).

Although the term CBT is commonly used in South Africa, the definition is contested and means different things to different people. The lack of consensus seems to stem from whether the community owns and/or manages the tourism venture or facilities and whether the focus is on provision of jobs for local people, or on issues of community involvement in decision-making and sustainability of those projects (Ndlovu & Rogerson, 2004:8). Leballo, as in Ndlovu and Rogerson (2003:125), argued that several authors accept a broad definition of community-based tourism, as that in

which a number of local people are involved in providing services to tourists and the tourism industry, and which local people have meaningful ownership, power and participation in the various tourism and related enterprises. Gopaul (2006:11) further reiterates that CBT is becoming increasingly popular in developmental cycles worldwide as a means of contributing towards rural development and poverty alleviation.

This is premised on using tourism as a means for sharing the developmental benefits of tourism. The tourism industry does not naturally benefit the destinations and its citizens, unless dedicated steps are instated to ensure its pro-poor. The intention has been to ensure that tourism contributes towards development and growth. In South Africa, CBT projects are supported and funded by the Department of Small Business Development, Department of Tourism, and the Department of Environmental Affairs (DETEA) through their poverty alleviation grants.

This is part of a broader government project to assist previously neglected groups and the poor South African communities, where most of the resources are concentrated (DETEA, 2012:55–57). Communities incur costs when they engage in CBT projects so they too have an interest in knowing how successful such initiatives are before engaging with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and others to realise the aspiration of CBT. There is evidence that a large majority of international CBT initiatives enjoy little success. Goodwin and Santilli (2009:4-8) reported research by the Rainforest Alliance and Conservation International where two hundred CBT projects across America were reviewed, revealing that many accommodation providers had only 5% occupancy. They concluded from their review that “the most likely outcome for CBT initiatives is collapsing after funding dries up”. The mentioned authors reported that the main causes of collapse were poor market access and poor governance. Access to markets is linked to having a consistent supply of tourism consumers, which would sustain the CBT. This means that CBT initiatives must be commercially viable and operated as commercial entities. There is growing scepticism of the value of CBT in delivering poverty reduction because of the inability of most schemes to achieve their most fundamental goal of directing sustainable and meaningful benefit flows to poor communities.

#### **Theoretical Framework: Community-Based Tourism**

Sustainable CBT aims to reconcile the tensions between the three partners in the development triangle, and maintains the equilibrium in the long-term. It highlights the aims of sustainable CBT, namely: to minimise the environmental and cultural damage, optimise visitor satisfaction and maximise long-term economic growth for the region. Sustainable tourism (ST) is tourism that does not deplete economic, social/cultural and environmental resources. Over the past decades, sustainability has become a focal point for tourism development around the world. Matarrita-Cascantea et al. (2010:9) state that ST is not just about controlling and managing the negative impacts of the industry. ST development aims to benefit local communities, economically and socially, and to raise awareness and support for conservation of the environment.

The concept of CBT emerged in the mid-1990s. CBT is generally small scale and involves interactions between the visitor and host community and is particularly suited to rural and regional areas. It is commonly understood to be managed and owned by the community, for the community. It is a form of ‘local tourism’ favouring local service providers and suppliers and focused on interpreting and communicating local culture and the environment. CBT can empower local communities, giving them a sense of pride in their natural resources and control over their respective community’s development. CBT should not be viewed as an end in itself, but as a means towards empowering poor communities to take control over their land and resources, to tap their potential, and to acquire the skills necessary for their own development.

### **Characteristics of community-based tourism**

CBT is premised on the inclusion of local people in the development of the industry. In fact, its characteristics include local control of development, community involvement in planning, equitable flow of benefits, and incorporation of resident values (Koster, 2010:4):

- Local control of development: there are many interest groups and many individuals who hold their own viewpoints, results in challenges to reach consensus. Communities rarely, if ever, speak with one voice.

- Community involvement in planning: current thinking in tourism focuses on interventions that are strategic and based on an open-minded assessment of where impact can be created at that scale. The other issue is for the government to provide a conducive environment for the private sector to work at any point in the tourism value chain, wherever there is greatest potential for pro-poor change and be able to evaluate the potential environmental, cultural, and social impacts of the intervention and the type of enterprise being developed. This should be done during the planning stage and in participation with local stakeholders to ensure the overall impacts will be beneficial (Spenceley et al., 2009:33). There is a range of ways that pro-poor interventions can be scaled up. These include joint venture partnerships, value chain linkages, community capacity building and skills training (Bricker et al., 2012:104).

- Equitable flow of benefits: according to Höckett (2009:2), rural community-based tourism proceeds rarely as an unplanned intervention of a free market process but more as a planned programme that is part of local or regional development strategies. This makes it possible to plan community-based tourism development carefully. The communities should discuss what they are willing to contribute and what they are not willing to give up (Hashimoto & Telfer, 2006:42–45).

- Incorporation of resident values: an important consideration needs to be raised when discussing the relevance of CBT in the development of rural areas. That consideration is the definition and importance of CBT, in the countryside or in a small rural settlement, and that it is made up of ecological elements of tourism (ecotourism), and cultural and traditional tourism. They may include commercial farms, small settlements, rural areas, and other areas further from the towns and cities (Essex et al., 2005:128).

Goodwin and Santilli (2009:27-28) as well as the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) (2010:3), explained that CBT may enhance social sustainability by empowering local communities to manage their own resources, providing meaningful employment and assisting with capacity building and cultural preservation. Environmental benefits include income generation for communities to actively protect their land from degradation and possible enhancement of conservation efforts to attract tourists especially with regard to ecotourism initiatives.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The primary objective of the study was to determine the sustainability of financial investment in CBT projects in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District of the Free State Province. The secondary objective was to determine if the projects can sustain themselves after funding support has been terminated. The descriptive study used a self-administered questionnaire as a tool for gathering information that was distributed to the twenty-one (21) CBT projects within the Thabo Mofutsanyana District. The sampling method used the formula by Stoker, which required that twenty (20) questionnaires be distributed to the population of twenty-one (21) CBT projects. A pilot study was undertaken on one successful and one unsuccessful CBT project to verify the questionnaire. After the data was collected, SPSS analysis was used as a statistical tool to prepare the data for analysis.

The Thabo Mofutsanyana District is located in the Eastern Free State in South Africa. The area can be defined as rural and per-rural surrounded by several secondary cities such as Bethlehem and Ladybrand. Agriculture is the main economic activity in this region. A tourism enclave in Clarens has been established which has seen tourism emerging as a major economic contributor to the Eastern Free State. According to the Thabo Mofutsanyana Integrated Development Plan (IDP) (2012), the Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality was chosen since it includes the majority of CBT projects in the Free State Province. There are 21 CBT projects at different stages of development in this area, 11 of which are currently in progress.

These are the projects to which funds were allocated timeously and the owning agencies were identified without any hindrances from government departments. The remaining ten projects either have failed or were declared redundant for different reasons. The CBT projects in this area are categorised into accommodation establishments (hotels, guesthouses, lodges and rondavels), hiking trails, hospitality training centres, craft centres, tourism routes, communication centres, water sports and other water activities. Data collection was undertaken through self-completion questionnaires conducted between August and September 2014.



**Figure 1.** Map of Thabo Mofutsanyana geographical area (Source: municipalities.co.za, 2012)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to determine the sustainability of financial investment in CBT projects in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District of the Free State



Province. The total number of respondents (N-community representatives) was 252. It is vital to clarify the roles and responsibilities of both the community representatives and the government officials in CBT project development. It is also important that the roles and responsibilities of all role players in development should complement each other rather than contradict each other. The government officials also play a vital role and have responsibilities towards the development of the CBT projects. In the development of CBT projects, the role of government is to improve infrastructure and establish a policy for tourism activities and controls on land use.

The government officials are therefore entrusted with the facilitation and execution of the roles and responsibilities of the government in the development of tourism projects. 59% of the respondents are male and the median age of the group is 37 years (inter-quartile range (IQR): 30 to 45 years). 95% of the community representatives were involved in one project only; followed by 3% in two projects and 2% in four projects and none were involved in three projects.

With reference to the percentage of CBT projects that community representatives were involved, 95% of the community representatives were involved in one project only; followed by 3% in two projects and 2% in four projects and none were involved in three projects. It poses a risk in the sense that by far, the majority of them were only exposed to one project and they therefore lack a broad experience basis. With reference to the involvement of community representatives in the initial planning stage of the CBT projects, 52% of the community representatives were involved in the initial planning of the projects. Therefore, this implies that 48% of them did not have information on why the project was initiated and they were never part of the planning and decision making process. It poses a risk when it comes to decisions that shape the project's destiny. In terms of frequency of community involvement during the initiation of CBT projects, 52% of the respondents indicated that they were not aware of how often the community was involved during the initiation phase since they were not involved themselves. Only 23% and 15% of the respondents respectively indicated that the community was always or often involved during the initiation of the CBT projects. For successful results in community development, it is always vital to involve communities at the initial planning stages because it assists in creating a sense of belonging and empowerment amongst the communities. According to Giampiccoli and Kalis (2012:174), the original concept of CBT must be seen as linking the concepts of sustainability, empowerment and self-reliance. This implies that the planning process was not as inclusive as possible.

This caused people to lose interest in the success and sustainability of the project. Only a third of the community representatives (34%) indicated that they were always involved in the monitoring of progress of the CBT projects and actively monitored it with the government officials. With regard to the community needs that were positively impacted by the CBT projects, the development of the CBT projects, the needs of the respondents have been satisfied through direct employment and/or self-employment (67%), followed by 22% who reported that they have been equipped with skills transfer, training and development. Therefore, this explains that some of the projects have the potential of being sustainable if the people affected are continually empowered so that their socio-economic status becomes sustained and a sense of belonging and ownership of the projects are ensured. 87% of the respondents indicated that the community benefited from the projects and 13% did not agree. The CBT projects have positively benefited the local community since the respondents have been capacitated with relevant skills (32%), they have secure jobs (25%) and have also experienced an improvement in their quality of life (23%). The respondents also indicated that they have generally benefitted socially and culturally which fulfils the guiding principles of

CBT development of securing the social, cultural, environmental and economic status of the population affected by the development. With regard to government's contribution to the CBT projects development, training and skills transfer is vital for CBT projects to be successful. Community representatives need to be equipped with relevant skills in order to perform their duties at an acceptable standard.

From the study, 84% of the respondents agreed that the government equipped them with relevant skills to perform their duties while 16% disagreed. It is clear that 59% of the community representatives were trained in entrepreneurial skills. This is followed by tourist guiding at 53%, arts and crafts at 51%, housekeeping at 41%, water sports at 29%, leadership and management at 27%, administration at 20%, environmental issues at 16%, guest house management at 14%, marketing at 8%, accounting at 4%, and oral history, traditional healing and cultural issues at 2% each. The training programmes that achieved a score above 50% indicate that there have been properly empowerment and sustainability for the developments. Therefore, this suggests that there will be an increased commitment and capability in the projects' development and systematic on-the-job learning will be provided for those community members that did not get training. As for those programmes lower than 50%, they indicate that there might be lack of ability to manage and operate the projects, which suggests a need for intensified provision of systematic on-the-job learning.

Other than offering training and development to the community members, which is supported by the Tourism White Paper of South Africa, the government introduced four benefit-sharing mechanisms to the community. The principal idea of the concept is to share the benefits resulting from the development of the natural resources in order to satisfy the needs of the concerned population. According to Oula (2006:57-58), benefit sharing with the affected local population refers to a commitment to channel some of the returns generated by the operation of a project back to the community where natural resources are exploited and infrastructure projects are developed. The relevance of this concept is that it has been recognised that modern compensation policies for projects that affected people should involve not only basic in-kind and cash compensation for lost assets and lost access to resources, but also measures that aim to restore and improve the livelihoods of the affected populations in the long-term (Prachvuthy, 2006:26-40). Below are some examples of benefit sharing schemes:

- Community Trust Fund: a fund acquired from inheritances income from which is to be used for the general betterment of the inhabitants of a community (Duruigbo, 2004:121).

- Share of profits: refers to various incentive plans introduced by businesses that provide direct or indirect payments to employees that depend on the company's profitability in addition to employees' regular salaries and bonuses. In publicly traded companies, these plans typically amount to allocation of shares to employees.

The profit sharing plans are based on predetermined economic sharing rules that define the split of gains between the company as a principal and the employee as an agent (Kate & Laird, 2002:4-5).

- Member of Board of Trustees: an appointed or elective board that supervises the affairs of a public or private organisation. They are responsible for guiding and assessing the effective implementation of the project's mission from the initial planning of the projects. That is, they are responsible for defining and monitoring the short and long-term goals of the projects, setting policies in accordance with the project's mission, support the management in the day-to-day operation but are not involved in management and administration. They are also responsible for approving the yearly budget (McKinnon, 1973:7).

- Revenue sharing: revenue sharing with the local or regional authorities can be arranged through royalties tied to the output of the project or through entrance fee charges. The amounts either are settled through negotiations between the local or regional authorities and the promoter or operator, are defined in the legislation (Cachon & Lariviere, 2005:30-35).

The respondents were asked whether the government has addressed community benefit sharing mechanisms. The majority (80%) agreed, while 12% did not agree and 8% did not know about the mechanisms. The respondents motivated their responses differently in the sense that 56% of respondents who indicated that community trust funds have been set up explained that the government and private investors have assured them that employment opportunities will be provided and direct revenue to the community trust fund will be guaranteed. This implies that if successful, there will always be income for the community over the long-term in case they want to venture into other businesses as a community, which means that the fund will be their investment or capital needed for such ventures. According to the study, 21% of the respondents indicated that there has been a collaborative agreement with the private sector, local government and the community that there will be a certain percentage of profits that will be shared amongst the community members involved in the development. This suggests that all stakeholders will receive dividends, which will motivate and compensate employees who are community members.

The community will be entitled to profits and other payments, which assists in positively influencing work effectiveness, productivity, good quality work and service, and lowering high costs. Another benefit sharing mechanism that some respondents agreed to be discussed with them is the establishment of a Board of Trustees. Only 4% of the respondents mentioned that there is a certain percentage of profits that is allocated to the community under the guardianship of the elected Board of Trustees on behalf of the community. The low percentage indicates that the introduction of this mechanism was inadequately executed or the respondents did not understand the mechanism. Lastly, the majority of respondents (80%) confirmed that revenue sharing mechanisms were discussed which means that a certain percentage of the daily takings (entrance fees and sales) will go directly to the service providers and affected communities. These responses indicate that all stakeholders agreed in ensuring that communities enjoy the benefits of the projects to encourage a sense of ownership to the projects, hence dedicate themselves to the projects' success and sustainability. In the management of project finances, the majority (77%) of the respondents indicated that the project finances were well managed, while 21% did not agree. The majority of respondents indicated that the reasons for failure of CBT are mainly in the area of mismanagement of funds (69%). This is followed by the exclusion of other stakeholders (33%), lack of empowerment, knowledge, skills and training (25%). The lack of planning, research and consultation is at (12%). The imposing projects on communities and lack of communication amongst stakeholders is at (10%). Conflict amongst communities and rejection of projects by communities is at (10%). Corruption, laziness and red tape by government officials are at (5%). Moreover, bad marketing (3%) and neglecting the importance of culture and environment are at (3%).

All these reasons are crucial for the development and sustainability of any community project. In this regard, it is obvious that project-planning processes were not carried out well or the stakeholders ignored the details on the characteristics and principles of CBT projects, or the guidelines for the development of CBT projects were ignored. Stakeholders must follow the correct procedures in developing and implementing CBT projects. In review of the respondents' responses, 100% reported that the financial support for the development of CBT projects comes from the National Department of Economic

Development, Small Business Enterprise, and Tourism and Environmental Affairs (DETEA). Other support comes in the form of exchange of skills, research and consultation, investment and management and marketing from different governmental and non-governmental entities. The respondents further indicated that the municipality assists in coordinating (100%) all activities with relevant bodies responsible for the CBT project development. The respondents (53%) suggested that the communities needed to be empowered in order for the CBT projects to be sustainable in the Thabo Mofutsanyana Municipality. All stakeholders must work together for the success of the projects (29%). There is a need to practice proper ways of developing a CBT project (8%). Employment of a Public Private Partnership strategy (PPP) has to be engaged in (4%). Open communication lines amongst the stakeholders must be created (4%). All these suggestions are encompassed in the principles and guidelines of a successful and sustainable CBT project.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Achieving sustainable CBT is a continuous process that requires constant monitoring and evaluation of impacts and introduction of the necessary pre-emptive and/or counteractive measures. Implementation of CBT initiatives plays an important role in the success or failure of the initiative, starting from initial planning to monitoring and evaluation processes. According to the Rural Tourism Strategy (2012:8), rural tourism has been insufficiently funded and resourced. The reason for this is that funding comes only from the National Department of Tourism (NDT). It is imperative that the government involves other donor agencies in funding CBT projects because it is the nature of CBT projects to be fully dependent on donor funding. This will assist in increasing community benefits from conservation and sustainable management of natural resources within the project areas. Involving the donor agencies also assists in extensive marketing and increases investment opportunities, but it is always a challenge for donors to support CBT projects because of their nature of creating low profit margins and taking a long time to generate profits. This does not mean that government should not forge investment opportunities from local, regional and international donors interested in or accustomed to working with rural development or even CBT projects. The following recommendations will not only be applicable to the CBT projects in the study area but can also be adopted by all envisaged CBT projects in rural areas:

- The government working with the private sector must establish sustainable CBT projects that will have a lasting impact on the livelihoods of the community.
- The community, and not the community elites, must be involved from the conceptualisation to the delivery of the CBT.
- Partnerships with tourism intermediaries must be established when the project is conceptualised.
- CBT need government support in terms of infrastructure provision such as roads, signage and lighting, which would improve the experience to and from the CBT project.
- CBT project must be hallmarks of good governance and management.
- CBT must ensure that the public are given access to the project, so that they can learn about the importance of tourism as an economic sector. This will ensure that the public becomes tourism friendly, and improve the experience of the tourists that visit the locality.
- CBT projects will only succeed if successful integrated marketing is undertaken to ensure that the marketing outlays are successful in cultivating sustainable tourism demand.
- Viability studies and market access studies must be undertaken to ensure that CBT projects attract tourists so that they can become fully functional and operational.

The governments interference in the decision-making process most of the time undermines community empowerment. Furthermore, the findings of the study also discovered that local government is mandated with overseeing the utilisation of government funding, of which according to the respondents, the local government officials negatively manipulate the utilisation of funding. The involvement of communities in the development of CBTs gives them power to make decisions on issues that involve their assets including their communal resources, living standards and their future. According to Henama & Sifolo (2017), the tourism industry is supposed to increase the standard of living of locals and the quality-of-life of the host community. CBT becomes a means to an end in trying to ensure that tourism benefits the local community, ensuring that the developmental benefits of tourism are shared.

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## **APPLICATION OF THE BALANCED SCORECARD AS A STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT TOOL IN PRACTICE: A CASE OF SLOVAK TOURISM SECTOR**

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**Abstract:** In this paper, we addressed the analysis of strategic management issues with specific focus on the use of Balanced Scorecard concept within the Slovak tourism enterprises. The main objective of paper is to highlight barriers complicating the application of the above mentioned method into business practice by means of the data obtained from the questionnaire survey. The essence of paper consisted of hypotheses formulated on the basis of literature review with an emphasis on professional publications and research studies conducted so far. Hypotheses were verified by selected statistical methods to explore the potential dependencies between variables. The partial objective of this research study was to point out the importance of Balanced Scorecard concept in terms of enterprise management assessing its performance by financial indicators as well as non-financial indicators.

**Key words:** Balanced Scorecard, tourism, ownership, personnel resources, Chi-Square Test of Independence.

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## INTRODUCTION

The current business environment is characterized by constant changes that companies need to be able to respond flexibly and effectively. The technological advancements in the globalizing world and the rapid change in socio-economic conditions result in the increase of customer demands and expectations (Tuzunkan, 2018a). Thanks to tourism, people are visiting new destinations, but also sport activities in a healthy environment are gaining importance. The practice of sport and leisure has begun to transcend the urban area as people are oriented towards the practice of physical exercise in nature, closely related to environmental requirements (Ilies et al., 2018). Therefore, the modern era combines tourism with physical activities that perfectly regenerate the human body and soul. All these factors include the tourism sector, which is the subject of our research. Employee engagement and employer branding is concerned, we are able to exhaust plenty of these conceptions on the basis of suitably formulated corporate policies and their initiation into real practise (Bendová & Štěpánková, 2017).

Business entities must respond to ever-changing market situation and be able to adapt to these changes professionally. In this context, companies need to employ appropriate managers with innovative approaches bringing new business ideas and trends. As reported by Malec, Kiráľová (2018), the most significant competencies demanded from managers are providing a complex view (summary) as well as feedback, time management, leadership and planning, considering both boundaries of eigenvalues with corresponding eigenvectors analytical (resp. smooth) path. Huttmanová (2017) emphasized that the main purpose of human development should be the expansion of human potential. If a company wants to be successful, it is not enough to focus only on financial aspects. Nowadays, the company's success depends increasingly on flexible factors including the non-financial indicators. These considerations closely linked to the ability to continually improve customer or supplier relationships include the ability to learn, the innovative strength of employees and the use of information society opportunities. In this regard, it is important to focus on the area of enterprise performance assessment and management (Šofranková et al., 2017).

The paper deals with the analysis of **Balanced Scorecard (BSC) method**, which is a modern management tool for measuring and managing the performance of an enterprise. According to Kerai, Saleh (2017); Kollberg, Elg (2011), the BSC concept is based on two basic pillars, representing both financial and non-financial indicators. In this paper, an emphasis was put on exploring the BSC method in Slovak tourism conditions, as tourism is one of the most important sectors within the world economy. Health and wellness tourism is now an established international trend for health-conscious consumers looking to improve their welfare (Stará & Peterson, 2017).

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Tourism sector is the largest service industry and largest employment generator in the world (Kolosinska et al., 2018; Tuzunkan, 2018b). Tej, Matušíková (2014) emphasized that tourism, mainly as a vital component of the so called leisure industry, has become a significant phenomenon in the last decades and its economic, social, political, cultural and other effects form an indisputable part of the reality transformations today. The definition of tourism is addressed by many Slovak as well as foreign authors, whereas each of them understands this concept from different point of view. In 1990s, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defined tourism and its related concepts at an international conference in Ottawa. The officially accepted definition of tourism was stated as "the activities of persons travelling to and



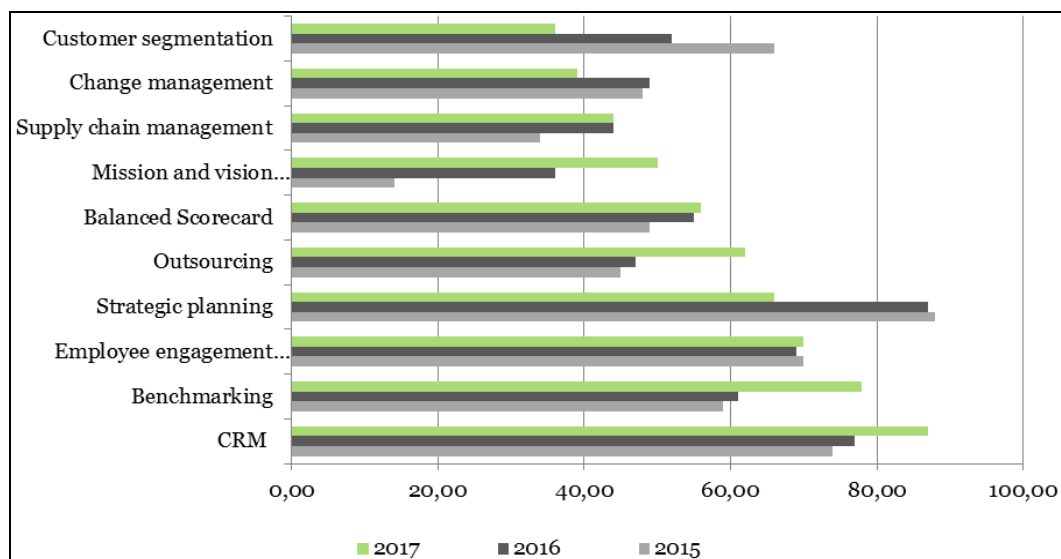
staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited" (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2017). According to the United Nations (2010), tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon related to the movement of people to places outside their usual place of residence, pleasure being the usual motivation. The activities carried out by a visitor may or may not involve a market transaction, and may be different from/or similar to those normally carried out in his/her regular routine of life. As reported by Gúčík (2013), tourism has acquired an interdisciplinary character with the essence to satisfy specific human needs. Author defines tourism as "a set of activities aimed at satisfying the demand for traveling and staying outside the place of permanent residence and usually in free time for the purpose of relaxation, education, health improvement, entertainment, cultural and sport activities or business trips". Tourism is considered as a system composed of different elements that have certain interconnections among themselves, or they can be easily created. According to Oriška (2012), "tourism is an open and dynamically evolving system that consists of two subsystems: the tourism subject and the tourism object". There are some links not only between these subsystems, but also between tourism and other systems constituting the surrounding (external) environment-economic, social, cultural, legislative, technical, technological and environmental environment. By author Baiburiev et al. (2018), tourism has a significant impact on economy and social development of the region, contributing to the flow of currency, creating new jobs, improving infrastructure, etc.

Improving the overall results in the tourism sphere also depends on the appropriate choice of methods supporting the performance improvement of tourism enterprises. In this study, we have focused on the BSC method representing a wide-spread strategic management tool. The essence of the above mentioned concept is to provide a comprehensive overview of both financial and non-financial indicators through four core perspectives that link business strategies and visions to individual goals and measures (Handoko & Wehartaty, 2017; Hladchenko, 2015). On basis of their expert observation, the authors of the BSC Norton and Kaplan (1996) offered four perspectives which make the basis of the given methodology. Characteristics of the four basic perspectives represent the following activities: financial perspective look at an enterprise from the point of view of its owners. The goals related to growth, cutting the cost, investments, and sustaining in the market and so on are set up. The goals are related to traditional financial indicators. Customers' perspective looks at an enterprise from the point of view of customers. Increasing the share in the market, satisfaction of customers, gaining new customers, increasing profit per customer or return of customer are frequent goals.

The perspective of internal processes follows the goals related to processes that must be improved to reach the goals set up in financial and customers' perspectives. Emphasis can be put on, for example, on the goals in the domain of value chain, innovative and operative processes. The perspective of learning and growth is focused on the goals related to the infrastructure and education of an enterprise. The authors of the conception do not recommend following more than twenty indicators in an enterprise. Doing so, an enterprise avoids following useless indicators and can concentrate its capacities on more important activities (Kaplan & Norton, 1996, 2005).

In the Slovak business environment, the BSC is not a commonly used method, but its application into practice is the subject of many research studies. In 2017, Bain & Company conducted a worldwide survey on a sample of 3,800 business entities to identify the most important concepts and tactics that companies are using today. The following

Figure 1 presents the top 10 management tools used in business practice (including the BSC method) over the years 2015 – 2017. According to Bain & Company's research, the BSC method fluctuated around the middle of compiled ranking, so it implied that approximately half of the surveyed enterprises used this modern performance method. Based on the above mentioned research we can state that the BSC concept is still up-to-date and successfully applied tool for measuring and managing business performance.



**Figure 1.** Top 10 management tools and their application in business practice (worldwide, in %)

In Slovakia, the research study focused on the BSC method was carried out by author Karabašová (2010), who dealt with the issue within her PhD thesis. Data were obtained from a total of 110 Slovak enterprises. Based on the findings, only 6.00% of the analysed companies used the BSC concept (on average). Another and more up-to-date research focused on the issue of BSC was realized by the authors Lesáková, Dubcová (2016) 6 years later. However, there were no significant changes as the evidence from this study suggested that only 9.15% of Slovak enterprises decided to apply the above mentioned concept. Compared to other European enterprises using the BSC method at the average level of 53%, this result is considered to be undoubtedly insufficient (Bain & Company, 2017).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The presented paper was focused on the BSC concept and its use within the tourism sample companies. In particular, we explored barriers as well as factors influencing the BSC use in Slovakia. The intention was to reveal statistically significant relations among the above mentioned factors through the verification of formulated research hypotheses. The relevant data from enterprises operating in the tourism sector was obtained by the questionnaire method. Currently, information is disseminated mainly thanks to information technology (IT) and devices, so we decided to submit a questionnaire compiled using Google form application. Questions were asked in the form of choice answers and the determination of their importance according to the Likert scale. The Likert scale represents a type of scale that consists of series of statements and mostly five options reflecting the degree of agreement or disagreement of respondents. Thus, the

range captures the intensity of their feelings for a given item (Široký, 2010). The compiled questionnaire was divided into two basic parts. The first one consisted of identification questions focused on the size of enterprises, the form of their ownership, category and class. The second part of the questionnaire concerned the strategy and enterprise performance management with a more detailed focus on the BSC concept. Based on the most comprehensive analysis of the BSC concept, we concentrated on finding answers to questions about the frequency of the BSC method use, the reasons complicating its application in practice and what are the preferences of the individual indicators within the BSC perspectives. Another important choice in compiling and submitting the questionnaire was to find a suitable, quality and relevant database to make our research sample representative. For the purposes of this study, the database of enterprises operating in tourism sector was obtained from the Slovak Business Agency (SBA), which is a crucial and the oldest specialized non-profit organization for the support of small and medium-sized enterprises in Slovakia. The questionnaire was submitted to a total of 616 enterprises operating in the Slovak tourism sector. However, of all the questionnaires sent, the return of questionnaires reached the level of 9.47% (60 questionnaires received).

For the needs of this survey, the return rate ranging around 10% was considered to be standard, so the results obtained were relevant. In this regard, the following hypotheses were set to support the aim of the paper:

**H1:** We assume that there is a statistically significant relationship between the ownership (Slovak or foreign) of enterprises operating in the Slovak tourism sector and the use of BSC method to measure their enterprise performance.

**H2:** We assume that there is a statistically significant relationship between the lack of personnel resources and putting the BSC method into business practice within the Slovak tourism sector.

From the research methods, descriptive statistics, contingency tables, comparative analysis, synthesis, selection, induction and deduction were employed to evaluate the data obtained. In order to verify the formulated hypotheses, the Pearson's Chi-square Test of Independence was applied and processed in the DELL Statistica software, 5.5th edition. In addition, we also used the standard deviation method as it was considered a suitable method for determining certain dependencies in this research. In the following Table 1 are stated formulas for calculating the selected indicators.

## RESULTS DISCUSSIONS

The research we conducted in the Slovak tourism sector was focused on the BSC concept use and possible barriers complicating its application in business practice.

In European or American countries, the BSC method is much more used than in Slovakia. Gartner's research in 2015 came to conclusion that more than 50% of large US companies applied the BSC method to measure enterprise performance. Based on the results of recent global study provided by Bain & Company, the BSC method ranked 5th within the top 10 most widely used management tools (Iervolino & Decker, 2015).

Such a high percentage of using the BSC method abroad encouraged us to analyse this concept in Slovak conditions. In accordance to above mentioned theoretical approaches to the solved research problem and knowledge about the use of BSC method, we explored whether there is a statistically significant dependency between the frequency of BSC use and the ownership of enterprises operating in Slovak tourism sector. From the point of view of enterprise ownership, we have focused and distinguished between domestically and foreign owned companies. The research studies mentioned in the previous section clearly point to the fact that businesses abroad use

the BSC concept much more than in Slovakia. Thus, we explored whether the application of BSC method into Slovak business practice is affected by origin/type of enterprise ownership and whether the foreign owners operating in Slovak business conditions use the BSC method more often. Therefore, data from questionnaires were processed only by respondents using the BSC in practice. As a suitable method for verifying a given hypothesis and detecting dependencies between the specified variables, the Pearson's Chi-square Independence Test was applied. Using this method, we calculated the Chi-square Test characteristics and subsequently compared with the critical table value for the selected profitability of errors and identified the degree of freedom. Table 2 contains the expected dependencies of the enterprise ownership.

**Table 1.** Calculation of the selected indicators (Data source: Marcheová et al., 2011)

Indicator	Formula	Author and description	Explanatory note
<b>Pearson's Chi-square Test of Independence</b>	$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(f_e - f_t)^2}{f_t}$	The Chi-square statistic is a non-parametric tool designed to analyze group differences when the dependent variable is measured at a nominal level created by Karl Pearson in 1900.	$\chi^2$ – the Chi-square value subsequently compared to a table value based on the selected error probability, $f_e$ – the empirical frequency of observed variables, $f_t$ – the theoretical frequency of observed variables.
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	$s = \sqrt{\frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})^2}$	Standard deviation is a measure that is used to quantify the amount of variation or dispersion of a set of data values. The name "standard deviation" came from Karl Pearson.	s – standard deviation, $x_i$ – the observed values of the sample item, $\bar{x}$ – the mean value of these observations, n – the number of observations in the sample.

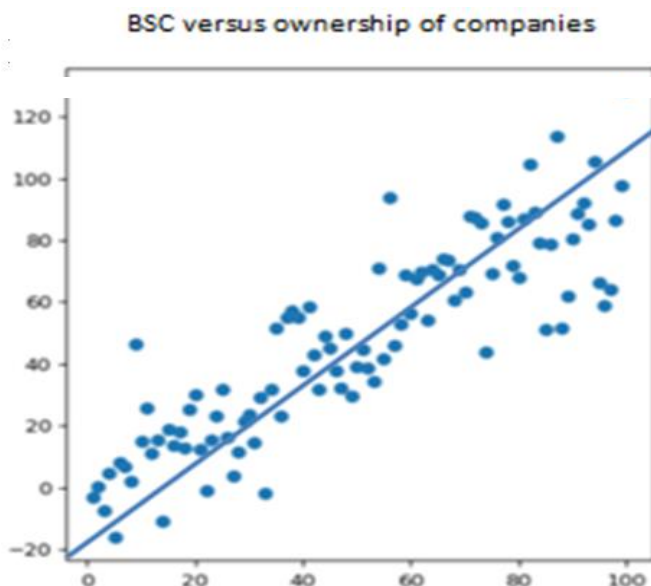
**Table 2.** The results of testing a hypothesis using the Pearson's Chi-square Test of Independence

<b>Pearson's Chi-square Test of Independence</b>	
Calculated value	p = 0.0467
Error profitability	$\alpha = 5\%$ (0.05)
Degree of freedom	DF = 1.00
Critical value	$\chi^2 = 0.01$

The results of Pearson's Chi-square Test of Independence reflecting the direct relation of these two variables by XY Scatterplot are graphically presented in Figure 2.

Based on the hypothesis verification via the above mentioned statistical test, we can conclude that there is a statistically significant relation between the analysed group of enterprises owned by Slovak and foreign investors and using the BSC method. This relation results from the calculated p value, which is lower than 0.05 (the significance level of 5%). Thus, there is a statistically significant relation between these factors and the hypothesis **H1 was accepted**. One of the main prerequisites for successful implementation and handling of the BSC concept depends on appropriate personnel resources, whereas well-trained and socially mature employees represent a big advantage for enterprises. As the Tootell et al. (2009) stated "since 1980s there has been an

increasing emphasis on the importance of HR measurement". Huselid, Becker and Beatty (2005) declared that the elements in the HR Scorecard are key leading indicators for workforce success. These theoretical approaches led us to determine the following hypothesis by examining whether there is a statistically significant relation between putting the BSC method into practice and the lack of personnel resources.



**Figure 2.** The BSC method versus the ownership of companies

To verify the second hypothesis, we asked respondents to specify reasons hindering the use of BSC concept in practice. This question was formulated in the format of the five-stage Likert scale, where respondents could express their agreement or disagreement with the submitted statement. When evaluating, we analysed the frequency of responses and the standard deviation value. However, one enterprise from the entire research sample marked a different option as it was offered, whereas the enterprise refused to publish results and information that could be revealed.

**Table 3.** Statistical assessment of reasons hindering the use of BSC concept in practice

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>The most common answer</b>	<b>Frequency of the most common answer</b>
Inability to clarify the current enterprise strategy	3	1	5	1.22	3	9
High financial costs of using the BSC method	3	1	5	1.10	3	11
Lack of personnel resources	4	1	5	1.17	3	7
Considering the BSC concept just as the current trend	3	1	5	1.17	3	8
Inconsistency between managers' ideas	3	1	5	1.10	3	10
Other reasons	3	3	3	1.00	3	1

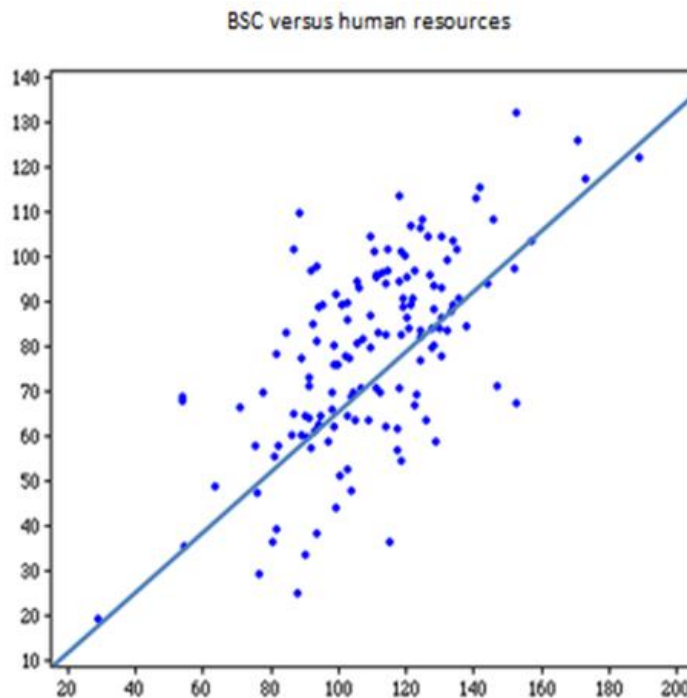
We consider this reason unfounded, as the BSC concept serves for internal needs and it is not a concept that makes the enterprise more visible or vulnerable than any external statement. The reasons complicating the BSC concept use and their statistical processing are stated in the following Table 3.

Subsequently, using the Pearson's Chi-square Test of Independence Test, we verified the hypothesis based on the assumption that there is a statistically significant relation between putting the BSC method into practice and lack of personnel resources. Table 4 contains the expected frequency of dependencies on the lack of personnel resources related to the use of the BSC concept.

**Table 4.** The results of testing a hypothesis using the Pearson's Chi-square Test of Independence

Pearson's Chi-square Test of Independence	
Calculated value	$p = 0.0496$
Error profitability	$\alpha = 5\% (0.05)$
Degree of freedom	$DF = 1.00$
Critical value	$\chi^2 = 0.01$

The results are graphically illustrated in Figure 3 reflecting the direct relation of these two variables by XY Scatterplot.



**Figure 3.** The BSC method versus the lack of personnel resources

Based on the result we can conclude there is a statistically significant relation between putting the BSC concept into practice and the lack of personnel resources. This statistical relation can be determined from the calculated p value below 0.05 (the significance level of 5%). Thus, the hypothesis **H2 was also accepted.**

The presented research was focused on the analysis and confirmation of the assumption that the ownership and the lack of personnel resources have a significant impact on the putting the BSC concept in Slovak tourism enterprises. To conclude, both premises were validated successfully using selected statistical tests.

## CONCLUSION

In the area of business performance and measurement system, many studies have been realized to create a management tool supporting the continuous improvement and performance evaluation of business processes. Enterprise performance measurement is actually characterized by two basic and quite different views. The first one is focused on the financial aspects perceived by investors as a financial investment increasing the company's value. The second approach to performance evaluation perceives the enterprise as a socio-economic system and a complex network of internal and external interconnections that also needs to be balanced. In this perspective, the BSC performance measurement methodology provides a strategic view of the enterprise management, vision, mission and strategy, not excluding performance measurement both financially and non-financially. In this paper, we addressed the analysis of BSC method, its application as well as shortcomings in the Slovak tourism sector.

The research consisted of several partial analyses based on the formulated hypotheses to explore potential interconnections influencing the BSC method use and its well-established concept in business practice. From the subsequent statistical verification of the hypotheses, we can confirm that there is a statistically significant relation between the ownership of enterprises (in the case of both Slovak and foreign owners) and using the BSC method. Putting the BSC method into practice is also influenced by lack of personnel resources, which was confirmed by statistical verification of the second formulated hypothesis. Summarizing the research, our findings and recommendations could be formulated as follows. Enterprises operating in the Slovak tourism industry perceive that performance measurement on the basis of financial indicators is currently inadequate and even inappropriate for the future-oriented businesses and success.

Otherwise, non-investing in employees and other non-financial indicators will threaten the company's competitiveness and sustainable growth. Despite the fact that investing in non-financial indicators causes a short-term deterioration of the company's financial situation, it does not lead to serious problems or bankruptcy. On the contrary, these investments will ensure profitability and an increase in the company value in the long term, which is the main goal of the company's owners.

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## **APLICATION THE DEVELOPMENT OF BALIKPAPAN BAY INDONESIA BASED ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**

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**Abstract:** The development of sustainable tourism has become an important issue for every country. Although it has been studied extensively, the study of bay tourism development which is in danger of damage is still limited. The purpose of this study is to (1) investigate the picture of tourism potential in Balikpapan Bay; (2) analyze the concept of sustainable tourism development in Balikpapan Bay; (3) examine the direction of sustainable tourism management policies in Balikpapan Bay as a leading tourist destination. The study method uses a mixed method approach. The results of the study revealed that the Balikpapan Bay area has the potential to be an ecotourism-based tourist area with the presence of marine ecosystems, coral reefs, mangrove forests, duyung (mermaid)/ dugong (dugong dugon), and the existence of 250,000 inhabitants of Balikpapan Bay, 80 percent of whom are fishermen. This concept can simultaneously be a solution in facing the threat of more severe environmental damage, increasing the economy of the local community and preserving the culture of the community. The direction of the development of Balikpapan Bay based on sustainable tourism is the Destination Management Organization (DMO).

**Keywords:** tourism, Balikpapan Bay, sustainable tourism

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The issue of sustainability and sustainable development has become an increasingly important issue for the 21st century. The concept of sustainability requires the conservation

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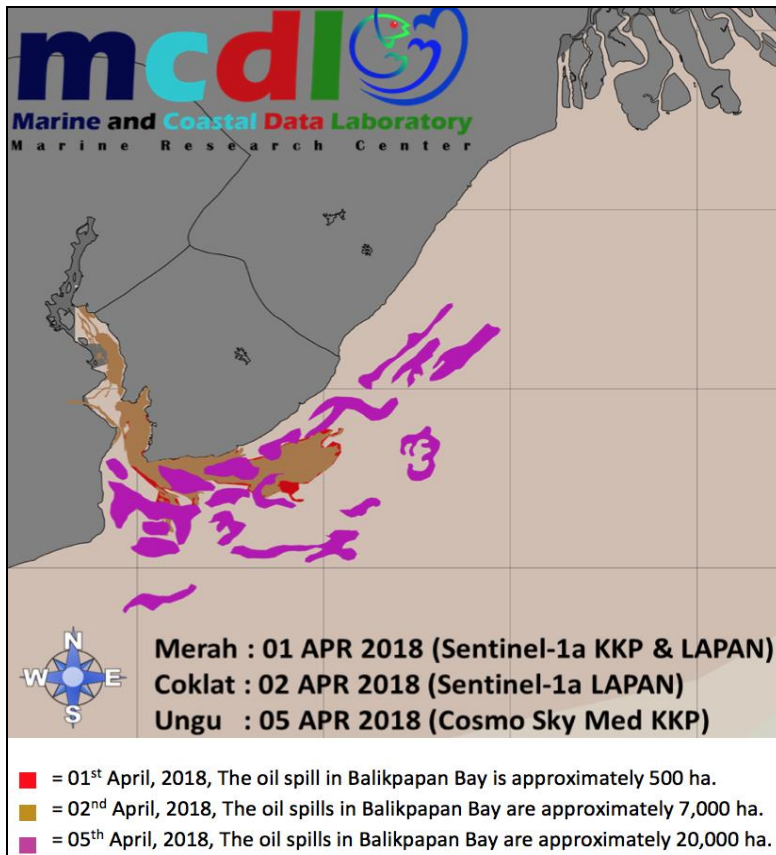
of resources and elements of equity for current and future generations. Moreover, now it can be concluded that there is international recognition of the need for sustainable development in all industrial sectors in the world. This recognition does not escape the tourism industry sector. Sustainable tourism development (STD) applies elements of sustainable development in the context of tourism and recent years has become a dominant paradigm (Hunter, 1995). In addition, the development of sustainable tourism has also become a strategic issue in every tourism development in each region (Alaeddinoglu & Can, 2011; Andreyanova & Ivolga, 2018; Aswita et al., 2018; Dymond, 1997), including the development of bay tourism (Nel & Binns, 2002; Pham, 2012; Stonich et al., 1995). Although many studies have revealed the importance of sustainable tourism development in the local region, studies of tourism development in the bay area (for example, tourism potential, development concepts, and policy directions) are still few and have not been explicitly discussed.

STD is often interpreted as a triangular interaction between host areas (including social and natural environments), tourists and the tourism industry (Lane, 1994; Müller, 1994). This concept gave birth to various sustainable development ideas such as responsible tourism, alternative tourism, soft tourism, minimum impact tourism, environmentally friendly tourism, and ecotourism (Lu & Nepal, 2009). Also, sustainable tourism includes conservation policies, pollution, the use of resources, tourism organizations (institutions), communities, tourists, the private sector and government (Laitamaki et al., 2016). In principle there are four basic principles for the concept of sustainability: (1) the idea of holistic planning and strategy making; (2) community involvement in each process; (3) cultural and environmental preservation then requires human inheritance and biodiversity and (4) development based on the idea that productivity can be maintained in the long term for future generations (UNDP, 2015). In essence, sustainable development is an integrated and organized effort to develop a quality of life by regulating the supply, development, utilization, and maintenance of resources in a sustainable manner (Zolfani et al., 2015). The concept will be well implemented if a good governance system involves active and balanced participation between the government, the private sector, and the community. Thus, sustainable development is not only related to environmental issues but also issues of democracy, human rights, and other broader issues. In fact (Edvardsson & Enquist, 2008) requires some requirements that must be met to ensure the sustainability of tourism, namely tourists have the willingness to consume tourism services and products selectively. The existence of Balikpapan Bay in the city of Balikpapan, East Kalimantan has the potential to lay the foundation for sustainable tourism management.

The bay, which has historical traces, community culture, natural resources, natural resources, is a great potential to make Balikpapan Bay the leading tourism destination in East Kalimantan. This is in line with East Kalimantan's vision of slowly leaving non-renewable natural resources as regional economic income. Balikpapan Bay region has a watershed area of around 211,456 ha and waters of 16,000 ha. 54 sub-watersheds are flowing into the bay, including one of the largest Sei Wain watersheds that have been designated as protected forest of the Balikpapan city government. Also, there are 31 small islands around it (Balikpapan, 2016). This description illustrates that Balikpapan Bay has the potential for local tourism development.

Also, Balikpapan Bay is also a vital economic point for East Kalimantan for export and import activities. A total of 5.130 ha has been transformed into the center of an industrial area known as the Kariangau Industrial Area (KIK), including the existence of an international container port. The development of this industrial area has threatened the local tourism ecosystem, for example, the native animal species of Borneo, the

Proboscis Monkey with the number reaching 1,400, representing 5% of yellow-haired primates throughout the world. Besides, there are also about ten species of primates and four types of marine mammals including Irrawaddy dolphins, most of which are found in Balikpapan Bay. Another potential is the existence of mangrove forests covering 2,189 ha (Hardjanto, 2015). Another threat is environmental pollution. Still fresh in our mind, at the end of March 2018, a major disaster occurred in the bay of Balikpapan. Spills of oil spills from Pertamina's pipeline under the seabed contaminate Balikpapan Bay with an area of up to 20,000 ha. This is generated from analysis of Cosmo Sky Med and Sentinel 1a radar satellite data on April 1, 2 and 5, 2018 (Figure 1) (Fajar, 2018).



**Figure 1.** The infographic of oil spill area in Balikpapan Bay, East Kalimantan (Source: Fajar, 2018)

Build this extensive database, and studies are needed to overcome the problem in this study specifically to develop local tourism in Balikpapan Bay. Thus, this study has the following objectives, namely: (1) to investigate the picture of tourism potential in Balikpapan Bay; (2) to analyze the concept of sustainable tourism development in Balikpapan Bay; (3) to analyze the direction of sustainable tourism management policies in Balikpapan Bay as a leading tourist destination.

This study will significantly provide a reference for stakeholders, especially the government of East Kalimantan, Balikpapan, Penajam Paser Utara and Kutai Kartanegara in managing and developing sustainable tourism in Balikpapan Bay.

## METHODS

The type of research in this study was a descriptive research method with a quantitative-qualitative approach. The researcher intended to describe the development of Balikpapan Bay based on sustainable tourism. The research setting was at Balikpapan Bay. Administratively, Balikpapan Bay is located in Balikpapan City, Penajam Paser Utara Region, and Kutai Kartanegara. The data collection technique and analysis were conducted through direct observations on the object of observation in biophysics data, social, economy, and culture which become the tourism object potential and attraction as well as resources in Balikpapan Bay. Besides, the distribution of questionnaires and interviews with officials were conducted, namely East Kalimantan Provincial Government, Balikpapan City Government, Penajam Paser Utara regency Government, Kutai Kartanegara District, PHRI, ASITA, Environmental NGOs, Universities, and communities around Balikpapan Bay and foreign tourists.

The results of data collection by identifying tourism potential then an empirical descriptive quantitative analysis was carried out to obtain a general picture of potential and tourist attraction. The methods in assessing the tourism potential and objects of tourist attraction were carried out using the assessment criteria that have been determined in the Guidelines for Appraising Objects and Attraction (Attar et al., 2013).

Furthermore, the data was calculated to obtain the score/value of tourism potential using the formula:  $S = N \times B$  Description:  $S$  = score/value,  $N$  = Number of values of elements - criteria,  $B$  = Weight value after obtaining the score each indicator was classified. The classification of assessment was arranged based on the readiness to develop tourism potential; highly potential, potential, less potential, not potential with the formulation of Interval:  $S_{\max} - S_{\min}$ : 3. Furthermore, for the development of Balikpapan Bay was analyzed using a SWOT analysis.

## RESULTS DISCUSSIONS

Geographically, the ecosystem of Balikpapan Bay region is located in three regencies namely Balikpapan City, Penajam Paser Utara Regency, and Kutai Kartanegara Regency. All are interconnected one and another. Penajam Paser Utara possesses Balikpapan Bay ecosystem area up to 80 percent, Balikpapan has 17 percent, and 3 percent belongs to Kutai Kartanegara. There are 42 villages from three regencies/cities in this region with a population of around 250 thousand. The people rely their lives on Balikpapan Bay through fishing, fish cages, crab fattening, and aquaculture (Makinuddin, 2010). Balikpapan Bay has waters area of 16.000 hectares. There live diverse endemic animals of Kalimantan such as *Pesut (Orcaella brevirostris)*, sea cow, dolphins, and seagrass. Also, there are also 31 small islands. In the bay margin, various mangrove plants grow with the area of 16.918 ha. Around 15.108 ha of land is located in the region of Penajam Paser Utara (PPU) Regency and 1.810 ha is located in Balikpapan City. The existence of mangrove gave livelihood for long-nosed monkeys or Bekantan (*Nasalis larvatus*) which are estimated to still number 1.400 (Mahdelany, 2015).

### Assessment of Tourism Potential and Object of Tourist Attraction

There are four criteria need to be met by a tourist attraction to be developed as a tourism destination such as attraction, accessibility, amenities, and institution (Trebicka, 2016). Similarly, Kauppila et al., (2009) stated that the factors that determine the development of a destination include attractions, amenities, and accessibility. These criteria were further developed by the Ministry of Forestry through the assessment of the component of tourism which included attraction, accessibility, amenities, and socio-economic conditions of the local community. This is in line with the sustainable tourism development which puts emphasize on three main aspects such

as environment, social, and economy. The results of questionnaire and interview on the potentials of Balikpapan Bay showed that there are several places which are potential to be tourist attraction such as small islands, sea cow, mangrove forest, Bekantan, and Gersik Fishermen's village as concluded in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The Assessment Results of Balikpapan Bay's components of tourism  
(Data source: The processed primary data, 2018)

Variable	Max Score	Min Score	Interval	Appropriateness Criteria	Total Score	Descriptions
Attraction	1080	360	240	Appropriate: 840-1080 Not yet appropriate: 600-840 Inappropriate: <600	900	Appropriate
Accessibility	750	375	125	Appropriate: 625-750 Not yet appropriate: 500-625 Inappropriate: <500	620	Inappropriate
Amenities	180	60	40	Appropriate: 140 - 180 Not yet appropriate: 100 -140 Inappropriate: <100	180	Appropriate
Infrastructure and Facilities	300	60	80	Appropriate: 220-300 Not yet appropriate: 140-220 Inappropriate: <140	300	Appropriate
Utility Network	360	120	80	Appropriate: 220-300 Not yet appropriate: 140-220 Inappropriate: <140	360	Appropriate

### Tourist Attractions

The variable of tourist attraction in Table 1 has the value of 900 from the maximum value of 1080. It means that regarding the attractiveness of Balikpapan Bay, it is very feasible or potential to be visited by tourists because tourism is the primary motivation for tourists to pay tourist visits (Ćorluka et al., 2016). The attraction is the initial capital that allows visitors to come (Attar et al., 2013). The same thing was confirmed by Kauppila et al. (2009) that the main factors that drive tourists to visit tourist destinations are tourist attractions. The element in the tourist attraction variable which has the highest value was the uniqueness of natural resources, the large number of natural resources that stand out, natural tourism activities, and comfort has a maximum value of 180. Respondents give this assessment by the condition of Balikpapan Bay which has desirable natural resources and wealth Such as Pesut (*Orcaella brevirostris*), dolphins, and seagrass. There are 31 beautiful small islands around Balikpapan Bay (untouched) and grown with 18 varieties of mangroves with an area of 16,918 ha. Also, it is inhabited by 1,400 Bekantan (Mahdelany, 2015).

From the perspective of history and culture, Balikpapan Bay becomes an essential part of the establishment of Balikpapan. The element of cleanliness and security are

assessed poorly by the respondents with the score of 75. This is because environmental pollution keeps occurring in Balikpapan Bay. While for the element of security, respondents considered encroachment on mangroves by the people around Balikpapan Bay had not stopped. Mangrove areas are converted into aquacultures and charcoal products. The changes in conservation land status into industrial land were done by local governments from 2,150 ha to 5,130 ha. There is no wonder that there is a horizontal conflict between the company and society with regional government.

### **Accessibility**

According to March (2004), accessibility refers to the convenience that can be obtained by the visitors in making the trips and entering a location. Two of the several factors that make an area attractive to visitors is the distance between tourist sites and international airports (whether close or far) and access to travel to tourist attractions whether easy and convenient or difficult. The assessment results on accessibility variable in Table 1 only gained the score of 620 which belongs to the category of inappropriate or not potential. The docking element is rated as the lowest by respondents from the five elements. This is due to the unavailability of individual piers made by stakeholders-local governments in facilitating tourist access to the Balikpapan Bay area. Travelers only use the Balikpapan ferry pier-Penajam Paser Utara in two places, Kampung Baru, and Semayang. The same thing happened at Penajam Paser Utara (PPU). Meanwhile, the road condition, distance, types of road, and traveling time from the downtown have the highest score. Balikpapan has an international airport Sultan Aji Muhammad Sulaiman Spinggan which only takes 30 minutes to Balikpapan Bay port with asphalt roads.

### **Accommodations**

The accommodation is something provided to fulfill the necessity, for example, a place to stay or a temporary residence for travelers (Trebicka, 2016). The commercial accommodations in the tourism field aimed are looking for profits by offering products or services to the tourists to gain profit. The result of data analysis on the accommodation variable in Table 1, respondents gave the maximum score of 180 categorized into appropriate. Two sub-elements in the accommodation assessment are the availability of hotels/inns and the number of rooms. This is in line with the condition of Balikpapan as a city of services, trade, and tourism. Data from the East Kalimantan Provincial Tourism Office, (2016) the number of hotels/inns in Balikpapan is 64 units with the number of rooms in total is 5319. The details are, 5-star hotels; 3 units (594 rooms), 4-star hotels; 7 units (1278 rooms), 3-star hotels; 12 units (1581 rooms), 2-star hotels; 3 units (150 rooms), 1-star hotels; 6 units (329 rooms), and non-star hotel 35 unit (1387 rooms).

### **Facilities and Infrastructure**

The destination facilities/ amenities are elements in a destination or associated with a destination that allows tourists to stay in the destination to enjoy or participate in the attractions offered (Martins, 2018). The destination facilities can be restaurants, cafés, and bars, including transportation and taxi rental services, as well as other services including shops, salon, information center, and others. The result of facilities and infrastructure variable in Table 1 belongs to the appropriate/ potential category with a score of 300. Respondents' assessment of facilities and infrastructure as shown in Table 1 shows that the facilities and infrastructure are available around the Balikpapan Bay tourist destination area. The aspects included in the facilities are the post office, health services, telephone network, and electricity network. The element in infrastructure, restaurant, shopping center, travel service, shop, café, karaoke and pub, souvenir shop, bank, and public transportation.

Based on the Tourism Office's data in East Kalimantan Province (Dinas, 2016), Balikpapan has the second most restaurants in East Kalimantan after Samarinda 981

units, food service enterprises 23 units, travel agencies 195 units, and gallery 16 units. The number of services gives direct convenience to the tourists.

### **Utility Network**

Utility network becomes an essential part in developing a tourism area in a region. The utility network in this research consists of three sub-elements namely the electricity network, telephone network, and a clean water network. The respondents assessed the utility network variable in Table 1 is very potent with the score of 360. Balikpapan Bay has become one of the sources of drinking water for the people of Balikpapan city, that is, the existence of the Wain River protected the forest. Since 1972 this freshwater has been used by state-owned companies-Pertamina for operational activities and employees with an average water use of 450-750 m<sup>3</sup> per hour or  $\pm$  25% of the total volume of freshwater commonly used by all households in Balikpapan (Rizkiyah, Sugianto, & Purwanto, 2016). This means the water in Balikpapan Bay is available for tourists if it is well-managed.

### **SWOT Analysis**

The results of tourist attraction in the Balikpapan Bay showed in Table 1 were combined with the results of interview and observation to be further analyzed using SWOT. This was conducted to find out further about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges of Balikpapan Bay at present and in the future.

#### **Strengths**

Balikpapan Bay has unique natural resources which do not exist in other bay areas in Indonesia. There live various flora and fauna. Balikpapan Bay is a habitat of Proboscis monkey (*Nasalis larvatus*) and contributes to five percent of the population from around the world which is estimated at 20-25 thousand individuals. There live more than 100 other types of animals such as the Kalimantan orangutan (*Pongo pygmaeus*), Kalimantan Owa (*Hylobates muelleri*), freshwater dolphins (*Orcaella brevirostris*), sea cow (*Dugong dugon*), to sun bears (*Helarctos malayanus*). There are more than 300 species of birds in this area namely Tokhtor Kalimantan (*Carpococcyx radiceus radiceus*) and Storm Stork (*Ciconia stormi*) (Fajar, 2018).

For Flora, Balikpapan Bay region is a primary tropical forest, regeneration of secondary tropical rainforests, mangrove forests, swamps, rocky lands, coral reefs, seaweed, and shallow seas. The secondary forest that connects these forest boundaries with other vital forests is the conservation area of the Soeharto Hill forest to the northeast and Mount Meratus to the southwest. The ecosystem of waters connects Makassar Strait to the east. From the aspects of social and cultural, around 250.000 local people reside on the Balikpapan Bay coastal and making the Balikpapan Bay as the primary source of livelihood in which most of them are fishermen. There are five traditional fishing villages namely Gersik, Jenebora, Lango Beach, Maridan, and Mentawir with the uniqueness of each village. Regarding accessibility, Balikpapan Bay is supported by Sultan Aji Muhammad Sulaiman Sepinggan Balikpapan International Airport with a distance of about 30 minutes. The availability of hotels, restaurants, and touristic service facilities are complete in Balikpapan city.

#### **Weaknesses**

The development of industry and palm tree plantation in coastal and upstream areas in Balikpapan Bay gives adverse effects on the ecosystem sustainability in the future. Not to mention the existence of environmental pollution, forest destruction, sedimentation. Especially with the existence of the Balikpapan city government policy to increase the extent of the Kariangau Industrial Area (KIA) so that the existence of Balikpapan Bay as a strategic and high-value area can be degraded quickly and uncontrollably. Also, concerning accessibility issue includes unavailability of a particular port and specially-designed boats for the tourist.

### **Opportunities**

The number of local tourist visits to East Kalimantan in 2016 reaching 5 million people and 2.3 million people was visiting Balikpapan. There were 24 thousand foreign tourists who visited East Kalimantan, and 9.223 people visited Balikpapan. The high interest in visiting East Kalimantan is the primary capital in creating tourism as a new attraction. About 70 percent of the interest in tourist visits is ecotourism, which is visiting the island of Derawan, Maratua, Sangalaki. The rest can be visiting Kutai National Park, Gersik Luwai, and Bukit Bengkirai as well as Samboja Lodge Research Center/ Borneo Orangutan Survival (BOS).

### **Challenges**

The threats to Balikpapan Bay in the future are there is a transfer of land functions from protected areas to plantation cultivation areas, aquaculture, agriculture, and residential area. The increased population has implications for the space required. The threats to transfer livelihoods as a result of overtaking space functions, poor conditions of residential infrastructure (clean water, drainage, and waste coverage), low quality of human resources, and water pollution due to the factory and household waste disposal. The threat to rare animal's lives (Pesut and sea cow) includes the silting of the estuary, especially the one used as a boat shipping channel. There is a tendency to open mangrove areas for aquaculture, industrial and residential areas, and other activities. The society's behavior often damages the conservational region and also the construction of a new building and residences which exceeds the coastal boundaries (Balikpapan, 2016).

### **Development of Balikpapan Bay Based on Sustainable Tourism**

Sustainable tourism implied that the growth of the economy and the conservation of environmental quality had strengthened each other. The essence of this form of development is a stable relationship between human and natural activities, which does not decrease the prospect of future generation to enjoy the quality of life at least as best as we do. Based on the analysis above, Balikpapan Bay can be developed as ecotourism area in which a part of the development of sustainable tourism. Ecotourism is one type of sustainable tourism that makes the community as the main subject which in principle conserves and utilizes the nature and culture of local communities and as a means of educating tourists. It is expected that in practice there will be environmental and cultural sustainability, not only on objects or attractions but when tourists return to their place of origin. On the economic aspect, it can improve the economy of local people and regional government through locally-generated revenue (LGR) since there is a large-scale employment opportunity.

### **Management Policy of Balikpapan Bay**

Balikpapan Bay has complex problems with substantial natural potentials. Geographically, it is included in three regions which are Penajam Paser Utara, Balikpapan, Kutai Kartanegara. Therefore, in realizing as a tourism-based tourist attraction, the implementation of policies can be implemented through the concept of Destination Management Organization (DMO). DMO is an integrated tourism management system that has the completeness as a system (Gryszel, 2010). With the application of this concept all elements can be involved in the management of Balikpapan Bay, starting from the community, the government of three regions, Penajam Paser Utara, Balikpapan, Kutai Kartanegara, East Kalimantan Province, Ministry of Tourism, private elements incorporated in PHRI, ASITA and companies operating in the Gulf Balikpapan, Universities and NGOs. The involvement of all parties is expected to be able to contribute to the regional development. As stated by Kim, Jang, & Morrison (2011) the completeness of DMO can be the economic driver, community marketer, industry coordinator, quasi-public representative, builder of community pride with an improvement in the quality of life.



## CONCLUSION

Principally, Balikpapan Bay is highly appropriate to be developed as a leading tourism object in East Kalimantan. The assets owned by Balikpapan Bay can be used as nature-based tourism, ecotourism, marine tourism, community-based tourism, or bay tourism which combines natural and aquatic elements. The concept is a part of sustainable tourism. At the policy level, the concept of Destination Management Organization can be applied by involving all elements and forming an integrated institution.

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## **TOURISM EVENT: PERCEPTIONS ON THE CRITICAL INDICATORS OF CLIMATE VARIABILITY AND CHANGE IN MALAYSIA**

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**Abstract:** The main purpose of the study was to investigate the perceptions on critical indicators of climate variability and change in the context of tourism event. Four indicators were identified namely, awareness and information sharing, policy and regulatory framework, added economic value and effective communication. To further explore and understand the perceptions, the method of the study involved a number of 57 event program students at the University Utara Malaysia as respondents. The findings indicated that they highly agreed to all four indicators as vital indicators of climate variability and change which need to be taken into account during conducting the tourism event. The findings highlighted that the effective communication is perceived as the most critical indicator whilst the added economic value is perceived as the least indicator of climate variability and change. The study suggested that further research should be undertaken with more number of respondents and also investigating the event organizers' perceptions on the critical indicators due to the fact that they are business oriented and would significantly consider the impacts of the event during climate variability and change.

**Key words:** Tourism event, critical indicators, climate variability and change, perceptions

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Event or special event is defined by Getz (2005) as a one-time or infrequently occurring event outside the normal range of choices or beyond everyday experiences. According to Roche (1994), a special event refers to a large-scale leisure event that is held over a relatively short period, but has long-term consequences for the destination. Additionally, Getz (2005) has also developed a typology of tourism event, which includes touring attractions and community festivals as well as business, sports, education, religious, and political events. Further, he stressed that local events that chiefly draw residents and local people are at the bottom of the hierarchy, whereas regional events with drawing power to entice both local residents and overseas visitors are on the middle of the scale. The importance of climate variability and change to tourism event has been highlighted in several literatures, in fact several studies on climate variability and change have indicated that they appear to be low levels of concern and little evidence of long-term strategic planning in anticipation of future changes in climate particularly in the context of tourism stakeholders decision making such as investors, insurance companies, tourism enterprises, governments, and tourists (Elsasser & Bürki, 2002; Gossling & Hall, 2006; Scott, 2006; Becken & Hay, 2007). Kaján & Saarinen (2013) highlights that more studies have focused over the past 15 years on the issue of adaptation of climate change in tourism. Additionally, a study related to climate change in the aviation industry has noted that climate change might influence the decisions to take holidays by air (Dickinson et al., 2013).

### **Problem Statement**

Even though the perceptions of climate variability and change impacts in a region are often heavily influenced by the nature of media coverage, the response of tourists to the complexity of destination impacts will reshape demand patterns and play a vital role in the eventual impacts of climate change on the tourism industry. In Malaysia, the climate variability and change would raise the temperature up to 2°C and with more extreme hydrological conditions such as higher maximum and minimum of rainfall and river flow (Tiong, 2009).

These would significantly lead to water sufficiency, food security, economic loss and infrastructure construction. Even though there are few studies on climate variability and change in the tourism industry, limited studies on tourism event have been conducted. Therefore, it is vital particularly to investigate the critical indicators which might influence the success of tourism event during climate variability and change.

### **Research Objective**

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the perceptions on critical indicators of climate variability and change in the context of tourism event. Four indicators were identified namely; awareness and information sharing, policy and regulatory framework, added economic value and effective communication.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Changes in temperatures and other climatic features will vary globally (IPCC 2007). It is very likely that hot extremes, heat waves and heavy precipitation events will continue to become more frequent. Another study by Tol (2007) and Gossling et al. (2008) have considered the effect on tourist flows of more specific variables related to (but not part of) climate change, such as the air transport eco-tax. Most research concludes that climate is an important consideration for tourists' destination decisions and climatic variables can explain tourists' flows. Glover (2010) has studied on the factors that most strongly related to Kaizen event sustainability and found that Kaizen Event Characteristics, Work Area Characteristics, and Post-Event Characteristics are

indicators to Kaizen event Sustainability Outcomes. Additionally, a study has been conducted by Schütter (2010) on the success factors of a leading meeting industry destination. The findings identified several general success factors which include easy accessibility; good infrastructure in terms of meetings facilities, public transportation and accommodation; branding and right image building of a destination; good marketing activities; beneficial networking possibilities; attractive cultural offer; stability, security and quality of living of the destination; understanding of association patterns and to be home to corporate headquarters.

Previously, Burger and Saayman (2009) have conducted a study in South Africa on the key success factors in managing conference centre. It is highlighted in their study that six factors show some similarities to similar research conducted in other sectors of the tourism industry namely activities and layout, marketing, operational aspects, planning, design and evaluation and human resources. Cashman et al. (2012) have concluded in their study that climate change had increased the operating costs and competition of water resources for tourism in Barbados.

### **METHODOLOGY**

For the purpose of investigating the perceptions of critical indicators of climate variability and change, the study was targeted to final year students from the Event Management Program, School of Tourism, Hospitality and Event Management at the Universiti Utara Malaysia. They were selected based on the fact that all final year students taking Event Management Program had conducted at least an event as their projects. Hence, they had been exposed to the critical indicators. There were a total of 57 final year students taking Event Management Program by December 2017. The questionnaire for this study was adopted and adapted from previous literature relating to the topic for instance Cserhádi and Polák-Weldon (2010), Burger and Saayman (2009) and Glover (2010). Data gained from the survey were analysed for descriptive statistics using a Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 19.0 created by SPSS.

### **FINDINGS**

#### **The Respondents' Profiles**

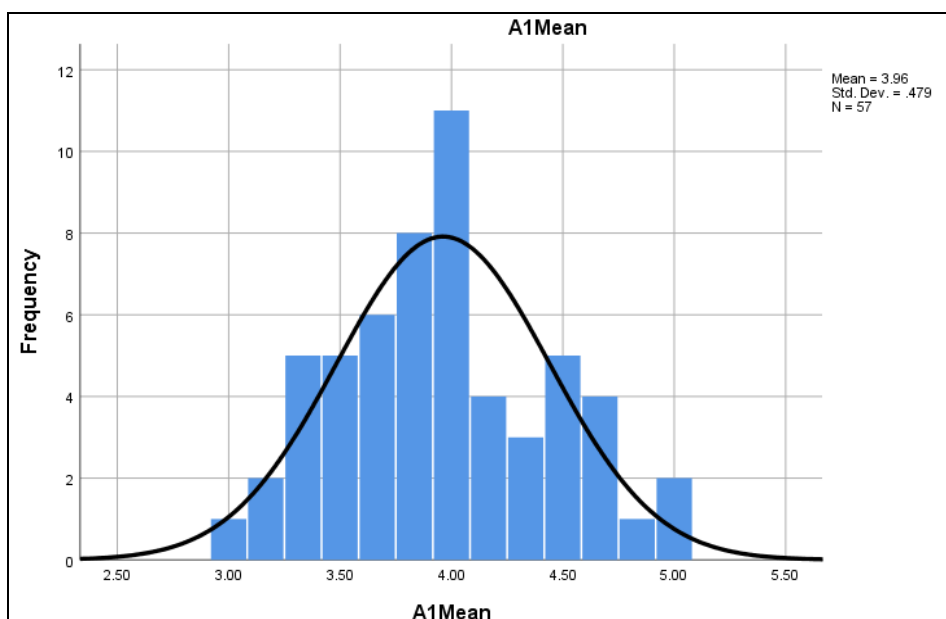
Most of the respondents had conducted less than 3 projects in a year (49.1%) and only few had conducted between 3 to 5 projects in a year (22.8%). Majority of them had conducted an educational project in tourism (42.1%) with only a small proportion conducted a project on training (3.5%). The findings also indicated that most of the respondents had participated in a team consisted of more than 10 people (70.2%). Majority of the respondents also stated that they had managed tourism project of less than 1 year (78.9%) and the remaining had experienced in managing the project between 1 to 5 years (21.1%).

#### **Perceptions on the Awareness and Information Sharing**

All the six items of awareness and information sharing were highly agreed by the respondents as critical indicator of climate variability and change to tourism event (Table 1). Majority of the respondents agreed (45.6%) and strongly agreed (40.4%) that it is vital to inform the participants regarding the potential benefits of the tourism event. In fact, most of them also agreed that it is vital to educate the participants of the potential benefits (56.1%). The findings also noted that majority of the respondents agreed (59.6%) that having an efficient information exchange system for the tourism event is important during climate variability and change. Only few respondents slightly disagreed that it is vital to focus on the establishment of low cost (5.2%) and high benefit utility sharing (2.0%). Figure 1 presents the distribution of the findings based on histogram chart.

**Table 1.** Awareness and Information Sharing

No.	Items	Percentage (%)			
		Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Informing the participants regarding the potential benefits that can be achieved.	0	14.0	45.6	40.4
2	Educating the participants of the potential benefits that can be achieved.	0	12.3	56.1	31.6
3	Vital to have an efficient information exchange system.	0	19.3	59.6	21.1
4	Vital to focus on the high benefit utility sharing.	2.0	26.0	50.9	21.1
5	Vital to implement a transparent information exchange system.	0	36.8	50.9	12.3
6	Vital to focus on the establishment of low cost.	5.2	40.4	40.4	14.0



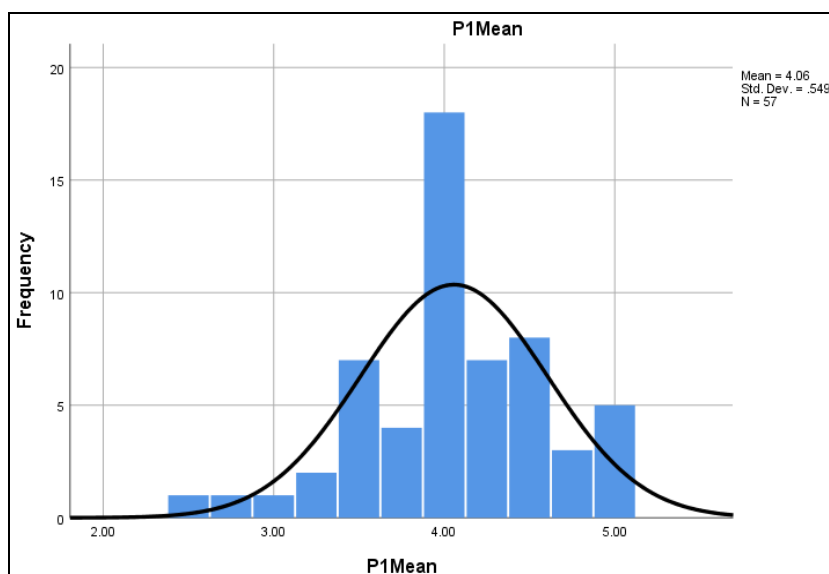
**Figure 1.** The Histogram Chart on the Awareness and Information Sharing

**Perceptions on the Policy and Regulatory Framework**

The findings further indicated that all the four items of policy and regulatory framework were positively perceived by the respondents as critical aspects of climate variability and change to tourism event (Table 2). Most of the respondents agreed that it is vital to create appropriate conditions (66.7%) and to identify opportunities (63.0%) for tourism event through the policy intervention. Only few of the respondents disagreed with both statements. Additionally the respondents also agreed that the implementation of policies and rules and also the enforcement of environmental laws are important for tourism even during climate variability and change (44.0%). Figure 2 presents the distribution of the findings based on histogram chart.

**Table 2.** Policy and Regulatory Framework

No.	Items	Percentage (%)			
		Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Implementation of the policies and rules of organization.	1.0	16.0	44.0	39.0
2	Enforcement of environmental laws by the government agencies.	3.0	18.0	44.0	35.0
3	Opportunities identification through policy intervention.	2.0	14.0	63.0	21.0
4	Creation of appropriate conditions through policy intervention.	3.5	15.8	66.7	14.0



**Figure 2.** The Histogram Chart on the Policy and Regulatory Framework

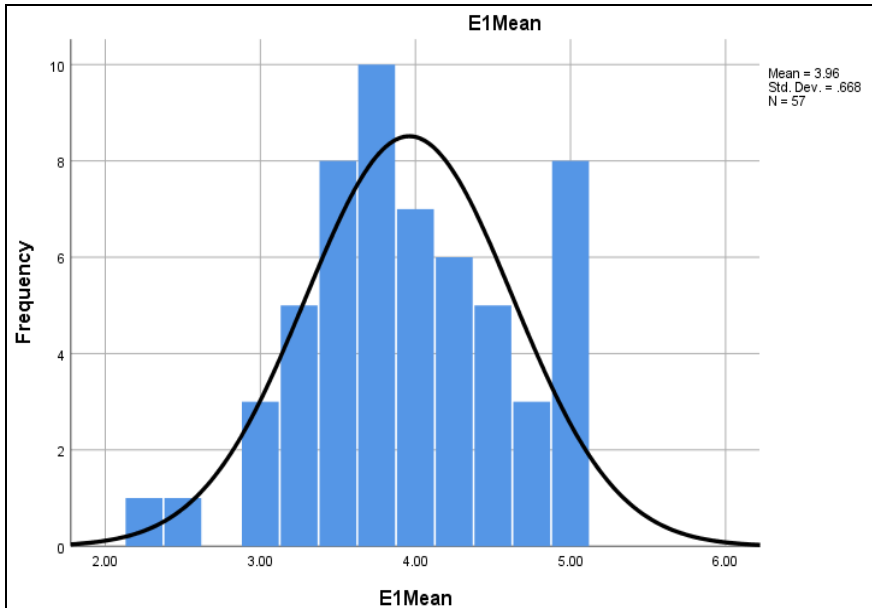
**Table 3.** Added Economic Value

No.	Items	Percentage (%)			
		Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Involvement of other parties.	3.5	19.3	43.9	33.3
2	Organizer willingness to invest time.	3.5	21.1	45.6	29.8
3	Organizer willingness to invest other resources.	3.5	26.3	38.6	31.6
4	Organizer willingness to invest money.	7.0	33.3	35.1	24.6

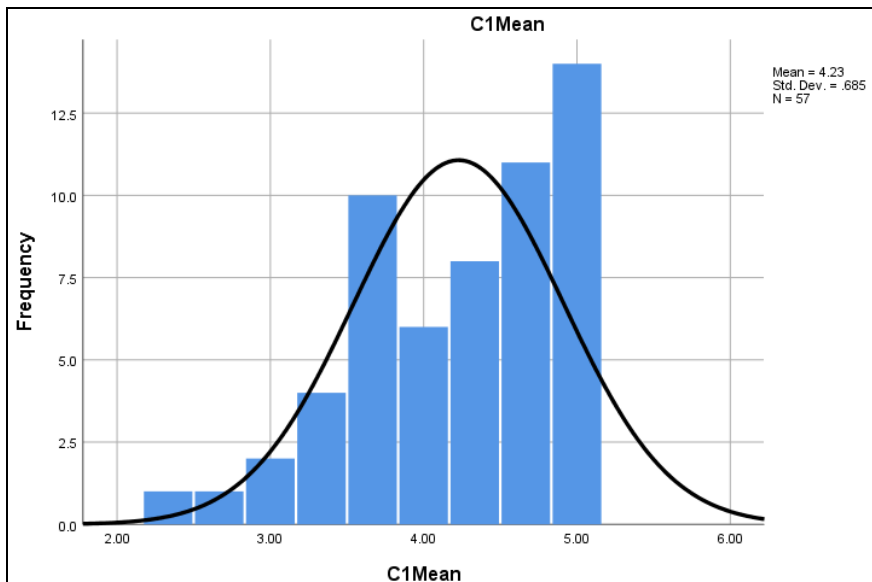
**Perceptions on the Added Economic Value**

Further, Table 3 depicts the findings regarding added economic value as critical indicator of climate variability and change to tourism event. The findings noted that most of the respondents agreed that the tourism event organizer willingness to invest time would add economic value to the program (45.6%). Similarly, most of them also agreed

that the involvement of other parties in the tourism program is vital in adding economic value to the program during the climate variability and change. Figure 3 presents the distribution of the findings based on histogram chart.



**Figure 3.** The Histogram Chart on the Added Economic Value



**Figure 4.** The Histogram Chart on the Effective Communication

**Perceptions on the Effective Communication**

Further, Table 4 presents the findings of three aspects in the effective communication. It can be seen that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that event



organizer should provide clear communication objectives and have constant communication during the climate variability and change (49.1%). Additionally, the findings also indicated that most of the respondents strongly agreed that using formal and frequent communication tools is important during the climate variability and change (33.3%). Figure 4 presents the distribution of the findings based on histogram chart.

**Table 4.** Effective Communication

No.	Items	Percentage (%)			
		Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Providing clear communication objectives.	3.5	7.0	40.4	49.1
2	Having constant communication.	0	14.0	37.0	49.0
3	Using formal and frequent communication tools.	5.3	22.8	38.6	33.3

### Overall Perceptions on the Critical Indicators

Table 5 depicts the findings of the mean value for all the four indicators. It was noted that the effective communication derived as the most critical indicator of climate variability and change to tourism event ( $m = 4.2281$ ) whilst the added economic value derived as the least critical indicator ( $m = 3.9605$ ).

**Table 5.** Mean Value of the Critical Indicators

Critical Indicators	Mean Value
Effective communication	4.2281
Policy and regulatory framework value	4.0570
Awareness and information sharing	3.9620
Added economic value	3.9605

### DISCUSSION

The findings have fulfilled the main objective of the study as stated in the earlier part of the report. It can be concluded that four major aspects are significantly considered by the respondents as critical indicators of climate variability and change to tourism event namely awareness and information sharing, policy and regulatory framework, added economic value and effective communication. The findings of the study showed that the most critical indicator is the effective communication, followed by the policy and regulatory framework and the awareness and information sharing. The added economic value is considered by the respondents as the least indicator which may also provide greater impact to tourism event.

During an event, it is important to consider the effective communication among all the stakeholders involved in the event program. The study significantly found that effective communication is essential for successful event during the climate variability and change. This is in line with previous study by Cserháti and Polák-Weldon (2010) which indicated that cooperation and communication among the stakeholders are two important aspects in determining the successful of sporting event.

The current study also indicated that the policy and regulatory framework is another critical indicator of climate variability and change to tourism event. As highlighted by Gibbs and Deutz (2007), the factor should be designed and implemented to play an enabling role in determining the success of an event thus in relation to the

current study, this factor is considered essential particularly to the event organizer in order to plan and manage the event programs during climate variability and change. The policy makers should set standard regulations or principles which must be followed by the event organizer to avoid unnecessary situation which usually may happen during climate variability and change. In line with the study by Sakr et al., (2011), the factor plays vital role in determining the success of environmental strategies based on innovative policy tools for the eco-industrial park in Egypt.

Additionally, the awareness and information sharing which derived as the third vital indicator is also significant to the previous study by Sakr et al., (2011). The indicator is found to play important role not just among the participants but also to the audience so that any impacts which may occur during the climate variability and change would be alert and further problems could be avoided. Also in line with Lowe (2001) suggestion, the awareness and information sharing could be performed through networking with key individuals and organizations, conducting workshops or conferences and having informative websites. More, the awareness and information sharing is also essential as it would assist the company to find suitable business and sharing of tools and resources within the community (Heeres et al., 2004).

Consistent to the study by Sakr et al., (2011) which indicated the added economic value as the second important critical factors for eco-industrial park, it is also seen as another vital critical indicator to successful event programs in tourism during climate variability and change. Even though it was considered as the least critical indicator, it is still considered as important aspect which need to be gained by all the parties involved including trust and cooperation (Gibbs & Deutz, 2007). In the case of the current study, the added economic value can also be gained through the fund sponsored by the university since most event programs were related to the students activities within the university itself.

### **Implications of the Study**

The findings would assist the stakeholders particularly the event organizers in the tourism industry to have better information regarding the critical indicators of climate variability and change which may provide greater impacts to the event programs. Identification of four major critical indicators namely the awareness and information sharing, policy and regulatory framework, added economic value and effective communication would significantly guide the event organizers to plan and manage better event programs in tourism particularly in preparing for the event participants and audiences.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

The study only focused on the students of Event Program with the assumption that they had conducted several event programs related to tourism. More, the study was only limited to the students conducting event programs in tourism surrounding the campus of Universiti Utara Malaysia. Other stakeholders' perceptions such as the event organizer and the tourism planners should be taken into account for further study in order to have better understanding regarding the critical indicators.

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## **MEASURING HOLIDAY SATISFACTION OF AMERICAN TOURISTS VISITING THE DEAD SEA IN JORDAN**

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**Abstract:** This article is written in the context of the tourism industry. The research purpose is to examine the satisfaction of tourism in terms of different factors related to the destination. The Dead Sea of Jordan was selected as the destination and American tourists were the study participants. Three factors related to the destination services were used for determining the satisfaction level of American tourists. The three factors include services related to accommodation, facilities at destination and services related to the travel agency. Further, the elements of these factors help in evaluating the satisfaction level of American tourists. The data was collected with the designed questionnaire distributed among American tourists by different travel agencies. The data gathered was analyzed using SPSS, which includes distribution of frequency, analysis of regression, t-test and analysis of factors. The findings of the research showed that elements related to the services of accommodation, services of travel agency and facilities at the Dead Sea were the strongest predictor of the satisfaction level of American tourists in Jordan. The scores of the mean for these three factors and their elements were above the neutral (unbiased) point. These statistical results confirm that American tourists were highly satisfied with their vacation at the Dead Sea, in terms of services provided and facilities available at the Dead Sea in Jordan. This paper provides insights about increasing the satisfaction level of tourists. It assists the tourism and hospitality market to increase the satisfaction level of tourists by focusing on the three mentioned factors in the paper.

**Keywords:** American Tourists, Tourist Perception, Jordan, Dead Sea, Tourist Satisfaction

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Davenport (2006) stated that tourism is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest industry in the world and it depends on the strong connection between the industry and the tourist. Tourism is ever growing and this is supported by the United Nation World Tourism Organization (2018) which stated that there were more than 1 billion tourists in 2017 with a total 1.5 US\$ trillion expenditure, making up for 10% of the world's GDP. However, competitiveness in the tourism market has grown immensely globally as more countries compete for the tourist dollars. The more popular types of tourism are sustainable tourism and responsible tourism which works to meet the needs of tourists and the destination countries while protecting and enhancing future opportunities for the industry (The United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2018).

The demand for international tourism is increasing and will continue to increase in tandem with the per capita income of countries. However, with the increase in the demand for international tourism, there have been great developments in that sector as well (Aktas et al., 2009; Carvache et al., 2018). This factor has increased the competitive level among different tourist destinations and therefore, creating better experiences for tourists. The tourism market's competitive level pushes the industry to provide better services to maintain the satisfaction of tourists, which in turn, leads to better marketing and funds. The fundamental element that the travel and tourism industry should consider is the satisfaction level of tourists which is important as satisfied visitors spread positive word of mouth and tend to visit the same destination again (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). Tourists visit locations globally but this paper will only focus on tourists visiting Jordan. The tourists to Jordan are from many countries but the main focus of this article is strictly American tourists since they are the largest group of tourists coming to Jordan (Jordan Tourism Board, 2017).

This paper will provide statistical information on American visitors. The Dead Sea of Jordan is a particularly popular area as it provides the three important factors which will be discussed in detail throughout this paper. Furthermore, the success of tourism management of destination is also measured by three main elements as advocated by Jang and Feng (2007) who state that the three elements that increase the level of satisfaction of tourists are (1) the main reason that attract tourists to select the particular destination over others; (2) the available activities for tourists and (3) the extraordinary services or products he/she receives. Similarly, many other factors are also considered in satisfying tourists like entertainment, food, accommodation, transportation and other general services. As per the study of (Poon & Low, 2005), there are many other services associated with the industry of tourism such as travel agencies, transportation services and other service centers providing many facilities to tourists. This paper helps in understanding the perception and satisfaction level of American tourists visiting the Dead Sea in Jordan. The attributes of the Dead Sea are also discussed. First, the literature review is discussed to understand the theoretical viewpoint related to the satisfaction and perception of the tourists. This is followed by the scientific study that is conducted to understand the satisfaction level and perception of American tourists visiting the Dead Sea in Jordan. Lastly, this paper will be concluded with a discussion on results and implications for the tourism industry in Jordan.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The services that consumers actually receive or experience determine the level of satisfaction. As such, satisfaction becomes the main concern in the service industry, in

particular the tourism market. It is considered an important indicator that determines the performance of a particular destination and creates a competitive edge in the globalised world where no secret may stay a secret. According to (Confente, 2015) tourism industry and other service-providing industries focus mainly on the satisfaction of their consumers due to the severe competition that arises from the latest trends in terms of consumer preferences and technological advancements. The theory for satisfaction is derived from Oliver's (1980) cognitive model where consumer satisfaction is expressed as a function of expectation and expectancy disconfirmation. This is based on the constructs of expectations, perceived performance and disconfirmation of beliefs that may influence consumer satisfaction. Similarly, Aktas et al., 2009, defined satisfaction as "the outcome of the evaluation of consumer related to the service provided that is based on the perception of the consumer and the previous expectations of the consumer". In this aspect, consumer expectation and their expectancy disconfirmation are the two elements that can bring success for the hospitality market. If the services provided are according to the expectations of the consumer or it exceeds the expectation then it is considered that consumers are satisfied. In this case there will be positive disconfirmation whereby it is more likely that consumers will avail the services again and recommend them to others since their post-purchase satisfaction has been enhanced (Johnston & Clark, 2005; Tuna, 2006; Thompson & Schofield, 2007).

The satisfaction level of consumers may be influenced by many factors especially for heritage tourism where the marketing mix of product, price, promotion and place play a major role in determining the success or failure of the tourism product (Wang & Qu, 2007; Donohoe et al., 2011). Where heritage tourism is concerned, the need to protect the heritage for the stakeholders exists (Matlovičová & Husárová, 2017) and this brings up the tendency to study the market which is brought to the product (Boyd & Timothy, 2006). That is the tourists, in the form of tourist market, are brought to the tourism product of heritage areas. In order to differentiate between the available heritage and cultural advantage from those offered by competitors, there is a need to use the elements of local heritage and identity in a responsible manner and at the same time to distinguish its uniqueness (Domsic, 2013; Mercede et al., 2017). According to Donohoe et al., 2011, the product refers to both tangible and intangible services for the consumers.

Hence, the services available for consumers must be planned and administered in the manner that provides the highest satisfaction for the consumers. Given that price, promotion and place can be offered by many service providers suitably, the importance of tourist satisfaction must be carefully scrutinised by stakeholders to ensure optimal tourist satisfaction to maintain the competitive edge over its competitors.

The future and survival of any tourism services or products depend on the satisfaction of tourists, making it a popular topic in the field of tourism and hospitality (Gursoy et al., 2003). Meanwhile (Baker & Crompton, 2000) defined satisfaction of tourists as "the emotional condition of a tourist after experiencing the particular trip". In this way, measuring the satisfaction level of a tourist is a post-consumption procedure (Kozak, 2001). Besides, a satisfied customer is in itself the biggest asset for any tourism provider. In contrast, a dissatisfied customer is also a jilted customer. Herein runs the risk of 'jilt' where the products delivered do not commensurate with what that have been promised or advertised (Aaron et al., 2017).

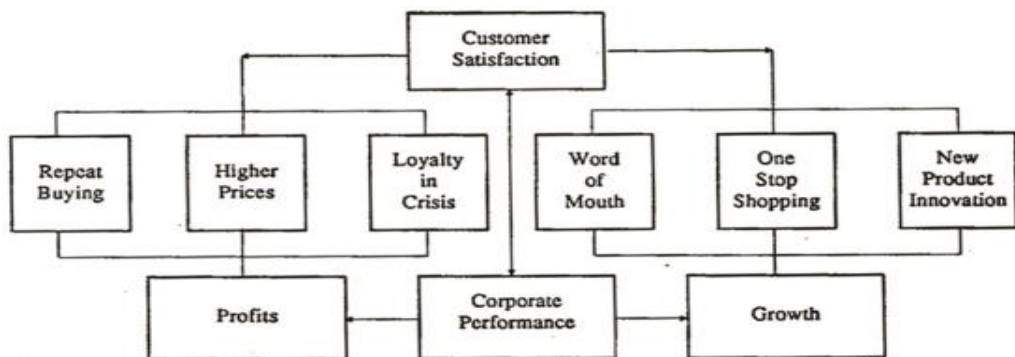
Hence, tourism industry players must also focus on the products they have pledged to offer and to provide for customers satisfactorily. This necessitates a 'post-consumption' procedure to evaluate the services provided at the particular destination and the satisfaction level of tourists. Therefore, measuring the satisfaction level provides the constructs for identifying and improving the services of tourism

destinations (Fornell, 1992; Hassan & Shahnewaz, 2014). In the tourism industry, the satisfaction level of tourists positively impacts the growth of the industry. In this context, the model provided by Sheth (2001) helps in understanding the importance of satisfaction of customers (tourists) that give the companies a competitive edge over the other competing companies. In this paper, the model is used to understand the importance of satisfaction of tourists that aids the tourism market to gain an advantage. In the model, (Sheth, 2001) presented six competitive edges that companies derived from a higher level of satisfaction of customers.

These six edges include ‘repeat buying, higher prices, loyalty in crisis, word of mouth, one stop shopping and new product innovation’. These six advantages contribute to increasing the profits, growth and performance of the company. However, ever more eager to provide satisfaction, industry players often bundle their tourism packages to provide economy and better deals for their consumers. This is a dangerous move due to risk in bundling as advocated by (Franklin & Ayelet, 2017) who warned that any shortcomings may cause more dissatisfaction among consumers.

Therefore, it is imperative to work carefully to provide sufficiently to consumers in order to achieve all the six advantages advocated above. The six major benefits are discussed in the context of tourist satisfaction. These six major competitive edges include visiting again (repetition in buying), pay more to avail best services (high prices), preference to help the site by visiting in bad times (loyalty in predicament), positive feedback and recommendation to others (word of mouth), increase in shopping (one stop shopping) and prefers to try the new things at sites and satisfied with those innovations (new product innovation).

In this way, these six factors increase the profit, performance and growth of the tourism industry. In the figure below, the model created by Sheth (2001) is shown. Many scholars also contribute in describing the importance of satisfaction of customers that contribute to improving the performance, growth and profits of companies by achieving competitive edges (Aaron et al., 2017; Sheth & Lee, 1987; Uttal & Davidow, 1989; Sewell & Brown, 1990; Zaithamal et al., 1990; Pizam & Ellis, 1999).



**Figure 1.** Six Major Competitive Edge received through high level of tourist satisfaction (Source: Sheth, 2001)

In this context, a high level of satisfaction is the main reason that encourages tourists to re-visit the particular destination, share their satisfaction which encourages promoting the destination free of cost (Yu, 2006). Along with these competitive edges, the high level of tourist satisfaction gives some financial advantages that include re-purchase, optimistic word of mouth, pay more money in terms of high-quality services and support the particular destination during occasions of financial crisis.

## **DEAD SEA - JORDAN: THE AREA OF STUDY**

According to the Jordan Tourism Board (2018), the Dead Sea is an endorheic lake located in the "Jordan Rift Valley at over 400m (1,312 ft.) below sea level. At the lowest point on the face of the earth, this vast stretch of water receives a number of incoming rivers, including the River Jordan. Once the waters reach the Dead Sea they are land-locked and have nowhere to go, so they evaporate, leaving behind a dense, rich, cocktail of salts and minerals that supply industry, agriculture and medicine with some of its finest products (Dead Sea Research Centre, 2018).

The Dead Sea is known around the globe as the saltiest sea known to man and is popular for its natural spa remedies (Dead Seaspacare, 2018). The Dead Sea is the deepest point on earth being relatively 402M below the level of the sea and bordered to the East side of Jordan. The sea is bordered by mountains to its East side and hills of Jerusalem to its West side. The area in the West is believed to have been home to five Biblical cities: Sodom, Gomorrah, Adman, Zebouin and Zoar (Bela). The dimensions of the Dead Sea are approximately 50km in length, and 15km in width. It was titled the Dead Sea due to its high salinity preventing microscopic marine organisms like marine plants and fish to survive (Dead Sea Research Centre, 2018).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study incorporates the survey technique of gathering data through the distribution of questionnaire among respondents. In the first section of the questionnaire, the demographic information of the respondents was discussed while the second section consists of roughly 20 questions related to the tourist perception and their satisfaction level visiting the Dead Sea in Jordan. Likert-type scale with five points was used in the designed questionnaire that starts from totally disagree (scale 5) to totally agree (scale 1) level. The hospitality and tourism industry and concerned management team with managers were the respondents. In this way, the answers to the questions were recorded and results were used for the improvement in the readability and clarity of survey questions. The three stages help in the execution of the study i.e. sampling, the collection of data and analysis of data. The data used is collected from the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities 2017. The size of the sample and design are important in order to focus on the statistics that signify the selected population and enable to present recommendations. The random design of sampling was selected for this research.

The research sampling population were American tourists visiting the Dead Sea through different traveling agencies. In recent years, the tourism rate has increased in the Dead Sea. For American tourists, there is a 19.3% increase (Jordan Tourism Board, 2017). The Dead Sea receives the largest group of tourists visiting this site.

The research survey was carried out between October and November 2016, which is the peak tourist season. In October and November, the weather is warm for tourists to enjoy the Dead Sea. Several renowned traveling agencies helped to distribute the designed questionnaire among tourists and around 800 questionnaires were returned by the American tourists. At the end of the trip, the respondents were requested to fill the questionnaire as the study used 'performance only technique' for determining the perception and measuring the satisfaction level of American tourists. For the analysis of gathered data, SPSS was used. The analysis process included distributions of frequency, analysis of regression, factor evaluation, t-test and descriptive figures.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Demographic analysis of participants**

In the literature of tourism, the patterns related to demographic aspects of



tourists like gender, age, education level, marital status, income level and profession were considered during the evaluation of satisfaction of tourist (Yavuz, 1994). Other authors also confirmed in their studies that these demographic aspects are the determining factors (Font, 2000). In this study, the descriptive analysis survey assisted in examining the demographic aspects of American tourists.

It was found that the percentage of male travelers (58.8% was high compared to female travelers (41.2%). This is representative of the individualistic and high masculine Western culture prevalent among American tourists (Reisinger, 2009). According to the survey, 74.4% participants were between middle to young age, as 28.2% were between 18-25 years, 24.6% were between the ages of 26-35 and 21.6% were between 36-49 years. It is important to mention that the education level of tourists was high, with 90% of the participants holding high school diplomas and post-graduation degrees. The level of education is also highly representative of the American culture of learning where education is given high priority (Joanne et al., 2004).

**Table 1.** Demographic Aspects of American Tourists (Data Source: Alrousan et al., 2018)

<b>Features</b>	<b>Dead Sea of Jordan (Demographic Aspects Result)- (n=350)</b>
<b>Gender (%)</b>	
Male	58.8
Female	41.2
<b>Age (%)</b>	
14-17	8.50
18-25	28.2
26-35	24.6
36-49	21.6
50-65+	17.1
<b>Marital Status (%)</b>	
Single	60
Married	30
Divorced	10
<b>Education Level (%)</b>	
Uneducated	0.5
Primary School	5.1
Secondary School	3
Passed High Secondary School	1
Graduated	45
Post Graduated	45
Others (did specific courses)	0.4
<b>Profession (%)</b>	
Government Employee	23.2
Private company employee	35.4
Housewife	21.5
Student	15
Others (Business owner and etc.)	4.9
<b>Income (US \$) (%)</b>	
<10,000	7.9
10,000-30,000	7
30001-50,000	10
50001-80,000	72
>80,000	5.1

There were roughly 60% of the participants who were single. In the profession aspect, 23.2% worked in Government institutions, however, 35.4% participants worked in private companies. The income level of the majority of the participants came to approximately 72%, with an annual income of US \$ 50,000-80,000. The detailed results of the demographic aspect of American tourists are discussed in the Table 1 provided below.

### **ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY COMPONENTS**

The analysis of designed questionnaire in which Likert type scale is used ought to become an evaluation of reliability and correlation in order to determine the satisfaction level of American tourists. In this stage, there is a measurement of the authenticity of the results by using the qualitative methods. 0.95 was the value of alpha. Generally, the agreed limit (lower) is about 0.60 for exploratory research (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Furthermore, for the identification of different dimensions the analysis of main aspects in terms of services was done. The data that appeared to be appropriate for the analysis of factors include 'calculation of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin statistics of 0.93 and Bartlett's test of sphericity that has a value of around 5459.027 (p, 0.001)'. In the analysis of factors, the factors with 'eigenvalue; of 1 or > 1 were replaced with the analysis named 'varimax'. With the help of twenty three enlisted items, three groupings in terms of factors were developed.

There were 10 elements of the first aspect. The variables include town safety, cleanliness, the hospitality of people, and cleanliness around the sea, facilities for shopping & refreshment, area convenience, shrines (pre-historic) and energetic night settings and live. All these elements are synonymous with the culture of American tourist to Jordan. According to (Joanne et al., 2004). Americans prefer to travel in a rigid and planned manner. In addition, Reisinger (2009) noted that American tourists prefer long trips, perceive service quality differently, prefer freedom of choice and are not comfortable with the hosts knows best notion, are more interested in people, novelty, desire to be near nature, and to visit national parks and national monuments, are most sociable, adventuresome and active.

All the mentioned elements are included in the facilities that are provided at the destination. Thus, this aspect is listed as 'facilities at destination'. The variance of the first factor was 24.9. The second factor includes seven elements such as hotel cleanliness, welcoming staff, hotel safety, quality of food and services, hotel comfortability, facilities of skydiving and other. These elements were directed to the services (accommodation) factor. While the third factor includes six elements that include agency expertise, staff behavior, transfers to airport, services related to providing information, services of guides and bookings. The traveling agency is responsible over these elements. These groupings sum up around 66% of the variance with 24.9 % of the first factor, 20.0% of the second factor and 21.0 of the third factor. The loadings of factors were greater than 0.71. There was a moderate level of correlation between the aspects and their groups. In the grouping aspects, 'the Cronbach's alpha assessment' is used to check the consistency level. The findings and description of factors related to the satisfaction level of American tourists in terms of provided services and tour at Dead Sea of Jordan are explained in the Table 2.

### **REGRESSION ANALYSIS**

The extension of simple linear regression 'Multiple regression' analysis was used to determine the aggregate impact of these cling factors on the satisfaction level of American Tourist. The strength of any element is determined by this analysis. The results for each procedure are reported in table 3 with the R2 values, t-statistics and coefficients. Here the

score of satisfaction level of American tourists was used as dependent factor and the coefficients of all three factors were used as independent factors.

**Table 2.** Results of Analysis of Factors (Data Source: Alrousan et al., 2018)

Items	Loading of factor	Eigenvalue	% of explained Variance	Value of F	$\alpha$	P
<b>Facilities at Destination</b>		5.8	24.9	11.726	0.95	0.0001
Town Cleanliness	.77					
Town safety	.73					
Hospitality of people	.66					
Cleanliness around Sea Area	.75					
Lively nightlife scene	.67					
Facilities for shopping	.55					
Facilities for recreation	.77					
Cheap living expenses	.69					
Prehistoric shrines	.79					
Area Accessibility	.79					
<b>Services (accommodation)</b>		4.9	20.0	35.8	0.90	0.0001
Hotel safety	.72					
Hotel cleanliness	.77					
Quality of services	.80					
Quality of food	.79					
Friendly & welcoming staff	.80					
Hotel comfortability	.79					
Facilities of Skydiving and other related facilities	.70					
<b>Services of traveling agency</b>		4.7	21.0	12.145	0.91	0.0001
Agency expertise	.80					
Staff behavior& attitude	.86					
Transfers to airport	.74					
Services in terms of providing information	.80					
Services of guides	.82					
Bookings	.75					

Table 3 demonstrates the impact of three factors and their elements with the level of satisfaction of American tourists. About 23% of the variance is accounted for dependent factor. From the analysis, it is noticed that the elements of three main factors had significant statistical results in terms of  $\beta$  coefficients. The core of services related to accommodation and services of the travel agency was positive but the score of facilities at the destination was negative. In Table 3, the stable predictor related to the overall satisfaction was of services related to the accommodation with  $p$ , 0.001, a travel agency with  $p$ , 0.006 and facilities at the destination with  $p$ , 0.005.

**Table 3.** Impact of elements of three factors on American tourist (overall level of satisfaction) (Data Source: Alrousan et al., 2018)

Factors	Beta	Value of T	Sig.
Constant		13,496	000
Facilities at destination	-,111	-2,183	031
Services related to accommodation	448	8,8867	000
Services of External traveling agency	118	2,272	024
$R^2=0.23$			

### MEANS ANALYSIS

For the investigation of perception of American tourists in terms of factors related to destination, a statistical process i.e. 'independent t-test' was done. Table 4,5 and 6 shows the scores of the mean of three factors and related elements to them that are facilities at destination, services (accommodation) and services related to the traveling agency. Among ten elements of facilities related to destination, five elements indicate significant mean scores. In addition, the four elements were assessed as highly satisfactory by the American tourists. The elements include cleanliness around the Dead Sea with a mean score of 3.84, pre historic shrines with a mean of 4.10, facilities of recreation with a mean of 3.97 and cheap living expenses with a mean of 3.80. The lively nightlife scene held the highest score of mean which came to 4.12. The summary of these statistical calculations is shown in the table 4 below.

**Table 4.** Summary of Results of 'T-test' for facilities of Destination (Data Source: Alrousan et al., 2018)

Elements	Mean	T value and significance
Town Cleanliness	3.55	-1.39
Town safety	3.71	-0.29
Hospitality of people	3.79	-1.72
<b>Cleanliness around the Dead Sea</b>	3.84	2.96
<b>Lively nightlife scene</b>	4.12	-2.20
<b>Prehistoric shrines</b>	4.10	3.25
Facilities for shopping	3.78	3.24
<b>Facilities for recreation</b>	3.97	3.29
Area Accessibility	3.66	-0.83
<b>Cheap living expenses</b>	3.80	2.19

**Table 5.** Summary of results of 'T-Test' for Services Accommodation (Data Source: Alrousan et al., 2018)

Elements	Mean	T-Value and Significance
<b>Hotel cleanliness</b>	3.96	2.607
<b>Hotel safety</b>	3.75	0.930
<b>Quality of food</b>	3.84	4.048
Quality of service	3.60	2.300
Hotel comfortability	3.55	1.591
Facilities of Skydiving and other related facilities	3.57	0.230
Staff hospitality	3.50	-1.425

**Table 6.** Summary of results of T-test for External Travelling agencies (Data Source: Alrousan et al., 2018)

Elements	Mean	T-Value and Significance
<b>Agency expertise</b>	3.83	-4.058
<b>Staff behaviour &amp; attitude</b>	4.16	-2.754
<b>Transfers to airport</b>	4.32	-3.267
Services related to providing information	3.56	-0.998
Services provided by guides	3.76	-1.183
<b>Bookings</b>	4.22	-3.205

With regards to services in terms of accommodations'-test' was conducted. Among the seven elements related to the services in terms of accommodation, three elements held the high mean, which are hotel cleanliness with a mean of 3.96, hotel safety with a

mean of 3.75, and quality of food with a mean of 3.84. The summary of the results are in the table 5 below. On the other hand, the results of calculation of means of elements of the traveling agency showed that four elements held a high score of mean.

These four elements include agency expertise with a mean of 3.83, staff behavior and attitude with a mean of 4.16, transfers to the airport with a mean of 4.32 and bookings with a mean of 4.22. The summary of the results are shown in the Table 6.

## **CONCLUSION**

There are different techniques for examining the satisfaction of tourists. This paper focuses on tourist from a certain country to a particular destination. The focal points of this paper are to highlight the satisfaction of American tourists who visit the Dead Sea in Jordan. As shown above, the perception of American tourists in terms of attributes and its relation to the destination are specifically examined. The results of the study are specific by focusing on the perception and satisfaction level of American tourists who visit the Dead Sea of Jordan. The focus on American tourist may possibly be generalised to represent Western tourists to Jordan since they make up the largest group of tourist visiting Jordan throughout the year.

It was found from the results of regression calculation that three factors directly influence the level of satisfaction of American tourists, which include services provided at the destination, services provided by the travel agency and available facilities at the destination. This fully corresponds with the American tourists' culture of individualism where they expect to receive the best of services on offer (Reisinger, 2009).

The scores of the mean of the three factors were above three, which is the neutral point of the overall scale. With the help of these results, it was discovered that American tourists were satisfied with the destination's services and facilities. The results of the 'T-test' showed that among the elements of the first factor (services related to accommodation), American tourists were highly satisfied with the pre-historic shrines, facilities of recreation, cheap living expenses, lively nightlife scenes and town cleanliness, in line with their preference for freedom of choice and adventurous inclinations to visit important locations (Reisinger, 2009). In the elements of the second factor (facilities at destination), American tourists were satisfied with hotel cleanliness, hotel safety and quality of life. Lastly, for the third and final factor (services of traveling agency), American tourists were content with the agency expertise, staff attitude and behavior, bookings and airport transportation. Both the third and fourth factors clearly showed the American spirit of a liking for novelty and a fulfilment of their own perceived service quality (Reisinger, 2009). In Jordan's other destinations like Petra, Jerash, Wadi Rum, Wadi Mujib, Mount Nebo, Aqaba have a high ratio of tourists. Nonetheless, tourists prefer to visit the Dead Sea, and therefore, the Dead Sea gains full attention from tourists due to the presence of salt crystals on its shores, spiritual and natural landscape on its West side and the hills of Jerusalem. Apart from these factors, pre-historic shrines and lively nightlife of the Dead Sea are also prominent aspects that fascinate tourists. In Jordan, tourism directly contributes to its GDP. Creating and maintaining the quality of services is important for managers of hotels, travel agencies and other stakeholders in the tourism industry.

In practice, managers and stakeholders in the tourism industry need to fully comprehend the satisfaction derived from expectation and expectancy disconfirmation (Oliver, 1980) in order to provide the best satisfaction for current and future customers. In addition, they also need to subscribe to the six major competitive edge proposed by Sheth (2001) so as to achieve a high level of customer satisfaction. For this purpose, the results of this paper are significant for those who hold positions in

tourism and hospitality management to increase the satisfaction of tourists by focusing on the three mentioned factors and their elements.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND JORDAN TOURISM INDUSTRY**

For future research, Jordan is full of historic and worth-seeing sites so researchers should contribute to examining the stratification level of tourists visiting the sites of the Dead Sea. They may focus on tourist from Asia and even run comparative studies of Eastern versus Western tourists. This will be useful with the rapid increase in tourists from China who have lots of time to spend in other countries. Alternatively, it is also advantageous to look at how the American tourists perceive their satisfaction at other tourist spots in Jordan. All these will help in contributing to the competitiveness and sustainability of the Jordanian tourism industry. The tourism industry should focus on capitalization of offerings to be different from its competitors. The tourism industry of Jordan is focusing on different campaigns related to the international and domestic marketing, it is recommended to do proper research in terms of their potential tourists along with focusing on the planning related to the destination and remove barriers in travelling for potential tourists.

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## MOTIVATIONS ANALYSIS IN ECOTOURISM THROUGH AN EMPIRICAL APPLICATION: SEGMENTATION, CHARACTERISTICS AND MOTIVATIONS OF THE CONSUMER

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**Abstract:** In recent years, there has been a growing interest of tourists in the environment and movements directed towards the enjoyment of the natural environment. This study is designed to analyze the motivations and the demand segmentation in ecotourism taking as reference the functional theory. The empirical analysis was carried out in Santay Island National Recreation and Morro Mangrove Refuge in Ecuador. About the data analysis, a factorial analysis and a k-means non-hierarchical segmentation were performed. The results show that there are several motivational factors in ecotourism: “Self-development”, “Interpersonal relationships”, “Building personal relationships and Ego-defensive function”, “Reward”, “Escape”, “Nature appreciation”. There are three segments of ecotourists: “Multiple motives”, “Nature”, and “Reward and Escape”.

**Key words:** Motivations, Segmentation, Tourism, Ecotourism, Ecuador

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### INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism has 5% annual growth rate worldwide and grows three times faster than tourism in general (Hultman et al., 2015). So there is a growing interest of tourists in environment and movements directed towards the enjoyment of the natural environment

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(Rivera, 2010). Ecotouristic areas have become important destinations, due to their efficiency in protecting the environment, education, recreation and job creation (Tao & Wall, 2009). In addition, ecotourism is a strategy to improve: conservation and local communities in protected areas (Jalani, 2012). However, Community-based tourism projects will only succeed if successful integrated marketing is undertaken to ensure that the marketing outlays are successful in cultivating sustainable tourism demand (Strydom et al., 2019). In addition, Local authorities must be convinced tourism is a viable and valuable activity that can economically revitalise the area and generate additional income for the local population (Vijulie et al., 2018). On the other hand, studies indicate that the most effective predictor of tourism behavior should be the behavior itself, including the motivations (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2003; Johns & Gyimothy, 2002; Kotler et al., 2003). In this sense, the study of the motivations allows a better understanding of expectations, needs and objectives of tourists and is a fundamental element to design marketing strategies, also to help the positioning and competitiveness of involved agents in the tourist activity (Pons et al., 2007). On the other hand, tourists have different reasons to visit different attractions and destinations related to nature (Chikuta et al., 2017). In this way, is essential for tourism managers to recognize that ecotourist´s motives are different (Álvarez, 2012).

Market segmentation has been widely used to identify the niche markets of different touristic products and services (Park & Yoon, 2009) and it is developed from behavior theories such as motivation or recreational specialization (Kim et al., 2008). In this sense and according to several authors, the segmentation of travelers based on motivations is one of the most effective methods (Crompton, 1979; Schewe, 1990). Therefore, to manage effectively a tourist destination it is necessary to know the main reasons that attract visitors and identify consumer segments, developing commercial strategies adapted to the target groups (Meiriño et al., 2016). In addition, tourism products designed according to the needs of consumers could be easily identified; the formulation, promotion and delivery of these products is facilitated (Park & Yoon, 2009).

However, the lack of information about the different ecotourism segments hinders efficiency in promotion programs specifically targeted (Park & Yoon, 2009). Also, it is important to consider that the providers of tourist services in a destination must understand needs and desires of tourists to manage the destination resources and attract different groups of tourists (Pesonen, 2012). In other words, more information about the market and the segments that comprise it, it is easier to design products or services that can satisfy customers (Pulido-Fernández & Sánchez-Rivero, 2010). However, demand segmentation studies in the different ecotourism segments are scarce (Weaver & Lawton, 2002). To address this gap in research, this study aims to present an analysis of the demand segmentation and motivations in ecotourism, to provide information that will help to plan marketing strategies for each segment to tourism marketers. It is a contribution to the debate about demand in ecotourism. To fulfill this objective, the article is structured, after the introduction, the second section where the literature is reviewed, the third section describing the study area, the fourth section that presents the research methodology, the fifth section with the results of the investigation and the sixth section with the discussion and conclusions of the study.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Motivations in ecotourism**

Swanson and Horridge (2006) defined motivation as a set of needs that make a person involved in touristic activities. They are psychological needs and desires that provoke, direct and integrate behavior and activity (Pearce, 2013). Therefore, it is the

central factor in the decision-making process (Yolal et al., 2015). Motivational factors are defined as psychological needs that play an important role in making a person feel a psychological imbalance that can be corrected through a travel experience (Crompton, 1979; Kim et al., 2000). On the other hand, Álvarez (2012) points out that ecotourism supposes to identify nature as the main motivation to travel, to acquire more knowledge about this natural environment and to become aware of its role.

In contrast, Del Valle (2007) considers the main motivations of rural tourism (ecotourism, agrotourism and adventure tourism): An environment with rural characteristics (low population density, slightly crowded) and naturalness. Attractive physical environment (good climate, presence of mountains, forests, waterbodies, etc.). The possibility to practice sports or outdoor activities is an additional attraction for some of the modalities of rural tourism. Architecture with traditional characteristics, adapted to the environment conditions and with aesthetic values. Maintenance of cultural values such as holidays, traditions, ways of life or local gastronomy.

One of the studies about motivation in ecotourism from Panin and Mbrica (2014) who through a descriptive investigation found the most important motivations for ecotourists in the Republic of Serbia. They divide the motivations into 4 groups: sports and health, motivation for nature, cultural and educational activities, and social activities. The motivations related to sports and recreational activities, the positive impact on health, walking in the forest, seeing and enjoying nature, are the main motivations in ecotourism. Another study about motivations in ecotourism is from Lee et al. (2014) who through a factorial analysis analyzed the tourists of ecological parks restored in South Korea, concluding that there are seven factors related to the motivations: Self-development, Interpersonal relationships, Reward, Building personal relationships, Escape, Ego-defensive function, Nature appreciation.

Regarding the ecotourists' characteristic, Álvarez (2012) points out that they are restless and active people who need to try the leisure possibilities that are compatible with the environment, activities in which nature prevails over the interests of human beings. Also to enjoy personal life development that allows the physical activities, the experience to become familiar with new lifestyles, meeting people with similar concerns, attending cultural events and buying local handicrafts. They also show a preference for small groups and personalized service. On the other hand, Cheng et al., (2016) consider that ecotourists would positively influence on the intention, interest and willingness to pay a higher price for ecotourism products and services. In this sense, Nickerson et al. (2016) concluded that sustainable tourists are willing to spend more, which can increase the benefit of offering sustainable tourism destinations. On the other hand, Ma et al. (2018) conducted a study in the Nanling National Forest Park and the Dinghushan National Nature Reserve, finding that the most important factor in Chinese tourists is "relaxation and nature exploration". In contrast, Chow et al. (2019) conducted a study to visitors to the Ramsar wetland in Hong Kong, finding that the most important motivations were relaxation, escape from daily life, and physical and mental health.

The theory used in this study is the functional theory, introduced by Katz (1960), who proposed that there are four motivational functions: knowledge function, expressive value function, self-defense function and utilitarian function.

From the sociology literature, Smith et al. (1956) added another function, a function of social adjustment. The knowledge function focuses on the desire to obtain information to understand the world. Knowledge variables such as learning, meeting

new people, appreciating nature and being with like-minded people correspond to the knowledge function. While the desire for knowledge is not an absolute desire to understand the entire universe, people want to understand the events that affect their own lives (Houle et al., 2005). The ego defense function emphasizes the reduction of social pressure by participating in an event. An individual finds means that will allow him to avoid or escape an unpleasant internal or external reality. As a result, the individual can choose to be adaptable to the contemporary event by eliminating anxiety. The elimination of anxiety can be achieved through commitment, such as being a member of a society and joining discussions about topics of similar interest with substantive rationality (Lee et al., 2014). The utilitarian function emphasizes the minimization of punishment and the maximization of rewards (Fodness, 1994). Measurement of utilitarian function can include gaining self-confidence, being independent, having fun, experiencing different cultures, and avoiding stress. Finally, the social adjustment function describes an acceptable norm for other associates, including family members, relatives and friends (Lee et al., 2014).

### **Demand segmentation in ecotourism**

According to Ho et al., (2012) market segmentation represents the decisive criterion to determine which groups of clients we should contact. The segmentation of heterogeneous tourists according to their motivations allows tourism providers to create products and services preferred and valued by the destination markets (Lee et al., 2004). In this sense, the market segmentation strategy can be used to identify specific groups of tourists, provide better tourism packages, increase the benefits for destinations and develop a more efficient tourism policy and marketing planning (Díaz-Pérez et al., 2005; Nickerson et al., 2016; Xia et al., 2010).

One of the segmentation studies of the demand for motivations in protected natural areas from Cordente-Rodríguez et al., (2014) who through a segmentation by latent classes analyzed the visitors in the protected area of “Serranía Alta” Cuenca (Spain). Two groups were found: Nature: has a unique motivation to enjoy nature and resources. Multiple motive: has a combination of several reasons such as enjoying nature and gastronomy, and visiting villages to learn about cultures and traditions.

Another study about demand segmentation in ecotourism from Barić et al., (2016) who through a factorial and a cluster K-means analysis conducted a study of visitors to Paklenica National Park in Croatia, they find 3 groups: Naturalist: the enjoyment of nature is the most important. Escapists: have a desire to escape and leave the solitude, with moderate interest in nature. Ecotourists: enjoy nature and novelty with educational interest and learn from experiences. In contrast, Neuts et al., (2016) analyzed market segments that cause economic impacts on ecotourism in Shiretoko, Hokkaido, Japan. The study found four segments: Bear-watchers: motivated mainly by bears observation, and they go on excursions to waterfalls or visit the Nature Center of Shiretoko National Park as secondary activities. Landscape-lovers: the elements of the landscape are the main reason for a visit. Organized tour groups: their motivations are the elements of the landscape and whale observation. Active explorers: are tourists with wide motivations. They prefer the elements of the landscape, but also the fauna as bear and bird observation.

Another study, that of Gu et al. (2018), was conducted in the Changbai Mountain Biosphere Reserve in northeastern China, finding four groups: “nature travelers”, interested in experiencing nature and appreciating natural landscapes; “cultural landscape tourists”, interested in participating in and appreciating nature and natural landscapes; “food and shopping enthusiasts”, showing a medium–high interest for the natural and cultural features of the reserve; and “eclectic adventurers”, expressing a wide range of motivations to

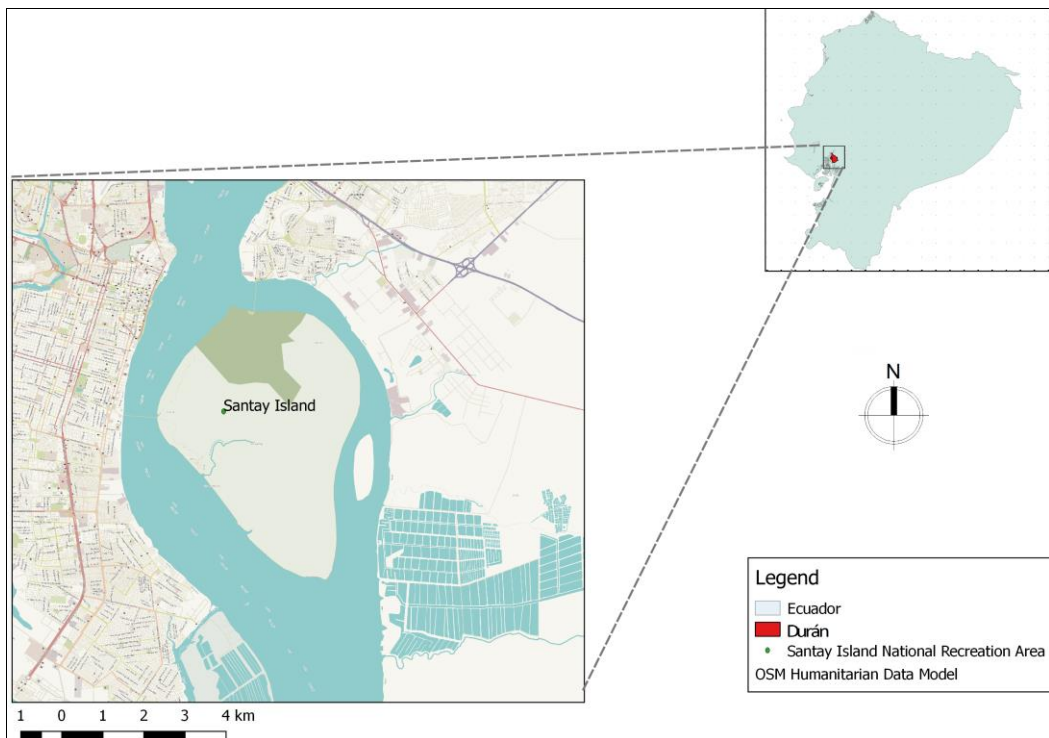
visit the reserve, with higher average scores on most motivational factors. Likewise, Jeong et al. (2018) conducted a study in Kuang Si Waterfall and Konglor Cave in Lao People's Democratic Republic, finding four segments: "nature and cohesion-seeking tourists", "nature-seeking tourists", "passive nature-seeking tourists", and "want-it-all tourists". In contrast, Carvache et al. (2019) conducted a study in protected Areas in Guayas, find three segments: Firstly, there is a multiple motives group, with high motivation in all the motivational variables. Secondly, there is a nature group, with high motivation in aspects related to nature. Thirdly, there is a reward and escape group, with high motivation related to nature, fun, exploring the unknown, and escaping from routine.

### EMPIRICAL APPLICATION

Ecuador is a mega diverse country which has 51 protected areas (Ministry of Environment, 2018), they are visited by national and international tourists. The province of Guayas, located in the coast of Ecuador, has important protected areas. For the present study, the Santay National Recreation Area and Morro Mangrove Wildlife Refuge were selected. These two places were chosen for their natural and cultural characteristics related to ecotourism. In other words, they are very visited because of the proximity to Guayaquil city, also they have attractions and ecotourism activities.

#### Santay National Recreation Area

Santay Island is located between the cities of Guayaquil and Durán, in the middle of the great Guayas River, in the Province of Guayas. This place has a wide variety of bird species, confirming its status as a natural refuge, leading it to be internationally recognized as the number 1041 (RAMSAR) place in the world since 2000.

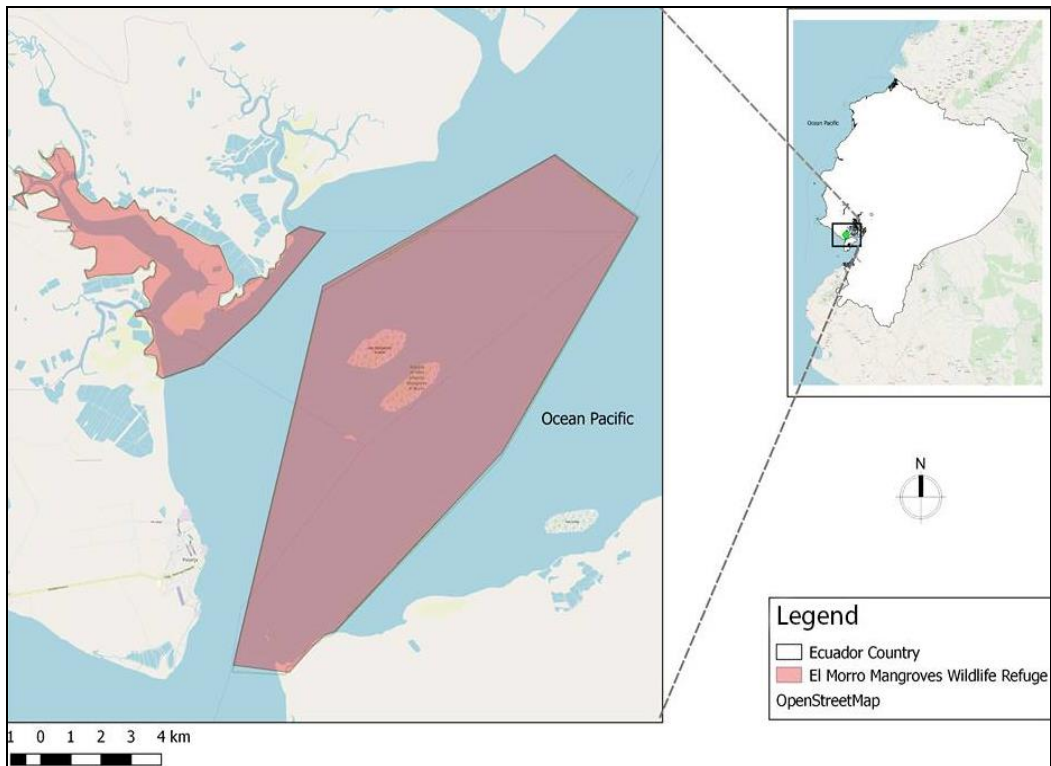


**Figure 1.** Geographical Location of Santay National Recreation Area (Ecuador)

Its declaration as a Ramsar place makes this place very important, with global interest and priority for conservation. In 2010, Santay Island was declared as a National Recreation Area by the Environment Ministry due to its environmental importance and for recreational purposes. This site is a wetland visited by waterfowl to rest, for a shelter and nesting. This wetland protects 60 plant species, 12 reptile varieties and 128 types of birds, 12 vulnerable and threatened birds are on the International Trade in Endangered Species List and the World Conservation Union. In addition, this place is important for its mangroves. In addition to its vegetation, several trees are already very scarce and offer protection to some mammals that are already rare. Among the main attractions in flora and fauna, there are mangroves and seabirds that tourists observe while they sail through the estuaries. Another attraction is the Ecovillage because tourists can visit it and appreciate some crocodiles (Figure 1).

### **Morro Mangroves Wildlife Refuge**

It is located on “Malecon” street, Morro Port (Rural area) in Guayas Province. The refuge is located to the north of Guayaquil Gulf, where Morro channel or stream begins. The main reason for its declaration as a protected area is the existence of a large population of dolphins that inhabit Morro channel and the frigate colony in “Manglecito Island”. In this place, there are four types of mangroves: red, white, jeli or button and black. In addition, the refuge mainland protects a small dry forest patch. Among the fauna, visitors find more than 80 species in this place, seabirds are the most abundant in the refuge. The main attractions are the observation of dolphins, frigate birds, pelicans and blue-footed boobies, roseate spoonbill, white ibis and cormorants.



**Figure 2.** Geographic Location of Morro Mangroves Wildlife Refuge (Ecuador)

On Manglecito Island, there are roosts and nesting places for frigates, pelicans and blue-footed boobies. It is estimated that the colony of frigates is about 6,000 individuals, which makes it one of the highest concentration place of these birds in Ecuador. In another place called “Farallones”, the colonies of blue-footed boobies and pelicans stand out at the entrance of the estuary (Figure 2).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The present empirical research was based on a fieldwork, a questionnaire was applied based on different previous studies about motivations and segmentation of demand in ecotourism (Crompton, 1979; Fodness, 1994; Weaver & Lawton, 2002; Galley & Clifton, 2004; McGehee & Kim, 2004; Jang & Wu, 2006; Lee et al., 2014). The sample collection was carried out from January to March 2018. The survey aimed national and international tourists over 18 years old who were visiting the two protected areas in the Ecuadorian coast: Santay National Recreation Area and Morro Mangrove Wildlife Refuge. The distribution of the surveys was carried out according to the method of simple random sampling in the aforementioned protected areas. The questionnaires were filled in place while the visitors were doing some recreational activity in both protected areas.

The tourists filled out surveys independently, and interviewers were ready to solve any question. The interviewers were students from tourism career in ESPOL University (Guayaquil), who were trained to obtain the sample in the study areas. The questionnaire consisted of Likert questions of 5 points, where 1 was little and 5 a lot. 162 valid surveys were obtained, with a margin of error of +/- 7.8% and a confidence level of 95%.

The Combrach's alpha coefficient reached the value of 0.97, which indicates a meritorious index on the scale. The data was analyzed in two stages: First, a factor analysis was carried out that helped to identify the constructs that underlie the variables, providing a global view of the most substantive motivations using such constructs. Factor analysis has been widely used in visitor segmentation research (Formica & Uysal, 1998; Kastenholz et al., 1999; Johns & Gyimothy, 2002). Specifically, Varimax rotation was used to facilitate the interpretation of the data.

The Kaiser criterion was used to find the number of factors, where only the factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were used. The KMO index (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) and the Bartlett sphericity test were used to know if it was appropriate to perform the factorial analysis. The Combrach's alpha coefficient was used to measure the reliability of the measurement scale. In the second stage, the K-means grouping method was implemented, which is commonly used in tourism segmentation research (for example, Formica & Uysal, 1998, Kau & Lee, 1999). The differences between the groups in relation to the motivations were evaluated by means of adequate analyzes including ANOVA, and the Brown-Forsythe and Welch statistics. For the post hoc analysis, the Games-Howell test was used. Finally, the Chi-Square analysis was used to explore the differences between the groups in terms of sociodemographic variables, satisfaction and intentions to return to the destination. The data collected was organized, tabulated and analyzed using the SPSS 22.0 program for Windows.

## **RESULTS**

### **Motivations in ecotourism**

A factorial analysis has been carried out which allowed to extract six motivational dimensions. The analysis of the main component has been used as a technique used for data reduction. The varimax rotation method was used to obtain a clearer interpretation of the factors, so that each one had very high or low loadings on the factors. For the

number of factors that were used in the Kaiser criterion where factors that have eigenvalues greater than 1.00 are taken into account. Six factors are part of the solution and represent 74.8% of the total variance, this is a sufficient total variance value because increasing a factor with an eigenvalue less than 1 will not provide enough information to the model, thus it will increase a bit more the total variance. The KMO index (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) is close to one, so the relationship between the variables is high and a factor analysis is appropriate. In addition, Bartlett's sphericity test is significant  $<0.05$ , so the factorial analysis must be applied. The results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Factorial analysis of motivational variables

Items	Loading						Factors
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
To gain a new perspective on life	0.794						<b>Factor 1:</b> Self-development
To know what I am capable of	0.755						
Para tener un sentido de confianza de mí mismo	0.727						
To be independent	0.693						
To understand more about myself	0.683						
To feel inner harmony/peace	0.634						
To have the opportunity to know me better	0.605						<b>Factor 2:</b> Interpersonal relationships
To strengthen relationship with my family		0.843					
To contact family and friends who live elsewhere		0.822					
To reflect on past memories		0.708					
To feel that I belong		0.703					
To reminisce about parents' time		0.686					<b>Factor 3:</b> Building personal relationships and Ego-defensive function
To think about good times I have had in the past		0.563					
To know the locals			0.762				
To meet people with similar interests			0.664				
To join the social discussion			0.662				
To follow current events			0.661				
To join interest of people			0.614				
To meet new people			0.593				
To be with others if I need them			0.516				
To visit destination			0.409				<b>Factor 4:</b> Reward
To develop my personal interests				0.715			
To experience new things				0.681			
To explore the unknown				0.681			
To have fond memories				0.676			
To have a sense of self-achievement				0.597			
To experience different cultures				0.538			<b>Factor 5:</b> Escape
To avoid daily stress					0.853		
To be away from the crowds of people					0.749		
To escape from routine					0.712		
To avoid interpersonal stress					0.686		<b>Factor 6:</b> Nature appreciation
To be close to nature						0.861	
To get a better appreciation of nature						0.816	
Auto values	16.435	3.12	1.889	1.747	1.229	1.01	
% variance explained	48.3	9.2	5.6	5.1	3.6	3.0	
% cumulative variance	48.3	57.5	63.1	68.2	71.8	74.8	
KMO	0.919						
Bartlett's sphericity test	Chi squared = 5161.946 sig=0.000						

This third dimension is related to a motivated visitor by meeting new people, people with similar interests, to join the interests of people, follow current events, meet new people and know about the destination. In addition, it is related to the defensive function of the ego and the function of knowledge according to functional theory. The fourth factor was called "Reward", and comprised 1.74% of the total variance. This fourth dimension refers to a visitor motivated by having fun, experiencing new things, exploring the unknown, obtaining good memories and experiencing different cultures. Likewise, it is linked to the utilitarian function according to the functional theory. The fifth factor was called "Escape", and comprised 1.22% of the total variance. This fifth dimension is associated to a visitor motivated by escaping routine and being away from daily stress or crowds. The utilitarian function according to the functional theory. The sixth factor was called "Nature appreciation", and comprised 1.01% of the total variance. This sixth dimension is associated to visitors motivated by nature. It is also related to the function of knowledge according to functional theory. The results are similar to Lee et al. (2014) who conclude that the functional theory in the context of ecotourism is valid, which indicates that the intentions of ecotourists to revisit the restored ecological parks are influenced by a variety of motivating functions. They obtained 7 motivational factors in their study: *Self-development, Interpersonal relationships, Reward, Building personal relationships, Escape, Ego-defensive function, Nature appreciation.*

#### **Demand segmentation in ecotourism**

For this part of the investigation, an analysis of non-hierarchical K-means clusters has been carried out. Under the criterion of maximizing the variance between typologies and minimizing the variance within each typology, the best solution that meets the criteria is that which establishes three conglomerates. The characterization of the clusters from the averages of the motivation variables appears in Table 2. The F statistic of the ANOVA allows to contrast that the compared averages are not equal, but it does not allow to specify where the detected differences are. To know which mean differs from another, the contrast called multiple post hoc comparisons has been used. In order to make these comparisons it can not be assumed that the population variances are equal.

The F statistic of the ANOVA is based on the fulfillment of the assumptions of normality and homoscedasticity. Indeed, it is not possible to assume that the population variances are equal, because the critical level associated with the Levene statistic is less than 0.05, the Brown-Forsythe and Welch statistics are used as an alternative to the ANOVA F statistic. Since the critical level associated with both statistics is less than 0.05, we can reject the hypothesis of equality of means and conclude that the averages of the motivational variables of the three comparative groups are not equal. To contrast the significant differences between the different means, the Games-Howell test has been applied. As Table 2 shows, in the first group there are visitors who have high motivation in all the motivational variables, which is why this group has been called "Multiple Motives". In addition, they are related to all motivational dimensions. Visitors who have a high motivation in aspects related to nature and experience new things form the second group, that is the reason why these visitors have been called "Nature". In addition, they are related to the dimension nature appreciation.

The third group are visitors who have high motivations related to nature, fun, obtaining memories, experience with new things and experience with different cultures, which is why this group has been called "Reward and Escape". Likewise, they are related to the dimensions of appreciation of nature, reward and escape. The results are similar as Cordente-Rodríguez et al. (2014), who found two groups: Nature and Multiple motive, finding in this study the "Reward and Escape" as the third group.



**Table 2.** Characterization of the clusters based on the motivational variables

Variables	Cluster		
	1	2	3
To be close to nature	<b>4.9*</b>	4.3	4.3
To get a better appreciation of nature	<b>4.9*</b>	4.2	4.4
To experience new things	<b>4.9*</b>	4.2	4.2
To explore the unknown	<b>4.9*</b>	3.9	4.1
To develop my personal interests	<b>4.7*</b>	3.8	3.9
To have fond memories	<b>4.9*</b>	3.9	4.2
To have fun	<b>4.9*</b>	3.9	4.3
To have a sense of self-achievement	<b>4.8*</b>	<b>2.6*</b>	<b>3.7*</b>
To experience different cultures	<b>4.9*</b>	<b>3.9*</b>	<b>4.2*</b>
To meet new people	<b>4.7*</b>	3.2	3.9
To meet people with similar interests	<b>4.7*</b>	<b>2.5*</b>	<b>3.7*</b>
To meet locals	<b>4.7*</b>	<b>3.0*</b>	<b>3.8*</b>
To be with others if I need them	<b>4.5*</b>	<b>2.2*</b>	<b>3.2*</b>
To have the opportunity to know me better	<b>4.7*</b>	<b>2.1*</b>	<b>3.6*</b>
To understand more about myself	<b>4.7*</b>	<b>2.1*</b>	<b>3.6*</b>
To gain a new perspective on life	<b>4.7*</b>	<b>2.5*</b>	<b>3.6*</b>
To think about the good times I have had in the past	<b>4.7*</b>	<b>2.2*</b>	<b>3.3*</b>
To know what I am capable of	<b>4.8*</b>	<b>2.0*</b>	<b>3.4*</b>
To have a sense of self-confidence	<b>4.7*</b>	<b>1.9*</b>	<b>3.4*</b>
To feel inner harmony/peace	<b>4.9*</b>	<b>2.8*</b>	<b>3.9*</b>
To be independent	<b>4.7*</b>	<b>1.9*</b>	<b>3.4</b>
To reminisce about parents' time	<b>4.6*</b>	<b>1.5*</b>	<b>3.2*</b>
To contact family and friends who live elsewhere	<b>4.6*</b>	<b>1.7*</b>	<b>3.2*</b>
To feel that I belong	<b>4.6*</b>	<b>1.7*</b>	<b>3.0*</b>
To strengthen the relationship with my family	<b>4.7*</b>	<b>2.0*</b>	<b>3.3*</b>
To reflect on past memories	<b>4.6*</b>	<b>1.7*</b>	<b>3.1*</b>
To visit the destination	<b>4.8*</b>	<b>3.0*</b>	<b>4.1*</b>
To avoid interpersonal stress	<b>4.8*</b>	<b>3.0*</b>	<b>3.9*</b>
To be away from the crowds of people	<b>4.9*</b>	<b>3.0*</b>	<b>3.9*</b>
To be away from daily stress	<b>4.9*</b>	<b>3.3*</b>	<b>4.1*</b>
To escape from routine	<b>4.9*</b>	<b>3.6*</b>	<b>4.1*</b>
To join the interest of people	<b>4.7*</b>	<b>2.0*</b>	<b>3.6*</b>
To join the social discussion	<b>4.6*</b>	<b>1.9*</b>	<b>3.4*</b>
To follow current events	<b>4.7*</b>	<b>2.0*</b>	<b>3.3*</b>

\* Bold values show significant differences in at least two of the means of the three conglomerates

### Satisfaction and intention to return to the destination in the three segments

For the relationship of the three segments with the satisfaction and intentions to return, a Chi-Square significance contrast has been made, and in this way we can find the variables that are really relevant for the analysis. A Likert scale of 5 points was used, being 1 little and 5 a lot. The results are shown in Table 3. As shown in Table 3, the segment "Multiple Motives" is characterized because it has a high percentage of very satisfied members (57.1%), so it is the segment with the highest level of satisfaction in relation to the others. Moreover, they have a high level of intentions to return to the destination (65.1%), so it is the segment with the highest level of intention to return to the destination in relation to the others. The segment "Nature" is the least satisfied and the group that has less intention to return to the destination in relation to the other segments. On the other hand,

the segment "Reward and Escape" is characterized because a considerable percentage of its members have a high level of intentions to return to the destination (41.1%).

**Table 3.** Relationship of the segments with satisfaction and intentions to return

Variables		Cluster			Total
		1	2	3	
Overall satisfaction	1		2.4%	1.8%	1.3%
	2	1.6%		1.8%	1.3%
	3	1.6%	34.1%	12.5%	13.8%
	4	39.7%	39.0%	60.7%	46.9%
	5	57.1%	24.4%	23.2%	36.9%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Intentions to return to the destination	1		2.4%		0.6%
	2	1.6%	12.2%		3.8%
	3	3.2%	22.0%	17.9%	13.1%
	4	30.2%	41.5%	41.1%	36.9%
	5	65.1%	22.0%	41.1%	45.6%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The segmentation based on the motivations of ecotourists is a useful tool for public institutions and private companies to adapt their offer with different groups of ecotourists. Therefore, they improve tourism products and increase the benefit for destinations, so there are more satisfied ecotourists and with high intentions to return to the destination. The main motivational dimension in ecotourism is the "Self-development", the same that is related to gain self-confidence and be independent. People consider that traveling is an opportunity to enrich their lives. Compared to more commercial forms of travel, ecotourism provides more independent time for people to think about personal matters (Kimmel, 1999). The second dimension in ecotourism is "Interpersonal relationships", related to visitors motivated to contact and strengthen relationships with family and friends. The third dimension in ecotourism is "Building personal relationships and Ego-defensive function", related to a visitor motivated to meet new people or with similar interests, to join the interests of people and follow current events. People tend to behave according to socially desired problems (McGehee & Kim, 2004). The fourth dimension in ecotourism is "Reward", related to a visitor motivated to have fun, experiencing new things and different cultures, so it is not enough for tourists to be surrounded by nature, but activities must be provided to them, this will generate fun and experience new things.

The fifth dimension in ecotourism is "Escape", related to visitors motivated to escape from routine and to be away from daily stress or crowds. Consequently, people travel to reward themselves and take a break from their routines (Broad & Jenkins, 2008). The sixth dimension in ecotourism is "Nature appreciation", related to a visitor motivated to appreciate nature. In addition, it is related to the function of knowledge according to functional theory. It is common to say that the appreciation of the natural environment is the predominant motivation of ecotourists (Weaver & Lawton, 2002; Wurzinger & Johansson, 2006). The dimensions mentioned in this study are similar to Lee et al. (2014), who mentioned that in ecotourism there are seven motivational dimensions related to functional theory. In addition, the findings of this study support other previous ecotourism research related to tourists' motivations (Weaver & Lawton, 2002; McGehee & Kim, 2004; Lee et al., 2014). Regarding the segmentation in

ecotourism, the findings suggest that the market can be divided into three groups based on the motivations of tourists. The first of them formed by the segment "Multiple Motives", with high motivation in all motivational variables, so that the tourist has several reasons to visit the place. The second segment called "Nature" that have high motivations in aspects related to nature and experience new things.

The third group called "Reward and escape", who have high motivations related to nature, fun, and experience with new things and different cultures. The profiles of these three segments showed a statistically significant difference in relation to satisfaction and intentions to return to the destination. Therefore, the segment "Multiples Motive" have higher levels of satisfaction and intentions to return to the destination in relation to others, so it should enhance the offer to this segment of various activities related to nature, culture, fun, social aspects and personal aspects. Likewise, the "Nature" segment is the segment with the lowest levels of satisfaction and the intention to return to the destination in relation to the others. So it should improve the offer of nature enjoyment, such as observation and education about flora and fauna. In contrast, in the "Reward and escape" segment, they have high levels of intentions to return to the destination. Therefore, activities related to fun and experience with new things should be offered to this segment.

The "Multiple Motives" group and the "Nature" group mentioned in this study are similar to the Nature group and the Multiple Motive group found by Cordente-Rodríguez et al. (2014). However, this study provides information from a third group called "Reward and Escape", so it should adapt an offer to this segment related to fun and experience with new things. As a conclusion, the motivational dimensions in ecotourism are related to "Self-development", "Interpersonal relationships", "Building personal relationships and Ego-defensive function", "Reward", "Escape", "Nature appreciation". "Self-development" is the most important motivational dimension. In ecotourism there are several groups based on the motivations of tourists, several things motivate one group at the same time, called "Multiple motives" another that is only motivated by nature, named "Nature" and the last one that is motivated for fun and experience with new things, named "Reward and Escape".

Among the practical implications, the findings of this study help tourism managers to establish marketing strategies and to improve the service according to the main motivational factors found, aiming to increase the impulse to visit these protected areas. Moreover, they can adapt the offer according to the characteristics of each segments found, in order to increase the satisfaction level of tourists and the interest to return to these protected areas. This study contributes to public institutions and private companies; they can improve the tourist offer in the destination and develop a more efficient planning. The main limitation of the investigation is the temporality, during the study. As a future line of research, it is recommended to carry out a study about offered products that adapt to the proposed segmentation, especially to the segment of tourists who seek fun and experience with new things.

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## **ASSESSMENTS AS REGARD OF SERVICE QUALITY OF TOURISTIC CONSUMERS WHO PARTICIPATE IN EQUESTRIAN TREKKING ACTIVITIES: AN APPLICATION IN CORE CAPPADOCIA, TURKEY**

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**Abstract:** In this study, based on the Servqual Scale a questionnaire consisting of 4 sections and 48 questions was applied in order to determine the service quality evaluations of domestic and foreign tourist consumers participating in equestrian trekking activities in Nevşehir. The study was limited to the local and foreign tourists visiting the equestrian trekking enterprises in Nevşehir. The survey was carried out with 350 people and T test ANOVA and LSD analyses were conducted. The findings of the study showed that the average score of domestic and foreign tourist about physical properties is very close to each other and domestic tourists have positive but foreign tourists have negative evaluations on reliability. In terms of willingness, the evaluations of domestic and foreign tourists are quite high. The general evaluations were negative in terms of assurance. In terms of empathy, the evaluations of both domestic and foreign tourists are positive. In addition, the differences between the evaluations of domestic and foreign tourists on the quality of service in terms of their demographic characteristics were examined. The findings of the study will be used in the enterprises performing equestrian trekking activities so the visitors will be more satisfied with the services provided, the satisfaction level and consequently, the number of devoted customers will increase.

**Key words:** Equestrian Trekking, Horse, Touristic Consumer, Service Quality, Nevşehir

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Horses, from the first ages of history in the life of humankind have served many different purposes. Initially, fed as prey animals, horses have served as an indispensable element in individual and community life through history since people began to recognize and took advantage of their different characteristics (Ünver, 2006, p.10).

In the past, horse riding had a great importance for travel and transportation. Unfortunately, nowadays in the concept of modern tourism with the foundation of space tourism, it cannot find the enough value it deserves. When the literature is reviewed, no studies were found except for the studies of Güngör (2016), Genç & Şengül (2016) and Tucker & Emge (2010) which refer to equestrian trekking in Cappadocia which means 'Land of Beautiful Horses' in Persian language. Of these studies, Güngör's work is directly related to the equestrian trekking in the scope of alternative tourism diversity. The other two studies just mention that equestrian trekking was carried out in Cappadocia.

The cultural and scientific values of Anatolia, which has a history of 6000 years of horse and equestrian history, unfortunately, cannot be sustained today in a way that is appropriate to its history. The Turks are the first who discovered horses on earth and trained them to use in the life of humankind. However, as in many other fields, the ignoring of science in equestrian sport has led to the need for support from European countries in the implementation of equestrian culture. In order to reach the deserved place on the international platform, there is a need to support the equestrian sport, which has been tried to be developed by local facilities with a large number of scientific research (Ünver, 2003, p. 82). Equestrian trekking which is one of the mentioned in many tourism types such as ecotourism (Hacıoğlu & Avcıkurt, 2011, p.129; Belber, 2018, p.76), rural tourism (Çimen & Abacı, 2012, p. 3), adventure tourism (Swarbrooke, et al., 2003, p.105), nature tourism (Kiper & Yılmaz, 2008, p.166), sustainable tourism (Pickel-Chevalier, 2015 p.110-134) and alternative tourism (Oruç, 2004, p.35), has become a recreationally preferred activity thanks to the riding disciplines developed within many years.

The region Cappadocia includes Nevşehir, Aksaray, Niğde, Kırşehir and Kayseri provinces. The region known as Core Cappadocia with the most observable area of the fairy chimneys consists of Uchisar, Göreme, Avanos, Ürgüp, Derinkuyu, Kaymaklı, Ihlara and its surroundings (Ahiler Kalkınma Ajansı ahika.gov.tr, p. 17).

Equestrian trekking is a new and less known form of recreation than other tourism activities. However, it has an increasing growth potential. With the increase of the demand, an increase in the number of enterprises that organized equestrian trekking in the Core Cappadocia region was observed. The fact that the same improvement in service quality was not seen despite the increasing numbers triggered this study. It was thought that improving the quality of service would have a significant impact on both customer satisfaction and increasing the number of incoming tourists. In this context, the study aimed to determine the service quality assessments of the tourists about enterprises in question and suggestions were made in this direction. Thanks to the enterprises that will operate in accordance with the mentioned suggestions, it is believed that the Cappadocia region will benefit both economically and ecologically.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In recent years, within the scope of touristic product diversification and sustainable tourism, the sector has been into different quest. Equestrian sport is one of the product diversification efforts in tourism (Aydoğdu & Tanrısever, 2015). Held in the regions where historical and natural beauties are located, daily or several-day excursion programs are called equestrian trekking (Batman & Eraslan, 2007, p.203).

Because of attraction, eligibility and satisfactory income, the number of enterprises organizing equestrian trekking in the Cappadocia region, known as the Land of Beautiful Horses, has increased significantly. Due to the increase of entrepreneurs and demands, different studies have been carried out in the literature, which deals with the issue in terms of socio - economic, cultural and service quality.

In a recreational sense, riding has a long history. This background has formed a significant number of different and well-known riding disciplines, such as dressage, jump shows, endurance, equestrian therapies, cross-country, horse races and western style riding (Ollenburg, 2005). Equestrian tourism has ancient roots in travel on horseback while at the same time constituting a thoroughly modern phenomenon which reflects intriguing trends of postindustrial society (Notzke, 2017, p. 3). Today the recreational use of horses is predominant in the industrialised societies.

In societies where the horse is no longer needed for labour, the cultural aspect of breeding, training and the recreational use of horses as a relationship between human and horse becomes even more pronounced (Helgadóttir, 2006). Equestrian tourism, as a form of broadly understood active tourism and a form of qualified tourism, is practised in free time of tourists for the purpose of exploring the country or region (Jasiński et al., 2006). Horse tourism is the most inclusive term, and refers to any form of tourism where the horse is an element of the tourism experience (Buchmann, 2017).

Outdoor recreation activities such as hiking, walking, paddling, bird watching and horseback riding are key travel motivators, occur in a variety of settings, are intricately linked to the tourism development process, and are often developed by entrepreneurs within the community (Kline et al., 2015). Knowing whether the guest likes to be treated as a customer or as a travelling companion and knowing which method adds more value to the experience of the guest, is important. Therefore, it is interesting that operators in horse-based tourism in Iceland seem to have more interest in horses and the desires of the guests than in running a profitable business (Helgadottir & Sigurðardottir, 2004).

Equestrian tourism has, in most cases, developed from an operator's passion for horses and is identified as a lifestyle industry; whereas developing a business is defined as a long-term process – including hard work and long working hours – while some operators find it hard to distinguish between their hobby and livelihood (Helgadóttir & Sigurðardóttir, 2008; Sigurðardóttir, 2015). The development of outdoor riding has also led to it becoming more professional in the field of tourism. First, the FFE created the label 'Equestrian Tourism Center', which aims to give credibility to companies, which link this activity to a high-quality welcome and choice of horses (Pickel-Chevalier, 2015).

The quality of service is the feeling that the customers have after purchasing service and implies whether or not they are satisfied with the service. Therefore, the concept of service quality can be described as the needs and expectations of the customer, the features of the service and the degree of which the service have these characteristics (Özveren, 2010). According to the model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, service quality is based on the comparison of customer expectations and perceptions. If the expected service is more than the perceived service, the quality of perceived quality will be low. If the expected service is equal to the perceived service, the perceived quality will be satisfactory. If the expected service is lower than the perceived service, the perceived quality will be high, which will ensure that the quality is ideal (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Servqual service quality scale, developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, and frequently used in the literature was used in the study with 5 factors as "Physical Specifications", "Reliability", "Willingness", "Assurance" and "Emphaty" was utilized.



## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Problem statement of the study is “Are domestic and foreign tourists visiting the enterprises that perform equestrian trekking activities in Nevşehir sufficiently satisfied with the quality of service of these enterprises?” The aim of this study is to determine the evaluations of the quality of service of domestic and foreign tourists attending equestrian trekking activities in Nevşehir. Furthermore, based on the results of the research, it is aimed to make suggestions on what can be done to ensure that the domestic and foreign tourists visiting the enterprises that perform equestrian trekking activities in Nevşehir will be more satisfied with the quality of the services offered by these enterprises.

The hypotheses for the purpose of the research are expressed as follows:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a difference between domestic and foreign tourists in evaluating the service quality of the enterprises where equestrian trekking activities are carried out.

H<sub>2</sub>: According to the demographic characteristics of the local tourists, there are differences between the evaluations of the service quality elements of the enterprises where equestrian trekking activities are carried out.

H<sub>3</sub>: According to the demographic characteristics of foreign tourists, there is a difference between the evaluations of the service quality elements of the enterprises where equestrian trekking activities are carried out.

The study was limited to the domestic and foreign tourists visiting the equestrian trekking enterprises in Nevşehir between the dates of 01.01.2018-01.09.2018.

The study was collected using face-to-face survey method that one of the primary data collection methods. The previous academic studies related to the evaluation of the service quality were examined and the questions and expressions to be used in the research were formed. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988, p. 39-40)'s studies and questionnaires were evaluated within the scope of the study and the scale was adapted for the study. The questionnaire used in the research consists of two parts. In the first part, there are questions about the demographic characteristics of the participants and in the second part there are 24 expressions about the quality of service. These statements are rated as “1: Strongly Disagree... 5: Strongly Agree”.

The data obtained from the collected questionnaire forms were analyzed by SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for Windows 23.0. In order to evaluate the questions about demographic characteristics, frequency distributions were examined. Likert-scale expressions were grouped according to service quality assessment dimensions in the studies of Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988, p.23) averages were taken. Then, ANOVA analysis and T test were used for the demographic characteristics of the participants. The results were interpreted and recommendations were made.

In this study, Nevşehir was chosen as the application area in order to obtain suitable data. The population of the research is composed of domestic and foreign tourists visiting the enterprises that carry out equestrian trekking in Nevşehir by September 2018. In order to determine the average number of domestic and foreign tourists who are interested in equestrian trekking in Nevşehir, operating on equestrian trekking enterprises were interviewed face to face. All of these enterprises gave information about their average number of tourists per year. Within the framework of this information, it is determined that about 1200 tourists visited the enterprises for equestrian trekking. At this point, because of the cost, time constraints and unwillingness of people to answer questionnaires, it was preferred to choose a sample to represent the population. As a sampling method, the non-probability sampling method was used. The aim of this method is to include anyone who wants to participate in the sample (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2015, p. 130).

The number of samples was calculated by the following formula (Yamane, 2001, 116 – 117):

$$n = \frac{N \cdot z^2 \cdot p \cdot q}{(N - 1) \cdot d^2 + z^2 \cdot p \cdot q}$$

N: population size

n: sample size

z: standard normal distribution table value for the desired reliability level

d: degree of accuracy

p: the proportion of individuals with the desired feature in the population (p + q = 1)

$$n = \frac{1200 \cdot 1,96^2 \cdot 0,5 \cdot 0,5}{(1200 - 1) \cdot 0,05^2 + 1,96^2 \cdot 0,5 \cdot 0,5} = \frac{1152,48}{3,9579931,7079} = 291,18 = 291$$

Due to the possibility of incorrect and incomplete answers to the questionnaires, more questionnaires were applied than the number calculated by the formula.

Because of the survey conducted with randomly selected 350 people from the population of the study, inconsistent and incomplete questionnaires were removed and the remaining 323 questionnaires were analysed.

## RESULTS

The difference between service quality assessments of domestic and foreign tourists was determined by taking the means of service quality assessment and T-Test and ANOVA analyses were used to determine whether there is a significant difference between them in terms of their demographic characteristics. LSD analysis was used to determine which variables caused the differences. To examine whether the data set used in the study shows normal distribution or not, standard deviation has been tested with the values of skewness, kurtosis and it is shown in Table 1. The standard deviation of a normally distributed data set is expected to be close to 1, and the skewness and kurtosis values are expected to be between -1 and +1 (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2015, p. 207–208).

At the end of the analyse, the kurtosis and skewness values were between -1 and +1 and the standard deviation was close to 1. In addition, "interval scales" are the rating scales which subjective properties are measured. The distance is normally defined as one scale unit for adjacent levels. For example, "a coffee brand rated 3 in taste" is one unit away from "a coffee brand which rated 4". In this case, equal intervals exist between the level descriptors (Burns & Bush, 2014, 177-179). For these reasons, ANOVA analysis and T test were used from parametric tests in this study.

**Table 1.** Normality Distribution

Evaluation Elements of Service Quality	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Physical Specifications	,64732	-,469	,437
Reliability	,84651	-,861	,392
Willingness	,81691	-,885	,397
Assurance	,68267	,093	-,685
Empathy	,78533	-,731	-,161

**Table 2.** Reliability Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	,867	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3909,405
	df	276
	Sig.	,000

In order to measure the reliability of the scale used in the study, reliability analysis was performed and is shown in Table 2.

The reliability coefficient should be 0.70 and above (Cronbach Alpha (0.70) <x) (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2015, p. 317). The reliability coefficient of the scale was estimated as (Cronbach Alpha) 0,867 and was interpreted to have a valid reliability level. Table 3 shows the demographic distributions of domestic and foreign tourists.

**Table 3.** Demographic Distribution of Domestic and Foreign Tourists

Domestic Tourists				Foreign Tourists			
	f	%		f	%		
Male	91	<b>52,9</b>	Gender	Male	74	49	
Female	81	47,1		Female	77	<b>51</b>	
15-25	46	26,7	Age	15-25	28	18,5	
26-35	68	<b>39,5</b>		26-35	78	<b>51,7</b>	
36-45	33	19,2		36-45	34	22,5	
46-55	16	9,3		46-55	7	4,6	
56 and older	9	5,2		56 and older	4	2,6	
Single	106	<b>61,6</b>	Marital Status	Single	94	<b>62,3</b>	
Married	66	38,4		Married	57	37,7	
0	111	<b>64,5</b>	Number of Children	0	95	<b>62,9</b>	
1	24	14		1	25	16,6	
2	17	9,9		2	22	14,6	
3	15	8,7		3	8	5,3	
4 or above	5	2,9		4 or above	1	0,7	
Primary School	6	3,5	Education Level	Primary School	2	1,3	
High School	54	31,4		High School	22	14,6	
Undergraduate	90	<b>52,3</b>		Undergraduate	109	<b>72,2</b>	
Postgraduate	22	12,8		Postgraduate	18	11,9	
Worker	47	<b>27,3</b>	Occupation	Worker	42	<b>27,8</b>	
Civil Servant	36	20,9		Civil Servant	42	<b>27,8</b>	
Retired	12	7		Retired	5	3,3	
Student	39	22,7		Student	35	23,2	
University	8	4,7		University Teacher	7	4,6	
Tradesman	12	7		Tradesman	13	8,6	
Housewife	9	5,2		Housewife	4	2,6	
Others	9	5,2	Others	3	2		
Less than	52	30,2	Monthly Income	Less than 2000\$	36	23,8	
2000-3000TL	59	<b>34,3</b>		2000-3000\$	48	<b>31,8</b>	
3001-4000 TL	42	24,4		3001-4000\$	48	<b>31,8</b>	
4001-5000TL	12	7		4001-5000\$	16	10,6	
5001-6000TL	7	4,1		5001-6000\$	3	2	
Total	172	100	Total	151	100		

The majority of the domestic tourists (52.9%) are male and the foreign tourists (51.9%) are female. The majority of domestic tourists (39.5%) and foreign tourists (51.7%) are between 26 and 35 years old. The majority of domestic tourists (61.6%) and foreign tourists (62.3%) are single. The majority of the domestic tourists (64.5%) and foreign tourists (62.9%) do not have children. Domestic (52.3%) and foreign tourists (72.2%) are

undergraduates. The majority of the domestic tourists are workers (27.3%), the majority of foreign tourists are workers (27.8%) and civil servants (27.8%). For the determination of monthly income; In the questionnaire forms TL and \$ options are used for domestic and foreign tourists, respectively. The majority of the domestic tourists have income between 2000-3000TL (34.3%) and the majority of foreign tourists have income between 2000-4000 \$ (63.6%). Table 4 shows the distribution of local and foreign tourists by region.

**Table 4.** Residence of Domestic and Foreign Tourists

Domestic Tourists			Residence	Foreign Tourists		
Regions	f	%		Continents	f	%
Central Anatolia	60	<b>34,9</b>		Europe	63	<b>41,7</b>
Aegean	34	<b>19,8</b>		Asia	55	<b>36,4</b>
Mediterranean	28	<b>16,3</b>		America	33	21,9
Marmara	18	10,5		Total	151	100
The Blacksea	11	6,4				
SoutheasternAnatolia	11	6,4				
Eastern Anatolia	10	5,7				
Total	172	100				

When Table 4 is examined; domestic tourists are mostly from Central Anatolia (34.9%), Aegean (19.8%) and Mediterranean (16.3%) regions, and foreign tourists are from Europe (41.7%) and Asia (36.4%).

**Table 5.** Evaluations and Means of Service Quality Elements of Domestic and Foreign Tourists

Evaluation Elements of Service Quality	Expressions	Means of Domestic Tourists	Means of Foreign Tourists
Physical Specifications	There are suitable horses for riders of different ages.	2,8488	3,1240
	There are suitable horses for riders of different riding levels.	2,8430	
	Instructors (trainers) and side walkers are presentable.	4,1802	
	Horses are sleek.	3,0349	
	Physical environment is satisfactory (restroom, protective materials for riders' safety etc.).	1,9186	
	Behaviors of other customers are suitable to the ambience.	3,9186	
Reliability	The number of horses is enough.	3,3968	3,1450
	Tour route is safe.	3,7199	
	The staff gives informative instructions to riders sufficiently.	3,9868	
	Insurance services for activities are enough.	1,4768	
Willingness	The number of instructors and side walker is enough.	3,5668	3,6328
	Waiting time is short for horse-riding trip.	2,6742	
	Attitudes and behaviors of employees are satisfactory.	4,1228	
	The staff is polite to the riders.	4,1674	

Assessments as Regard of Service Quality of Touristic Consumers Who Participate  
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Assurance	Horse equipment (saddle, bridle, rein, etc) is in good condition.	3	2,4507	2,6425	2,3765
	Horses are quiet.	3,2305		3,3311	
	First aid facilities are enough.	2,0123		2,1121	
	Business certifications and staffs certifications are in a place that everyone can see.	1,5602		1,4205	
Empathy	Price and service quality is consistent.	3,0165	3,2239	4,3728	3,6185
	The prices of other goods and services (food & beverage, souvenirs etc.) are satisfactory, too.	3,0491		4,0020	
	Registration desk, lobby and food & beverage services are enough.	3,4244		3,4238	
	Parking area is enough.	4,0116		4,2649	
	Transportation is easy.	4,2093		4,2914	
	There are disabled facilities.	1,6325		1,3563	

The expressions used in the evaluation of the service quality and the elements formed by these expressions and the average of these elements are shown in Table 5. When Table 5 is examined, both domestic and foreign tourists' views on physical properties are positive, domestic tourists are more positive about reliability, foreign tourists are more positive about their willingness, assurance in both groups is negative of foreign tourists were more positive in terms of empathy.

ANOVA analysis and T test were used to determine the differences between the evaluations, in terms of the demographic characteristics of the quality of service of domestic and foreign tourists. According to ANOVA analysis and T test results, no difference was found between domestic and foreign tourists in terms of gender, marital status, age and number of children. In terms of educational level of domestic tourists, there is no difference. However, there is a difference for foreign tourists.

**Table 6.** Differences Among Foreign Tourists' Assessment  
of Service Quality Elements in terms of Their Educational Levels

Evaluation Elements of Service Quality	Education Levels		Mean Difference	Standard Error	df	F	Sig.
Willingness	Undergraduate	Primary School	-1,35436	,51076	3	8,88	,000
		High School	-,72936	,16730			
Empathy	Undergraduate	Primary School	-1,35474	,46259	3	7,276	,000
		High School	-,52898	,15152			
	Postgraduate	Primary School	-1,00926	,48320			
		High School	-,87446	,13091			

When Table 6 is examined, according to their educational status of foreign tourists there are differences about willingness and empathy. The average scores of primary and high school graduates for willingness is higher than the average scores of undergraduate. For empathy, the average scores of primary and high school graduates is higher than those of undergraduate and postgraduates. When Table 7 is examined, there is a difference between tradesmen and civil servants, students, university teachers and housewives for willingness. For empathy; differences were found between workers and civil servants, retirees, students, university teachers and tradesmen.

When Table 8 is examined, for assurance there are differences between workers and civil servants and university teachers; between students and civil servants and university

teachers; between housewives and civil servants and university teachers in the element of assurance. For empathy; there is a difference between civil servants and workers and students; between retirees and workers; between university teachers and workers, students and housewives; between tradesmen and workers.

**Table 7.** Differences among Domestic Tourists' Assessment of Service Quality Elements in terms of Their Occupations

Evaluation Elements of Service Quality	Occupation	Mean Difference	Standard Error	df	F	p	
Willingness	Tradesman	Civil Servant	-,54167	,27076	7	2,882	,007
		Student	-,75160	,26814			
		University Teacher	-,75000	,37075			
		Housewife	-,96528	,35818			
Empathy	Worker	Civil Servant	-,70144	,17648	7	4,566	,000
		Retired	-1,08570	,25771			
		Student	-,57501	,17259			
		University Teacher	-,65514	,30475			
		Tradesman	-,76625	,25771			

**Table 8.** Differences Among Foreign Tourists' Assessment of Service Quality Elements in terms of Their Occupations

Evaluation Elements of Service Quality	Occupation	Mean Difference	Standard Error	df	F	p	
Assurance	Worker	Civil Servant	,60000	,14563	7	4,737	,000
		University Teacher	,68095	,27245			
	Student	Civil Servant	,66762	,15274			
		University Teacher	,74857	,27631			
	Housewife	Civil Servant	,87619	,34920			
		University Teacher	,95714	,41829			
Empathy	Civil Servant	Worker	,64683	,13839			
		Student	,38651	,14515			
	Retired	Worker	,65079	,30003			
	University Teacher	Worker	,93651	,25891			
		Student	,67619	,26258			
		Housewife	,91071	,39750			
	Tradesman	Worker	,56105	,20128			

When Table 9 is examined, for assurance there is a difference between domestic tourists with an income of 4001-5000 TL and those with lower income. For empathy, there is a difference between domestic tourists with an income of 3001-4000TL and those with lower income. When Table 10 is examined, for assurance, there is a difference between foreign tourists with an income of \$ 2,000 and less and those with an income of 2000-3000 \$ and 3001-4000 \$. When Table 11 is examined, for assurance, there is a difference between tourists coming from the Black Sea and tourists from Mediterranean, Central Anatolia, Aegean and South Eastern Anatolia; and tourists coming from the Eastern Anatolia and tourists from Mediterranean. For empathy, there is a difference between the tourists coming from Mediterranean and tourists from Marmara and Black Sea and between the tourists coming from Eastern Anatolia and the tourists from Mediterranean, Central Anatolia, Aegean and Southeast Anatolia. When Table 12 is examined, for assurance and empathy, there is a difference between tourists coming from America and tourists from Europe and Asia.

**Table 9.** Differences among Domestic Tourists' Assessment of Service Quality Elements in terms of Their Monthly Income

Evaluation Elements of Service Quality	Monthly Income		Mean Difference	Standard Error	df	F	p
Assurance	4001-5000 TL	Less than 2000TL	-,30641	,13146	4	2,828	,026
		2000-3000TL	-,27740	,12793			
		3001-4000TL	-,53333	,20742			
Empathy	3001-4000 TL	Less than 2000TL	-,47466	,17260	4	3,187	,015
		2000-3000TL	-,55724	,16796			

**Table 10.** Differences among Foreign Tourists' Assessment of Service Quality Elements in terms of Their Monthly Income

Evaluation Elements of Service Quality	Monthly Income		Mean Difference	Standard Error	df	F	p
Assurance	Less than 2000\$	2000-3000\$	,47778	,15314	4	4,157	,003
		3001-4000\$	,56111	,15314			

**Table 11.** Differences among Domestic Tourists' Assessment of Service Quality Elements in terms of Their Residence

Evaluation Elements of Service Quality	Residence		Mean Difference	Standard Error	df	Sig	F
Assurance	The Blacksea	Mediterranean	,69740	,22519	6	2,297	,037
		Central Anatolia	,46788	,20757			
		Aegean	,50749	,21952			
		Southeastern Anatolia	,63636	,26985			
	East Anatolia	Mediterranean	,58286	,23314			
Empathy	Mediterranean	Marmara Region	,55026	,25024	6	2,722	,015
		Black Sea	,60498	,29475			
	East Anatolia	Mediterranean	,97619	,30515			
		Central Anatolia	,85556	,28292			
		Aegean	,77941	,29798			
		Southeastern Anatolia	,81061	,36192			

**Table 12.** Differences among Foreign Tourists' Assessment of Service Quality Elements in terms of Their Residence

Evaluation Elements of Service Quality	Residence		Mean Difference	Standard Error	df	F	Sig.
Assurance	America	Europe	,40317	,15242	2	3,966	,021
		Asian	,38061	,15619			
Empathy	America	Europe	,52886	,14176			
		Asian	,46566	,14526			

## CONCLUSION

The study examined whether or not domestic and foreign tourists visiting the enterprises performing equestrian trekking activities are sufficiently satisfied with the service quality of these enterprises. In addition, based on the results of the research, it was aimed to make suggestions about what can be done to ensure that the domestic and foreign tourists visiting the enterprises that carry out equestrian trekking activities in Nevşehir will be more satisfied with the quality of the services offered by these enterprises. The scope of

the study was composed of 323 domestic and foreign tourists visiting the enterprises engaged in equestrian trekking in Nevşehir. Means scores were compared to determine whether there is any difference between domestic and foreign tourists in the evaluation of the service quality of the enterprises where equestrian trekking activities are performed. T test and ANOVA analysis were used to determine whether there is any difference between the evaluations of the service quality elements in terms of demographic characteristics of domestic and foreign tourists. LSD analysis was used to determine which variables caused differences. When the differences between “service quality assessments of domestic and foreign tourists are examined;

- It was observed that the averages of domestic and foreign tourists were very close to each other in terms of physical properties. Considering the expressions of physical features, because expressions of characteristics do not vary from person to person, it is thought that there is no difference between domestic and foreign tourists. The average value above 3 shows that tourists find businesses satisfactory in terms of physical properties. Therefore, the continuation of such practices would be beneficial for customer satisfaction.

- It has been determined that the evaluations of the domestic tourists in terms of reliability are in a positive way while the evaluations of the foreign tourists are in a negative way. It is seen that the average of the foreign tourists' expressions is very low, especially in terms of insurance and informative instructions. Regarding informative instructions, foreign language knowledge of employees is thought to be insufficient. Therefore, it is clear that care should be taken to ensure that insurance is provided for services and that foreign language knowledge of employees should be increased.

- The evaluations of domestic and foreign tourists about willingness are quite high, however, it was observed that the evaluations of foreign tourists were more positive. The reason for this difference is thought to be more care for foreign tourists by enterprises. Although the positive situation of the enterprises continues, it is thought that providing equal and high quality service without making any distinction between domestic and foreign tourists will give more results that are positive.

- It was observed that the general evaluations of the two groups about assurance are negative. However, when the averages of the statements are examined, it is found that the average of horse equipment materials and horses being quiet in nature were very high and the averages of the first aid and operating certificates were quite low. These statements are also caused by the decrease in the general average. Therefore, it is considered that the establishment of the enterprises' documents at the points that everyone can see and increasing the facilities for first aid will bring positive results in the service quality evaluations.

- In terms of empathy, the evaluations of domestic and foreign tourists were positive but the evaluations of foreign tourists were found to be more positive. When the expressions of empathy are examined, it is seen that the averages of the two expressions related to pricing are significantly different between the domestic and foreign tourists. Therefore, this difference is thought to be caused by the gap in monthly income. Although it is not possible to reduce prices according to domestic tourists, it may be beneficial to apply campaign prices in low season as in accommodation facilities. The averages of facilities for disabled people were very low in two tourist groups. In face-to-face interviews with enterprises, it is learned that there were no facilities in many enterprises. These arrangements are important in terms of both ethics and business success.

ANOVA analysis and T-test were conducted in order to determine the differences between the evaluations of the domestic and foreign tourists according to their



demographic characteristics. The level of education affects people's knowledge of their environment and the outside world, expectations and issues of interest (Rızaoğlu, 2003, p. 139). While there was no difference between the domestic tourists in the study about education, there was a difference in willingness and empathy among foreign tourists. The average of primary and high school graduates about willingness is higher than the average of undergraduates; For empathy, it was determined that the average of primary and high school graduates was higher than those of undergraduates and postgraduates. This difference may stem from the fact that people's expectations increased as their education levels increased. Therefore, it may be possible to say that their evaluations are more negative than tourists with low education level.

In order to change this situation, the service quality should be increased. In the analysis made on domestic tourists in relation to the occupation; for willingness, there was a difference between tradesmen and civil servants, students, university teachers and housewives; for empathy, there was a difference between workers and civil servants, retirees, students, university teachers and tradesmen. In the analysis made on foreign tourists, for assurance, the difference was seen between workers and civil servants and university teachers. Between students and civil servants and university teachers, between housewives and civil servants and university teachers. For empathy, it was seen that there was a difference between workers and students, between university teachers and workers, between university teachers and workers and students and housewives, and between tradesmen and workers. Occupations, life styles, types of products and services they will buy (Meydan Uygur, 2007, p. 174; Rızaoğlu, 2003, p. 139) affect the quality assessment of the services purchased. In the analysis on monthly income of domestic tourists; it is determined that there is a difference between tourists who have an income of 4001-5000TL and others with the lower income for assurance. For empathy, there was a difference between those with income of 3001-4000TL and those with lower income. For assurance of foreign tourists, there is a difference between tourists who have an income of less than \$ 2000 and those with an income of both \$2001 -3000 and \$3001 -4000.

It is normal for consumers with different levels of income to have different service quality expectations and assessments. It is natural that high-income tourists have higher expectations when considering the possibility of more equestrian trekking activities compared to low-income tourists. In this context, it is possible to say that providing services according to income levels and service quality expectations of the incoming tourists will increase their satisfaction levels.

The country or region of residence affects the attitudes and behaviours of consumers (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2004, p. 143). When the differences between the domestic tourists in terms of service quality are examined according to their residence; for assurance, the differences are observed between tourists coming from the Black Sea and those coming from the Mediterranean, Central Anatolia, the Aegean and Southeastern between tourists from the Eastern Anatolia and those coming from the Mediterranean. For empathy, the differences are between tourists coming from the Mediterranean Sea and those coming from Marmara and Black Sea; between the tourists coming from Eastern Anatolia and those from Mediterranean, Central Anatolia, Aegean and Southeast Anatolia. Cultural differences among people living in different regions of Turkey, differences in ways of life, differences about climate and eating habits are effective in their evaluations of service quality.

For example, people living in Black Sea Region are fast, short-tempered, overhasty and they are accustomed to rain, mud and horse-riding. However, it is difficult to observe the same habits in Aegean, Mediterranean, Central Anatolia and Eastern people.

There are also serious differences between the Eastern people and the Mediterranean people. These differences can also be seen in the assessment of service quality. For foreign tourists; It was determined that there is a difference between tourists coming from America and tourists from Europe and Asia about assurance and empathy. Differences among continents are normal and reasonable in that there are differences among regions within a country. For this reason, it is clear that the determination of the characteristics and expectations of the tourists in terms of their residence is important for customer satisfaction and loyalty. The use of the findings, comments and suggestions of the study in the enterprises performing equestrian trekking activities may enable that the visitors to be more satisfied with the services provided and as a result, the satisfaction level and the number of devoted customers will increase. Education and training of employees are essential in equestrian tourism to ensure quality and customer satisfaction, as well as the safety of horses and guests (Sigurðardóttir & Helgadóttir, 2015a). Satisfaction questionnaires posted online by Cavaliers du Monde tour operator suggest that clients consider the main criteria that determine the success of a trip are 'the personality and the qualifications of the guide'. Of course, the beauty of the landscape and local cultural and historical heritage are also key factors, but no more so than the quality of the animals, the equipment and the support provided (Pickel-Chevalier, 2015, p.126-127). Therefore, it is believed that the increase in the profitability of the enterprises will increase the economy and the tax revenues of the state will be affected positively by the situation. Moreover, thanks to these activities with high service quality, it will be possible to contribute to both local and international promotion.

In addition, it is known that one of the activities that cause the least harm to nature is the equestrian trekking among the touristic activities in Nevşehir (hot air balloon tours, ATV tours, regional tours with buses). For this reason, it is believed that the increase in service quality of the enterprises carrying out equestrian trekking will benefit from both economic and ecological aspects.

It is thought that this study will guide the future studies.

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## **PROBLEMS OF DESIGNING GEOPORTAL INTERFACES**

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**Abstract:** The manuscript is devoted to analysis of the problem of designing graphical geoportal interfaces. The support points for the problem solutions are formulated and rationale of each of them is given. The emphasis was placed on the following orientations: to a flexible process of interface development, the need to introduce adaptability, progressive development, the motivated abandonment of geospatial content management systems and the use of third-party libraries where necessary, problem-solving and achieving goals. The lists of basic functional and qualitative requirements for graphical geoportal interfaces are given. In the last segment, the authors share their experience in the development of geoportal solutions.

**Key words:** Geoinformatics, Geosciences, Design, Web-based GIS, Mordovia

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In the conditions of active economic and information development of regions, the effective use and development of geographic information systems (GIS), in particular web-based GIS (geoportals), is becoming particularly relevant. This class of software systems providing access to information resources about the natural and socio-economic sites in different regions of the country contributes to the formation of an information environment that determines the sustainable development of society: from the economy and realization of political potential to the progress in social and cultural sphere (Koshkarev et al., 2008). Geoportals are used in various professional fields: tourism (Sigala, 2012), dissemination of information on geological and cultural heritage (Koszewski et al., 2018), formation of spatial data infrastructure (Denzer et al., 2015), information management in land use systems (Cegielska et al., 2018), decision support systems (Karabegovic & Ponjavic, 2012), monitoring of technogenic systems (Xu et al., 2015), rational use of land and resources (Granell Canut et al., 2017; Reddy et al., 2018), analysis of the geoecological state of territories (Gachenko et al., 2016), emergency prevention and disaster reduction (Giuliani & Peduzzi, 2011), traffic flow management and road traffic management (Gunay et al., 2014), integration of complex scientific studies and visualization of their results (Yakubaylik et al., 2014; Blake et al., 2017a) and so on.

Large cartographic services, such as Google Maps, OpenStreetMap, Microsoft Bing Maps, Yandex Maps and 2GIS take special places. They are not profiled on the provision of specialized environmental data for scientific analysis, but they provide a convenient interface for finding interesting objects by key requests, the quality and high-speed response of which is worth orienting to. In this context, it is worth mentioning the use of the crowdsourcing concept, the essence of which is to transfer the function of updating geographic data to anyone who wishes, i.e. to the entire world community.

This concept was implemented in OpenStreetMap in its pure form thanks to which their maps are very detailed, and any change in geographic features and infrastructure can be timely added to the cartographic database which provides unprecedented relevance of the data presented in the system. When creating geoportal systems, many problems are solved both from the field of software engineering and other applied disciplines: software complexes of this kind acquire maximum efficiency when solving the problem of obtaining and storing information and knowledge (Samakovlija & Bartoli, 2017), automated analysis of collected data (Yermolaev et al., 2018; Yamashkin, 2018a; Yamashkin, 2018b), visualization of results and achievement of the possibility of working with them on the basis of modern web technologies (Fiedukowicz et al., 2012; Mehdi et al., 2014; Zhu et al., 2015). A special case is the navigation within a user-oriented geoportal and the search for geoinformation in large data sets. To solve this problem, advisory systems have been developed (Lombardo et al., 2015; Dareshiri et al., 2017).

## **LITERATURE BACKGROUND**

### **The history of designing geoportal interfaces**

Currently, a number of successful geoportal solutions that show their social and scientific significance have been proposed. In the mid-90's of the last century, spatial data infrastructure (SDI) developed as new spatial data resource management mechanisms. In accordance with the Inspire Directive (2007), the Member States of the European Union (EU) should provide their spatial geographical data in a single standardized format. In addition, many countries realized the prospects of spatial data infrastructure and the value of spatial data for economic benefits. The aim of the directive is to create a single spatial data base for storing, processing, transferring and

receiving these data within the EU to facilitate interaction with geographic information in solving political, social and economic issues. The adoption of the directive and the steps towards its implementation meant the universal recognition of SDI as the main path for further successful geoinformatic development (Koshkarev et al., 2008), and users witnessed the growing development of web-oriented web sites based on maps at national, regional and local levels for the professional use of geodata.

Spatial data on the INSPIRE geoportal are presented for all countries of the EU, and at the same time, many countries have their own national geoportals, for example: Sweden (<http://www.geodata.se>), Serbia (<http://www.geosrbija.rs>), Switzerland (<http://geo.admin.ch>), France (<http://www.geoportail.gouv.fr>), Poland (<http://geoportal.gov.pl>), the Netherlands (<http://www.nationaalgeoregister.nl>), Germany (<https://www.geoportal.de/>), Finland (<https://www.maanmittauslaitos.fi/>) etc.

The US geoplatform (<http://www.geoplatform.gov/>) is also characterized by the availability of complete and integrated environmental and geographic information with an authentic concept of representing maps. Russia has also a number of geoportal solutions: when creating a geoportal of the spatial data infrastructure of the Russian Federation (<http://nsdi.ru>), the experience of the all-European initiative (INSPIRE) was taken into account, and Roscosmos geoportal (<http://geoportal.ntsomz.ru>) was created to solve the problem of cataloging Russian satellite data and it operates on the basis of the Research Center for Earth Operative Monitoring. Despite the extensive use and successful experience of geoportal developments, a number of studies that relate to the usability of such sites is relatively small, and some of these studies mainly deal with commercial cartographic products or services (e.g. Yahoo Maps or Google Maps). One of the interesting examples (Skarlatidou & Haklay, 2006) showed the interests and expectations of users who visited pages of geoportals. In this study, the key emphasis was made only on the behavior of users without any experience in working with GIS.

Moreover, Hornbaek et al. (2002) primarily focused on the specific component of geoportal sites, namely an overview map. The authors analyzed the interactions of users with these maps. Other studies (Harrower & Sheesley, 2005; You et al., 2007) made focuses on the navigation tools on the geoportal map data, as well as the methods of scaling. As shown in these papers, the design of the user interface has a significant impact on the usability of the platform. One of the significant drawbacks is that the analysis was conducted only on specific examples and functions ignoring the full coverage of all the functionality and opportunities of geoportals. Nivala et al. (2008) analyzed a number of commercial geoportal services on the basis of which a complex of applied works was conducted. According to the results of the study, 403 problems that arose when working with various platforms were identified. In addition to the identified drawbacks, several proposals were presented to address them and improve the ease of using services. The number of detected errors underscores the importance of analyzing geoportal Internet services. Kramers's research (2008) emphasized the fact that many users cannot cope with a large number of functional opportunities provided by modern geoportals. The reason for this lies in the development of such interfaces that are closer to professional GIS specialists but not to ordinary users. However, as practice shows, the user-oriented approach is an effective way to avoid the most common mistakes made by users when working with web-GIS.

A number of recent scientific articles (Resch & Zimmer, 2013; Blake et al., 2017b; Gkonos et al., 2018) is devoted to open questions of the analysis of the convenience of using geoportal systems, the search for ways to improve user experience. Special attention is paid to visualization of cartographic data, as well as combined display of thematic

layers and three-dimensional models (Hoarau, 2012; Hoarau et al., 2013; Horbiński & Medyńska-Gulij, 2017), a numerical evaluation of the efficiency and convenience of graphical interfaces (Xin et al., 2012; Gkonos et al., 2018). Researchers agree that the problem solution of creating effective graphical geoportal interfaces is the initial formation of a design focused on a person, created to solve specific problems based on best practices and design patterns (Panchaud & Hurni, 2018).

A set of qualitative and functional requirements for interfaces is traditionally presented to geoinformation systems inheriting key properties of wide-range software information systems and with the help of these requirements they interact with the surrounding world (Maguire & Longley, 2005). In this specific area, the Application Programming Interface (API) and Graphical User Interface should be considered separately. The first class of interfaces provides the possibility of automatic or automated interaction with GIS including remote system management and data exchange. To maximize the effectiveness of these processes, specialized geodatabase formats and standards are used (GeoJSON, TopoJSON, KML).

They are deployed on the basis of such styles of interaction of components as REST, subsystems of Web API and web services functioning. The problem of developing reliable, easily modifiable applicative programming interfaces takes a special place in solving the problem of putting into operation the effective GIS. In this article we will dwell on the problem of creating modern web-based GIS: designing and developing stable, adaptive, intuitively understandable geoportal interfaces.

### **Support points for creating geoportal interfaces**

Analysis of existing geoportal solutions and experience in designing and developing web-based GIS (Yamashkin, 2015) permits to form a list of support points and meaningful following these points allows to approach the creation of effective geoportal interfaces:

1. Orientation to the flexible process of developing interfaces of geoportal system – the essence of this postulate is a permanent analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of a web-based GIS, its potential and external threats in a competitive Internet environment. In a dynamically developing Internet space the role of competent risk management which is necessary for sustainable development of a web project cannot be denied. Historically, the Waterfall Model of the life cycle of information systems is the first concept of software development described by Royce (1970). In this model, the process of creating software systems looks like a flow containing a certain clearly verified sequence of phases, and nowadays it most noticeably loses its relevance including the field of developing web-based GIS. It happens due to the fact that an attempt to initially think over all the functional and qualitative characteristics of the system is doomed to failure in the conditions of a polymorphic, constantly changing information world. Searching for an answer to this threat often goes into a flexible development characterized by a series of approaches to create software focused on iterative planning, risk management and dynamic requirements formation (Dingsøyr et al., 2010).

2. The need for cross-platform adaptive web-interfaces – the general introduction of smartphones and tablet computers into our lives resulted in a revolutionary change in the set of functional and qualitative requirements for graphical interfaces of web-based GIS. Capacitive sensors of modern devices give absolutely different possibilities for interaction with cartographic material allowing to control the processes of obtaining and changing geospatial content using gestures and specialized controllers. The presence of an encapsulated GNSS receiver allows to make a dynamic content selection relative to a user position or route, and the ability to make instantaneous photo and video leads to receiving a key for implementing the task of publishing urgent data from the first source.

3. Orientation to the future – responding to the new urgent requirements, geoportal interfaces should be designed and developed as an investment in the future. Thus, the technologies of augmented and virtual reality which are currently at the stage of their dynamic development are able to change the appearance of modern GIS fundamentally in the near future, as it was previously done by the widespread introduction of mobile computers. At the same time, the Internet of Things (IoT), which is taking root in all spheres of life of our society has enormous prospects and promises a turning point in all spheres: tourism, agriculture, medicine, design and creation of smart energy-efficient homes and cities. In this context, geoportal systems become the key link in coordinating the relationship between a person and smart machines, as well as controlling machine-to-machine communication (M2M). Their cartographic interfaces should allow to provide effective monitoring and control over the functioning of smart devices as components of the Internet of Things.

4. Motivated refusal from geospatial content management systems – currently, there is a number of frameworks and geospatial content management systems capable of providing a basic framework and a structural frame for the deployment of geoportal applications and allowing to reduce the time for designing, developing and implementing geoportals. The prominent family representatives of such software products include ArcGIS (for Server produced by American company ESRI) or GeoMixer (produced by Engineering Technology Center "Scanex"). Generally, recognizing the constructive role of systems of this class, the authors of the article reasonably believe that it is possible to achieve maximum efficiency in the development of geoportals in the initial design based on a problem situation and not on the abilities of geospatial management content systems of third-party suppliers. This statement is based on two propositions: the universality of existing geoportal frameworks inevitably results in redundancy of software components and interfaces (Yamashkin, 2016); and their limitations, on the contrary, become a stumbling block for the development of their own geoportal which becomes a functional hostage to its structural frame. It should not be forgotten that ready-made third-party solutions cost relatively large amounts of money, and if their use to deploy complex geoportals from an economic point of view may be appropriate (due to time and cost savings for developers), then such cooperation may prove to be economically unprofitable when building web-based GIS of middle and small scale. Finally, geospatial content management systems of leading vendors are written by ordinary specialists, so their software and architectural implementations are not devoid of vulnerabilities that endanger the data published on the Internet and users of the system. The key danger is that hundreds of organizations use ready-made geoportal solutions, and if an attacker finds a vulnerability in one typical, often analysis-accessible solution, all organizations that use them will be in danger. With a motivated refusal from third-party systems for managing geospatial content, problems of a different kind arise based on the need to form their own cohesive project team to create a geoportal or to find a solution in the field of IT outsourcing. However, despite the need for greater effort, the result can be rather fruitful, and it can be expressed in high efficiency, fault tolerance, extensibility and modifiability of the solution obtained. Finally, the geoportal graphical interfaces constructed in this way will not be limited by the functionality provided by the suppliers of the ready-made geoportal frames but will be tooled for solving specific problems.

5. Using third-party libraries where necessary – the previous point does not at all mean a complete refusal from ready-made solutions, but only focuses on the danger that the use of geospatial content management systems entails the appearance of limitations in the functional and qualitative characteristics of the system among which security has



an important role to play. A paradigm like a component-oriented programming that involve the reuse of independent modules of source code is currently at the height of its development having already proved its effectiveness in web technologies for a long time (Khitrin, 2017). Therefore, the use of external libraries of third-party suppliers that solve a task in the construction of geoportal systems, in particular their interfaces, should not be forbidden. This approach allows to save a significant amount of time and money resources due to the replacement of the need for self-implementation of some modules. This substitution takes its toll: having implemented a third-party software component into the system, the developer of the geoportal takes responsibility in that at any moment he/she will be obliged to modify this module under a certain problematic situation. One can give a specific example illustrating this statement. The Leaflet.js library created to organize the basic framework for the operation of dynamic electronic cards is often motivated as a third-party module that is being introduced into geoportal systems. This step can lead to saving many hours of work of competent programmers, because the implementation of such a fast fail-safe component is comparable in labor intensity to the development of a medium-sized geoportal as a whole. However, the undeniable advantages of this library are its high optimization, light weight and modifiability, and these positive sides entail a challenge: if it is necessary to extend the functionality to its problem area, it is necessary to be ready to independently expand the provided functionality.

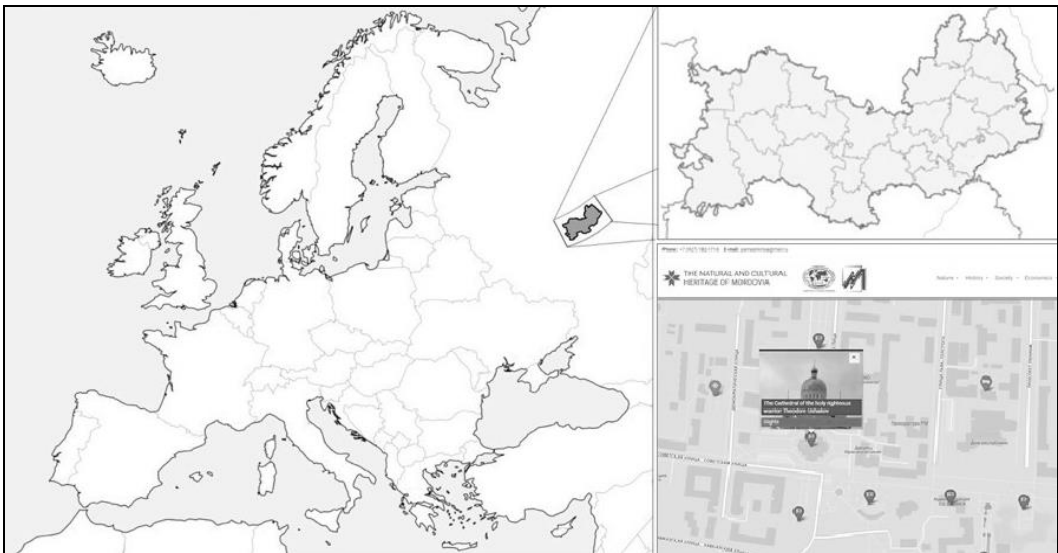
6. Human-centeredness of the interface design process is an important strategy in which the needs, desires and limitations of the end-users of the geoportal system are given considerable attention at each stage of the development process (Gkonos et al., 2018). Geoportal and cartographic design can be analyzed on the basis of studying the user's behavior (measuring the time spent on the resource, building a map of page transitions, scrolling and moving the mouse cursor). This is a common method for studying visual search problems and it contains design guidelines for improving geoportal interfaces that have a fairly long history of development. Jenks (1973) was one of the first cartographers to experiment with eye movement techniques in cartographic design. Observing user's behavior can be applied to the design of interfaces where a deeper understanding of the cognitive processes of obtaining information is required. The behavior data show which interface elements are interesting to users and which ones are mainly used for problem solving. Cognitive mapping uses cognitive theories and methods for understanding, producing and reading maps and geo-applications. Montello (2002) explained that informative and cognitive processes in cartography include several aspects: perception, learning, memory, thinking, reasoning, problem solving and communication.

7. Orientation to problem solving and achieving goals, which involves a list of support points for creating effective geoportal interfaces. More recently, the overwhelming number of web systems in all their diversity and geoportals in particular have been designed to represent an effective result of the work done. Currently, the dominant part of attention is paid to the creation of information systems that solve specific problems and function to achieve certain goals. The above list of support points for the creation of effective geoportal interfaces is not exhaustive but it includes a basic set of justified rules without which the development of effective geoportal solutions is under threat. Engineering requirements is a process which consists in the formation of a well-grounded list of functional and quality queries for the created geoportal interfaces. It is expedient to implement based on the compliance of these provisions.

#### **Examples of different approaches for designing geoportal interfaces**

Let's now turn to the consideration of the solutions realized by the authors of the article taking into account the support points for creating effective geoportal interfaces

and basic functional and qualitative requirements. The geoportal called "Natural and Cultural Heritage of Mordovia" (<https://tourismportal.net/>) was created for the purposes of visualization and dissemination of information on the multi-layer structure, the heritage of the cultural landscape of Mordovia. The key task of designing a geoportal is to disclose information about its natural, sociocultural and infrastructural potential of the region. The graphical interfaces of the geoportal are oriented to usability and characterized by the properties of intuitive understandability, adaptability, modifiability, reliability and security. The functioning of the geoportal is based on the spatial-temporal systematization and comparative analysis of large volumes of information in order to form an idea of harmonious interaction of nature and society in the form of a model of the national cultural landscape that provides coordination of the search and rational use of data on ethnogeographic space. The structure of the projected information resource reveals the tourist and recreational potential of the cultural landscape of Mordovia through the visualization of natural and cultural heritage (Figure 1). The multilayer structure of the cultural landscape is represented by two organizational contents: an electronic map and an encyclopedic block (Yamashkin, 2016).



**Figure 1.** The geographical location map of the study area – Mordovia (Russian Federation)

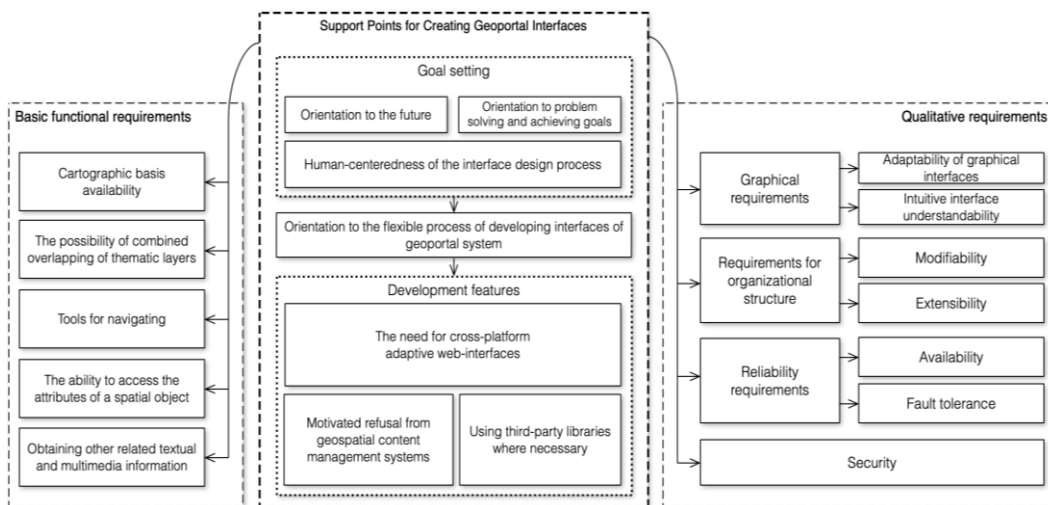
Specially protected natural areas of federal and regional significance, rare plant and animal species are listed as elements of the natural heritage within the portal. Illustrating the cultural and historical potential in the structure of the geoportal is based on information on the region as part of the Finno-Ugric space, which has a significant material and spiritual heritage. The cultural and historical potential is realized in the description of ancient cultures, archeological monuments, the most ancient cities of Mordovia, existing urban and rural settlements, the ethnic composition of the population, religious sites, places where outstanding people lived, historical and cultural monuments of federal and regional significance. The social and economic block of the tourist and recreational potential is structured through analysis of the economy of the region: industry, agriculture, forestry, construction, transport and communications, support points of development (Popović et al., 2018).

Another principle of building geoportal system is implemented in the project called Lifeshot.info. Its emphasis is to provide convenient cartographic interfaces to news information rather than to spatial objects as traditionally accepted. From the point of view of organizing control blocks, more attention is focused on the cartographic basis than in the previous example. Control components are designed in such a way as to provide an opportunity to obtain information about current news and events happening around the user. The approach to the conclusion of news information adopted in Lifeshot.info is unique and completely different from the solutions used by leading news vendors. The novelty and effectiveness of the result is due to the merger of the potential of geoportal systems and news resources. When developing a news geoportal, the property of adaptability of graphic interfaces is realized: it is convenient to receive information about surrounding events both from a desktop computer and from a mobile device. Currently, the prototype of the native geopolitical application Lifeshot.info is being developed for the Android operating system. Thereby, geoportal systems with well thought user interfaces can provide problem solutions from various problem areas whether it is disseminating information on the natural and cultural heritage of the region or solving the problem of efficient visualization of relevant news.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Functional and qualitative requirements for geoportal interfaces

Recognizing the reasonability of orientation to the flexible process of developing interfaces for geoportal systems and the need for a dynamic permanent formation of the requirements for them, one can nevertheless list the functional and qualitative requirements that will be necessary when designing the vast majority of geoportal solutions. Formation of a set of requirements should be carried out based on the list of support points for creating effective geoportal interfaces given in the previous section of the article. Functional requirements cover regulations of the system describing its behavior and options for using. The main question: "What should the geoportal system do?". The list of basic requirements for graphical interfaces for web-based GIS of this category is shown below (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** The support points for creating geoportal interfaces and the requirements they form

Cartographic basis availability is a requirement that allows to provide an intuitive visual reference of the spatial objects of geoportal to real world areas. Yandex Maps,

Google Maps, Bing and other vendors, OpenStreetMap (OSM) road layers, space images of various satellites and resolutions can act as a basic framework. The specification of the present requirement can be the function of changing the cartographic basis by the user. The possibility of combined overlapping of thematic layers is a function of almost every geoportal solution, the choice of categories and parameters of spatial objects is a variant part here. Specification of using the indicated option can be very diverse and include the specification of the list of control elements of thematic layers, as well as scenarios for selecting the displayed objects. Tools for navigating the geospatial database including scaling the map and navigating through it with dynamic loading of objects and multi-criteria search. In times of implementation of these functions it is important to rely on the possibility of input/output of information on various user devices: for example, on a smartphone, geoportal navigation tools will be more concise, some of them will be hidden in the departing menus but they can fully rely on the potential of touch control, rather than desktop interfaces. The ability to access the attributes of a spatial object is a requirement that aims to obtain detailed information about spatial objects. In particular, a detailed description of a section of the Earth can appear in a modular pop-up window and contain textual information and multimedia data. Object attributes are able to maximally expand a fixed, rigidly defined set of object nomenclature classes allowing to provide a variety of necessary information on an interesting element of the geospatial database. Obtaining other related textual and multimedia information that does not have a spatial reference. To achieve the tasks in various problematic situations, the geoportal system should often provide relevant information without regional reference. Contact information, encyclopedic materials, news feed, various data banks provide good examples. Focusing attention on geo-spatial cartographic materials, geoportals do not have to be limited only by them. If the need to implement functional queries is almost never in doubt, then executing many important qualitative (non-functional) queries often remains out of the engineering requirements. Nevertheless, the efficiency of the geoportal system directly depends on it. Qualitative requirements answer the question: "How should geoportal interfaces work?" It is necessary to mention separately the following list:

1. Graphical requirements determine the fact how graphical geoportal interfaces should look like. This area should be decomposed into the following blocks: adaptability of graphical interfaces and intuitive interface understandability.

2. Requirements for organizational structure divided into modifiability and extensibility indicate that the software implementation and design solutions of geoportal interfaces should provide quick and effective vertical (intensive) and horizontal (extensive) extension. Thus, cartographic interfaces should allow to connect new thematic layers easily, as well as reorient to solve new problems. From the point of view of implementation, graphic interfaces should function on the basis of fault-tolerant loosely coupled modules whose architecture allows to reuse the program code.

3. Reliability requirements including availability and fault tolerance describe the attributes of system quality characterized by the time of continuous operation of geoportal interfaces and the maximum allowed wait time. Components of cartographic geoportal interfaces must be repeatedly tested in order to minimize the probability of failure. It is important to remember that testing can never identify all the vulnerabilities of the system, but it should strive to make the fullest possible verification of the correspondence between the actual and expected behavior of the system on the final set of tests. Since geoportals belong to the class of distributed web systems and are accessed by a limited number of Internet users, it is important to ensure the stable functioning of the interfaces in conditions of powerful traffic flows. High-speed response ensures the speed and smoothness of interaction with geoportal interfaces.

4. Security is an unquestionably important qualitative requirement for the interfaces of the geoportal system including a request for delineation of access, provision of work with private data and reduction of risks from external attacks.

The indicated list of requirements is not exhaustive, it can and should be extended when designing a specific problem-oriented GIS. However, it is strongly recommended to take it into account when designing your own effective geoportal solution.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Evaluation of the effectiveness of introduced geoportal interfaces**

In order to judge the effectiveness of the developed interfaces, it is advisable to collect statistical information on the process of using geoportal resource. Graphical interface is a face of the web-based system and the behavior of the visitors receiving information and navigating links depends directly on them.

To solve the task of behavior monitoring, an internal system for collecting statistics was developed which makes it possible to account the attendance of the resource and the behavioral indicators. The data was collected on the basis of the received information transmitted by the web client in the body of the HTTP request, in particular, the user-agent (the line containing information about the software and hardware) and the client's IP address were analyzed. Here is a list of obtained indicators:

- Time spent on the geoportal is an important, informative and easily defined criterion reflecting the interest of visitors with the resource content. Users close uninformative pages a few seconds after opening them, they spend tens of minutes on interesting resources and hours on social networks every day. The higher this indicator is, the better. That is why the design of the portal, its functionality and content should be such that users spend maximum time on the resource.

- Geoportal visit depth shows how many pages the user browsed per visit. Going to one resource, the user can find all the necessary information on the first page. Users browse many pages on informative portals with good linking and this gives a good bonus when ranking such sites by search engines.

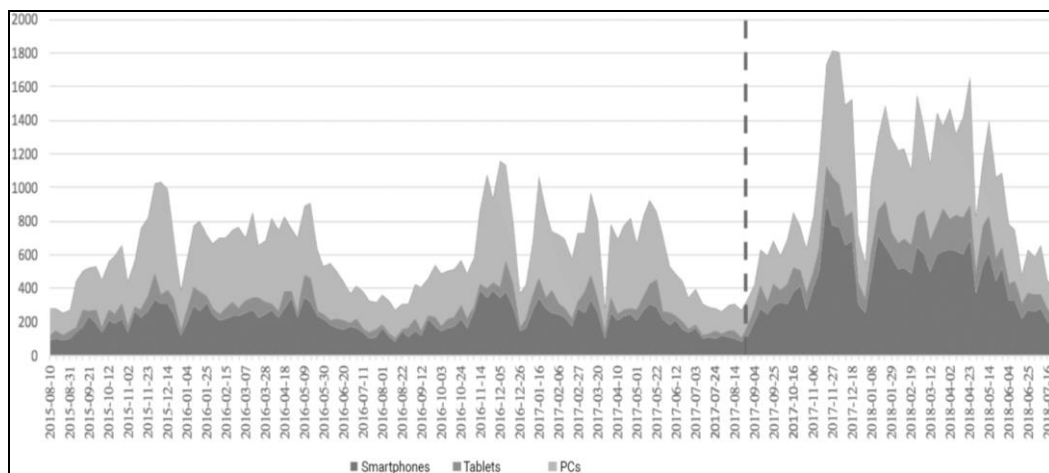
- Bounce rate – different search engines calculate the given indicator in diverse ways, but it is very important for all search engines. Often the indicator (percentage) of failures is the percentage of visitors who did not make the transitions to other pages of the site and left (refused further browsing) browsing not more than one of its pages. Reducing the value of this parameter can improve the design of the portal (special attention should be paid to optimizing navigation components) and increasing the value of the published content.

- Geoportal attendance is an important characteristic in itself, it is taken into account when ranking by search engines and indicates that the site is in demand among users. Together with other behavioral ranking factors, site traffic is an important criterion by which search engines evaluate web resources. The analysis of the effectiveness of changes is particularly informative. These variations are attracted by the modification of geoportal interfaces. Investigating the statistics of visits to "Natural and Cultural Heritage of Mordovia" geoportal, we divided the calculation of the indicators into two blocks: in the first case we determined the behavior indicators specific to the first cross-browser but non-adaptive version (functioning before September 1, 2017), in the second, to the updated adaptive design of the graphical interfaces described in this article. The results of the traffic behavior analysis are summarized in Table 1. The table shows that for the geoportal system with the second version of the interfaces, an increase in the relative share of a mobile traffic (visits from smartphones and tablets) comes at the expense of a decrease in the share of a desktop traffic. The objective process of widespread use of compact devices for browsing

Internet systems also touched on the updated geoportal: adaptive interfaces became more accessible from the search results for mobile devices. The transition made it possible to reduce the bounce rate as well and increase the average time spent on the geoportal and the depth visit of its pages. Thus, the change of graphic interfaces did not pass without a trace: the use of new modern solutions contributed to increasing the degree of involvement of the World Wide Web users in the work with the geoportal.

**Table 1.** Quantitative traffic figures for the first and second versions of the interfaces of "Natural and Cultural Heritage of Mordovia" geoportal, as well as the values of their changes

Version of geoportal interfaces	Qualitative traffic indicators	Type of device			
		PC	Smartphones	Tablets	TV sets
First, cross-browser	Unique visitors	65.6 %	29.6 %	4.7 %	0.1 %
	Bounce rate	13.1 %	18.7 %	13.7 %	1.5 %
	Average geoportal visit depth	2.1	1.5	1.9	3.2
	Average time spent on the portal	3:10	1:52	2:21	3:53
Second, adaptive	Unique visitors	47.2 %	41.2 %	11.1 %	0.5 %
	Bounce rate	12.3 %	14.6 %	11.1 %	0.5 %
	Average geoportal visit depth	3.2	3.6	3.8	4.0
	Average time spent on the portal	4:16	2:47	4:31	5:58
Change of indicators between 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> versions	Unique visitors	↓18.4%	↑11.6%	↑6.4%	↑0.4%
	Bounce rate	↓0.8	↓4.1	↓2.6	↓1.0
	Average geoportal visit depth	↑1.1	↑2.1	↑1.9	↑0.8
	Average time spent on the portal	↑0:06	↑0:55	↑2:10	↑2:05



**Figure 3.** Schedule of changes in the attendance of the geoportal "Natural and Cultural Heritage of Mordovia". Note: the dashed line indicates the time of transition to new interfaces

It can be noticed that the positive change in the analyzed indicators is achieved not only through the modification of graphical interfaces, but also due to the development of published content and the increase in the recognition of the resource. This is true but having constructed a schedule of the dependence of geoportal attendance and values of behavioral indicators on time, it can be seen that the introduction of new adaptive interfaces indisputably contributed to the improvement of behavioral indicators (Figure 3). The decrease in the attendance of the geoportal in summer is due to the large percentage of vacations, in particular among educators and scientists who are the main consumers of

geoportal content. The schedule shows that the introduction of new geoportal interfaces allowed to keep the trend of increasing the attendance of the resource in the autumn-spring periods tolerating to growth the volumes of incoming traffic and its behavioral indicators, to save traffic from desktop client machines and to increase mobile one.

## CONCLUSION

The conducted theoretical research and experience of practical development of geoportal systems allowed to draw the following conclusions' remarks:

1. Geoportals play an active role in ensuring the process of sustainable development of the global society by coordinating the search and rational use of natural resources, tourism, territorial and sectoral planning and property management, monitoring the social and environmental state of the region (Potić et al., 2017). In this case the effectiveness of geoportals strongly depends on the level of their users' graphical interfaces.

2. The analysis of existing geoportal solutions and experience in the design and development of geoportals made it possible to formulate a well-founded list of support points necessary for the creation of effective geoportal interfaces. It includes the following postulates: 1) orientation to the flexible process of developing interfaces of geoportal system; 2) the need for cross-platform adaptive Web-interfaces; 3) orientation to the future; 4) motivated refusal from geospatial content management systems; 5) using third-party libraries where necessary; 6) human-centeredness of the interface design process; and 7) orientation to problem solving and achieving goals.

3. The article contains a list of functional and qualitative requirements which are necessary when designing the vast majority of geoportal solutions. This list can be supplemented or decomposed in solving specific problems. The following functional requirements are identified: cartographic basis availability, the implementation of the possibility of combined overlapping of thematic layers, the availability of convenient navigation tools on the geospatial basis, access to attributive characteristics of spatial objects, as well as the possibility of obtaining other related textual and multimedia information. Adaptability of graphical interfaces for various devices, intuitive interface intelligibility, modifiability and extendibility, reliability and security are designated among the set of important qualitative queries.

4. As illustrative examples of different implementation of graphical user web interfaces, the article presents the case of "Natural and Cultural Heritage of Mordovia" geoportal and the Lifeshot.info news project. It is shown that well-thought out interfaces of geoportal systems can contribute to solving problems from various problem areas from the dissemination of information about the natural and cultural heritage to solving the problem of effective visualization of relevant news. The evaluation of the effectiveness of the implementation of adaptive geoportal interfaces was made which allows us to make a statement that the measures taken led to a positive growth of a mobile traffic on the project.

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## **WHAT MAKES WILDLIFE TOURISTS HAPPY AND WHAT DISAPPOINTS THEM? LEARNING FROM REVIEWS POSTED ON TRIPADVISOR**

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**Abstract:** Wildlife tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors worldwide and has been increasingly used to promote tourism in certain countries. With 26 national parks and 61 wildlife reserves covering 13% of its land surface area, Sri Lanka has a great potential to become one of the world's hotspots for wildlife tourism. However, in order to ensure a sustainable development of this sector it is essential to evaluate tourists' level of satisfaction with their experience. This research examined the main factors contributing to tourist satisfaction / dissatisfaction in Sri Lanka's most visited national park. QDA Miner and Wordstat software were used for the qualitative content analysis and coding of reviews posted by international tourists on TripAdvisor. The research revealed that the great majority of visitors were satisfied with their visit at Yala National Park. However, this overall assessment masks a highly uneven visitor experience which was understood only after qualitatively analyzing the content of the visitors' comments. The study found that satisfaction/dissatisfaction of visitors depends on three main factors: the number and diversity of animals, the number of vehicles and tourists and the knowledge and skills of guides and drivers. These findings have a number of managerial implications which are highlighted at the end of the study.

**Key words:** wildlife tourism, safari tourism, tourist satisfaction, user-generated content (UGC), TripAdvisor, Sri Lanka

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the fastest growing tourism sectors worldwide (Rodger et al., 2007), wildlife tourism is an important source of money and a major component of the host country economy (Higginbottom, 2004), especially in Southern and Eastern Africa (Akama et al., 2011; Akama and Kieti, 2003; Brooks et al., 2011; Mbaiwa, 2011; Okello et al., 2008; 2005). For example, wildlife tourism accounts for 70% of total tourism earnings in Kenya, 25% of the GDP and more than 10% of total formal employment (Akama et al, 2011, citing governmental documents). While not nearly as important as in Africa, wildlife tourism is also gaining importance in some Asian countries such as Thailand (Duffy and Moore, 2010) and China (Cong et al., 2014) and is developing very fast in Sri Lanka, a developing country of over 22 million people situated southeast of the Indian Peninsula. Sri Lanka's economy was hampered for 26 years by a civil war between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and desperately needs to increase tourism income in order to recover. Sri Lanka is a country with great potential for the development of wildlife tourism. The country boasts numerous national parks and reserves that could be used by marketers to attract international tourists. Together with the Western Ghats, Sri Lanka is one of the world biodiversity hotspots (Mittermeier et al., 1999) and has the highest density of flowering plant, amphibian, reptile and mammal species in Asia (Weerakoon, 2012 citing a document released by the government). There are 26 national parks in Sri Lanka covering an area of 5734 km<sup>2</sup> and 61 wildlife sanctuaries with a total area of 2780 km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>1</sup> In total, over 8500 km<sup>2</sup> or 13% of Sri Lanka's land surface area has been designated as Wildlife Protected Areas (WLPAs).

Designated as a life sanctuary in 1900 and declared a national park in 1938, Yala is the most visited national park in Sri Lanka (Bultjens et al., 2005). Situated in the southeast of the country and covering 97,881 hectares (International Water Management Institute, 2006), it is home to 215 species of birds – of which seven are endemic to Sri Lanka – and 44 species of mammals (Senaratna, 2009). Among these, sloth bears and elephants are major attractions for tourists. However, what makes Yala unique among the natural parks in Sri Lanka is its leopard population – the park is home to one of the highest densities of leopard in the world (Kittle, 2009). There is a strong support for further tourism development among the local communities so there are plans to increase visitation levels (Chandralal et al., 2010). However, this massive increase in the number of visitors, especially to national parks and other protected areas already poses a major challenge to nature conservation as well as to the experience of the visitors (Rathnayake, 2016b).

In order to ensure a sustainable development of this sector it is essential to evaluate tourists' level of satisfaction with their experience. Satisfaction of visitors plays an important role in planning and marketing wildlife tourism products and destinations (Yoon and Uysal, 2005) and in increasing destination competitiveness (Andriotis et al., 2008). It has been reckoned that tourist satisfaction leads to repeat visits and/or positive word-of-mouth (Som & Badarneh, 2011) as well as improved brand equity and increased revenues for destinations as tourists will be willing to pay more for their experience (Dmitrovic et al., 2009). Any form of feedback from tourists could help destination developers and marketers to identify the main issues regarding visitor satisfaction and help design tools to improve the image of the destination and increase satisfaction (Andriotis et al., 2008; Egresi and Polat, 2016). Analyzing the factors that influence visitor satisfaction with their experience is of paramount importance, especially in wildlife tourism where tourism development needs to happen in parallel with biodiversity conservation and local community development (Torres-Sovero et al.,

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<sup>1</sup>According to Sri Lanka's Department of Wildlife Conservation ([www.dwc.gov.lk](http://www.dwc.gov.lk)).

2012). Understanding the interaction between tourists and wildlife is, also, important for the sustainability of the industry (Rodger et al., 2007).

In general, visitor satisfaction has been investigated with the use of quantitative methods. However, the use of questionnaires and Likert scale questions to examine tourists' satisfaction is not always the research method that leads to the most accurate results (Alegre and Garau, 2010); some researchers have noted that these questionnaires are biased towards more positive ratings of the destination attributes (Oh et al., 2001). More recently, qualitative methods, such as content analysis of reviews posted by users on travel sites started to be employed; however, their use is still limited. To the best knowledge of the authors there are only a few studies on wildlife tourism based on content analysis of reviews posted on specialized sites such as TripAdvisor and even fewer dealing with visitors' satisfaction. Aiming at filling in this gap, this study will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. Whether or not international tourists visiting national parks in Sri Lanka are satisfied with their overall experience.
2. What are the most important factors that could determine international tourists' satisfaction with their experience visiting these parks?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Wildlife tourism**

Wildlife tourism is a form of alternative tourism (Egresi, 2016) that is undertaken to view and/or encounter wildlife (Newsome et al., 2004). It includes a diversity of activities such as bird watching, wildlife observing, photo safari, whale watching, trophy hunting, sport fishing, and reef diving (Rathnayake, 2016a). Wildlife tourism could be about animals in captive or semi-captive state or about animals roaming freely in the wild (Newsome et al., 2004). In the first case it could include more interactive activities, such as feeding and/or touching the animals while in the latter case tourists' activities are limited to observing and photographing (non-consumptive activities) or hunting and fishing (consumptive activities) (Higginbottom, 2004; Newsome et al., 2004). In this study, by wildlife tourism, we understand only those activities undertaken by tourists to observe and photograph wild animals in their natural, non-enclosed environment.

Worldwide, the number of tourists interested in wildlife is constantly rising. It is estimated that between 20% and 40% of international tourists could be engaged in wildlife tourism (Rathnayake, 2016a). Wilderness tourism usually takes place in state-run protected areas but sometimes could be organized on privately-owned and operated wildlife "farms" where wilderness has been commodified (Brooks et al., 2011). In some destinations, wildlife tourism is the sole attraction while in others it is promoted in tandem with other tourism forms and products such as nature-based tourism, rural tourism, cultural tourism or religious tourism (Valentine and Birtles, 2004). In general, tourists have a preference for dangerous animals – both herbivores and predators (Newsome et al., 2004) and for wildlife that is endangered, threatened or rare (Cong et al., 2004; Higginbottom, 2004). Ideally, animals and birds favored by tourists should be active during the day and easy to approach and observe, tolerate visitors easily and exist in great number and/or display great varieties (Reynolds & Braithwaite, 2001).

Besides economically benefiting local communities (Mbaiwa, 2011), development of wildlife tourism could also finance the conservation and preservation of biodiversity and local ecosystems (Tisdell and Wilson, 2001). Moreover, wildlife tourism also includes an educational component; if properly done, it can educate visitors to become more aware of the needs for biodiversity conservation and to behave in a way that would minimize harm to the wildlife (Ballantyne et al., 2011). The main challenge for the providers of wildlife

tourism products and services is to provide tourists with the best experience, while, at the same time minimizing their impact on the environment (Reynolds & Braithwaite, 2001).

### **Tourist satisfaction**

Satisfaction is a multifaceted concept that measures to what degree tourists' expectations are fulfilled by their experience at the destination (Pizam et al., 1978). Satisfaction has been approached from different angles and a number of theories have been developed to explain it. One of the most popular theories among scholars of tourism studies is the disconfirmation theory (Oliver, 1980). This theory states that tourists have previous expectations and satisfaction with their experience results from comparing these expectations with the perceived experience visiting the destination (Pizam & Milan, 1993). If the experience is better than or matches the expectations (positive disconfirmation), then we can say that the visitor is highly satisfied and looks forward to returning in the future (Akama & Kieti, 2003; Yu & Goulden, 2006). If the experience is not up to its expectations (negative disconfirmation), the visitor is dissatisfied and is unlikely to return and/or recommend the destination to others (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

However, not always tourist satisfaction leads to increased number of tourists (Akama & Kieti, 2003). Overall satisfaction does not guarantee repeat visitation as often tourists prefer not to visit a place twice and, instead, to look for new destinations (Yu and Goulden, 2006). However, they can still promote the destination in case of positive experiences by recommending it to others (Akama & Kieti, 2003; Lee et al., 2007; Yu and Goulden, 2006). Assessment of visitor satisfaction is very complex and includes also experiences of tourists with services and facilities at the destination as well as personal interaction experiences, including the performance of the tour guide/driver (Chen et al. 2011; Reynolds & Braithwaite, 2001). Moreover, tourist satisfaction depends not only on the quality of the tourism product and/or service but also on price and the perceived value of the product and/or service (Akama & Kieti, 2003; Lee et al., 2007).

### **Use of reviews posted on TripAdvisor for data collection**

Word of mouth is a cheap and very powerful strategy to attract tourists to a destination (Okello et al., 2005) and plays an important role in marketing tourism products and services (Litvin et al., 2018). More recently, with the arrival of electronic media, in the form of user-generated content (UGC), the importance attached to online reviews posted by peer users has risen even more (Zeng and Gerritsen, 2010) creating new possibilities for marketers (Dellarocas, 2003). These reviews, which were often likened to electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) have revolutionized the travel industry (Vinod, 2017) facilitating independent travel planning (Xiang et al., 2015). We should also mention that eWOM is particularly important in tourism because of the intangible nature of the industry (Martin-Fuentes et al., 2018). Many independent travelers are now able to select their destination and plan their trip without the help of travel agencies, based on advice shared on electronic media by fellow travelers (Shanka et al., 2002). The advantage of online travel-related UGC is that it is easy to understand (Zhang and Sun, 2017) and is more trustworthy than any marketing material posted by providers of tourism services (Albarq, 2014). Moreover, compared to classical WOM, which in time may fade away, eWOM remains posted and can influence the intentions of many more tourists (Yang et al., 2012).

Considering the popularity of travel websites such as TripAdvisor (Cong et al., 2014), we can safely assert that the power of eWOM has multiplied (Schegg et al., 2008) to become the most influential source when making travel-related decisions (Zhang and Sun, 2017). Founded in 2000, TripAdvisor is the largest online network of travelers in the world with operations in 45 countries, 315 million members and more than 500 million reviews. The main appeal of reviews on TripAdvisor is the perceived objectivity; most

visitors find these reviews to be credible and useful (Cong et al., 2014). The use of reviews on TripAdvisor in tourism research to examine satisfaction is still in its incipient stage (Egresi, 2017; Egresi, 2015; Wu et al., 2014) and very few studies deal with wildlife tourism (Cong et al., 2014; Prakash et al., 2017a, 2017b, 2017c). Cong et al. (2014) content-analyzed tourist reviews on TripAdvisor of the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding in China. They found that tourist motivations, preferences and satisfaction levels varied. Prakash et al. (2017a) examined the major reasons for visitor dissatisfaction in five national parks in Sri Lanka. They found that 75% of the negative reviews were related to park management and included: overcrowding, too few species of wildlife that can be observed, high entrance fees and lack of quality interpretation services. A similar study at five ex-situ elephant establishments in Asia revealed that most visitors were dissatisfied mainly with the unethical treatment of elephants and with the lack of conservation relevance. Also many visitors expected more interaction with elephants than they were allowed to have (Prakash et al., 2017b). A third study by Prakash et al. (2017c) explored tourist satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the whale watching operation in Mirissa, southern Sri Lanka. They found that the main complaints of tourists were overcrowding with boats and tourists and harassing the whales.

## METHODOLOGY

Reviews published by users on Tripadvisor between 1 November 2013 and 31 June 2017 were compiled for this study. Only reviews in English were considered, which represented approximately 60.6% of the total reviews. Each review was entered in an excel document and then exported to QDA Miner and coded as case. QDA miner, developed by Provalis Research is a software package used for coding, annotating, retrieving and analyzing qualitative data in textual and photographic forms. Next, we searched for duplicates and all found duplicates were carefully removed. In the end, a total number of 368 cases (amounting to 40,748 words) were analyzed.

**Table 1.** Code frequency

Category	Code	Count	% Codes	% Cases
Experience	Worth	200	17.9	54.3
	Missed	83	7.4	22.6
	Disappointing	63	5.6	17.1
Time	Morning	93	8.3	25.3
	Afternoon	38	3.4	10.3
Activity	Bumpy ride	69	6.2	18.8
	Photo	12	1.1	3.3
	Toilet facilities	12	1.1	3.3
	Lunch/breakfast	13	1.2	3.5
	Crowded	113	10.1	30.4
	Driver/guide	76	6.8	20.7
	Dusty road	19	1.7	5.2
Wildlife	Abundant	132	11.8	35.9
	Diverse	60	5.4	16.3
	Elusive	54	4.8	14.7
Entry	Cost	54	4.8	14.7
	Line	29	2.6	7.9

In order to compile the list of themes and concepts, manual coding was performed. This was deemed necessary because, often, words were misspelled and/or shortened and

therefore not picked up by the software. Also, while doing a good job in about 70% of the cases (Schuckert et al., 2015), text analysis software cannot always understand the real meaning of sentences. In the second part, we used another Provalis software, Wordstat, to better understand and visualize the relationships among words and categories.

## FINDINGS

Following the manual coding process, a number of 17 codes resulted which were further grouped into five categories or themes (experience, time, activity, wildlife and entry). We counted a code only once in any case, regardless of how many times it was mentioned. The most frequently used codes can be seen in table 1.

### **International tourists' satisfaction with their overall experience in Yala Park**

As can be seen in table 1, over half of all those who posted reviews on TripAdvisor were content with their experience in Sri Lanka's national parks and only a little over 17% expressed dissatisfaction (for the rest – to 100% - there is no mention of whether they were satisfied or not in their review). Less than a quarter (22.6%) lamented for missing the main animal attractions, such as the leopard or the sloth bear but many of these still considered their experience to be satisfactory. For example, one reviewer titled his/her review: "*Fantastic – saw everything – except a bear*" (Case # 1). Another reviewer, while sorry for not being "*lucky enough to spot a leopard*", still started his/her account of Yala Park with "*What a great place!*" (Case # 17).

### **Factors determining tourists' satisfaction**

Tourists can choose to buy either a full-day or a half-day safari. Not all reviewers specified in their post the type of ticket they bought, but of those who did, it seems that the majority preferred the half-day option. In total, "morning" was mentioned 93 times (8.3% of all codes), or in more than a quarter of all cases, while "afternoon" was mentioned 38 times (more than 10% of all cases". The morning safari was preferred by some reviewers because – they claimed – afternoons were hot and with fewer animals to see (Case # 21) while in the early mornings many animals come to the waterholes to drink and therefore are easy to spot (Case # 219). Others, on the other hand, recommended afternoon visits because "*The atmosphere in the late afternoon is magical, the sun begins to set and the air becomes cooler. The light is perfect for photographs and the animals leave their shelters, which increases chances of encounters*" (Case # 38). Moreover, there could be "*a lot less safari jeeps in the park in the evening to contend with and it made seeing the wildlife a bit easier*" (Case # 52). Further others recognize that, while both could be equally satisfying, morning and afternoon safaris could offer different experiences (Case # 33).

In the "activity" category, the codes that appeared the most frequently are "crowded" (113 times, 30% of all cases), "driver/guide" (76 times, almost 21% of all cases and "bumpy ride" (69 times, almost 13% of all cases). As we can see, the problem of jeeps crowding the few roads in the park has bothered numerous reviewers (table 2).

As can be understood from the quotes above, the great number of safari jeeps that are allowed to enter the park every day would scare away the animals depriving tourists of animal sights, which is the very reason visitors booked the safari. Moreover, when rushing at full speed to a site where an animal was spotted, jeep drivers endanger the integrity of tourists, especially considering that roads are in very poor state. For this reason, one reviewer stated clearly that the safari was "*Not advisable for aged people or people with back pain as most of the drive is bumpy and it will hurt the back*" (Case # 71). Other reviewers also mentioned the constant dust and the pollution generated by the numerous jeeps clustering together. While "crowded", "bumpy ride", and "dusty road" were used

with negative connotations, the code “driver/guide” was used in both positive and negative situations. For example, one reviewer emphasized that having good guides is paramount to having a satisfying experience in the park: *“Our guides, one from the safari company that drove, another from our hotel that served as a spotter/naturalist, were both excellent and saw birds and other animals that we would have missed with our untrained eye”* (Case # 52). Unfortunately, some visitors may end up with *“young and inexperienced persons who are really just drivers, who don’t really know much about animals and like car-racing all the time”* (Case # 217).

**Table 2.** Quotes that illustrate overcrowding

Quote	Case #
<i>[...] Do not come to Yala expecting a Serengeti-like experience, it is not that. You will see lots of other jeeps especially if seeing some of the larger game the park contains – Leopards, Elephants, etc. In the case you see these creatures, be ready to see up to 30 other jeeps that will come rushing to the spot where the animals are. [...]</i>	52
<i>[...] Go with the company that accesses Yala from the back, not the main entrance. There are 150 jeeps everyday entering Yala from the main gate and they race with each other to see animals - absolutely crazy! However there are only 12 companies that access from the back gate. [...]</i>	55
<i>We did a morning safari on 1 February 2017. We reached the park entrance at about 5:45am, and got surprised to see so many jeeps. [...] What disappointed us most is the number of jeeps, which are uncoordinated and disorganized. When drivers got the info about sighting something interesting, so many of them rush to the place, creating big traffic jam and noise/air pollution. The Park should seriously consider limiting the number of jeeps; otherwise, visitors cannot enjoy nature, and nature will be gradually damaged by jeeps.</i>	112
<i>I had a good time – really enjoyed it. However, would have been better with less of a crowd. Every time something is spotted, all the jeeps in the vicinity start to crowd round, and most often than not, scare the wildlife away. [...]</i>	116
<i>The worrying factor is the pressure created by so many vehicles. We did come up against long backlogs of jeeps clogging the grade roads coming in both directions rendering any form of escape impossible.</i>	320

When analyzing the quotes that best illustrate the codes “photo”, “bathroom facilities” and “lunch/breakfast” we notice that the tone is generally neutral (*“We were here for taking wildlife photo, ideal place when you have good driver/guide. Crowded, especially when leopard was seen (sic!). And many peoples take photo with compacts, mobile and tablets :-)* even when 300mm telephoto lens is short”, Case # 216), although it sometimes could be positive (*“The toilet break by the seaside was heavenly with sea breeze to add it on”*, Case # 23) or negative (*“When we approached the toilet facility near the beach, I saw trash everywhere and used toilet paper (we were advised to actually not use the toilet because it was so unclean). I think that park management should install proper facilities so as to avoid the amount of rubbish in the park”*, Case # 226), especially when mentioning toilet/bathroom facilities. We found that three codes could best describe the characteristics of wildlife in the park. Two of these can be considered positive (“abundant” and “diverse”) and one negative (“elusive”). Wildlife is characterized as “abundant” in 132 cases (almost 36% of all cases) and diverse in 60 cases (over 16%). Only 14.7% of the reviewers complained for the scarcity of the wildlife in the park (table 3). The last category (“entry”) includes two codes that best describe the experience of the reviewers before entering the park (“cost” and “line”). When mentioning the cost of the tickets to enter the park, most reviewers simply reported a figure (often quoted in local



currency) without making any comment whether they felt it was too high, too low or just right. Out of those who commented, most seemed to believe that tickets were rather expensive. For example, one reviewer lamented: “[...] We paid 4300 per person entry fee and 5000 for a truck with a friendly and good driver/guide. Could be a bit too much! [...]” (Case # 34). Another visitor considered that the ticket was “a tad bit expensive but worth it” because the reserve is well run (Case # 30). Yet another tourist even appreciated the entrance fee to be reasonable when traveling in group as discounts can be negotiated (Case # 228). While the code “cost” is used in both positive and negative contexts, “line” is used exclusively to denote a complaint. For example, one visitor reported: “We had read reviews that the park is commercial and the host at our hotel informed us there are about 100 jeeps!! We thought he's definitely exaggerating! However, we were shocked to see a huge line-up at the entrance of the park. [...]” (Case # 46).

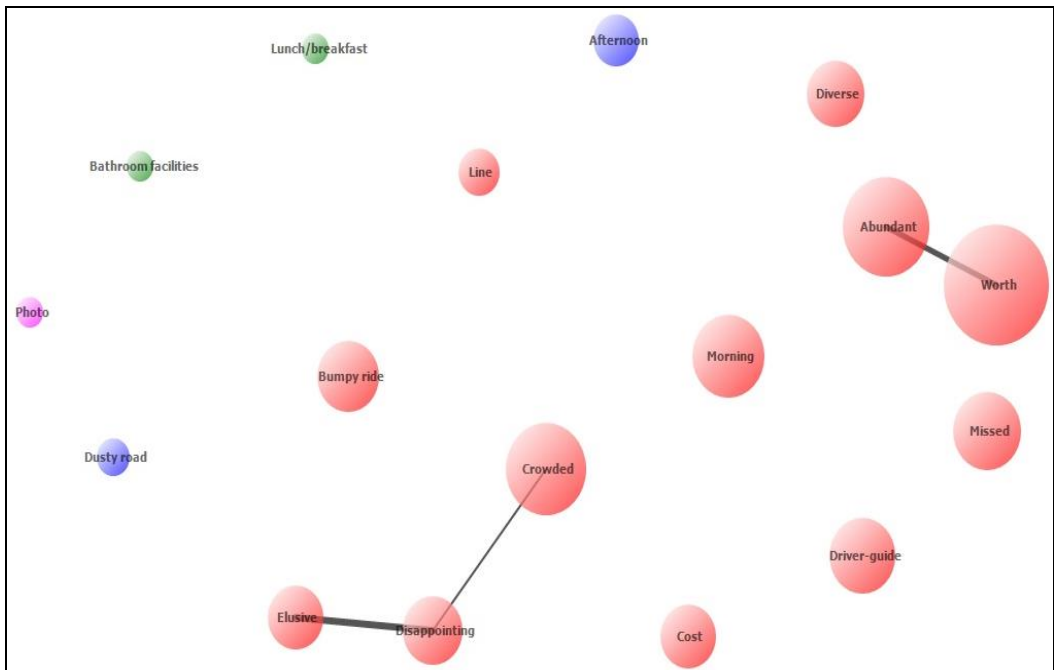
**Table 3.** Quotes showing positive and negative views of the wildlife

<b>Positive views of the wildlife (under the codes “abundant” &amp; “diverse”)</b>	<b>Negative views of the wildlife (under the code “elusive”)</b>
Having never been on safari before, this was a wonderful first experience. We saw loads of different creatures including elephants, crocodiles, water buffalo, many different birds and even a black bear! The park has a wide open plains, numerous lakes, rocky outcrops and lots of tightly packed bush, so there's plenty of variation. (Case # 29)	If sitting on a highway with 40 other cars is your kind of thing, this safari is for you. While novel for the first hour or so, after a while it becomes a little tiresome. Animals are few and far between (I can hardly blame them) and there seemed to be little explanation by any of the guides for what we were actually seeing.[...] (Case # 111)
Vast land, scenic trails, abundance of wildlife, from birds to mammals, we have sighted leopards, elephants, kingfishers, all kinds of colorful birds, wild boar, crocodile, peacocks...a serene park. However, since this reserve is one of the key attraction, it tends to be slightly overcrowded at the entrance. (Case # 39)	[...] it was all nothing but a huge disappointment. The driver just kept on driving and we were sitting at the back of the jeep hoping to see some wildlife. All we saw was buffaloes, monkeys, rabbit, deer and crocs. Besides crocs, all of this we have seen outside Jungle too so we felt like our money was entirely wasted. The Jungle literally felt empty! [...] (Case # 138)
Yala National Park was predominantly low thorny acacia habitat. There was an abundance of wildlife: deer, crocodiles, wild boar, elephants, wild buffaloes, monkeys and a huge variety of water birds.[...](Case # 103)	Average safari with few animals to see [...] In all we seen approx 6 animals and 4-5 birds, nothing spectacular and not really worth doing if you previously have been to a good safari or zoo. (Case # 198)

Next we explored the potential relationship among these codes by using the codes co-occurrences tool available in QDA Miner. Results are displayed in the form of dendograms, concept maps and proximity plots which were obtained through the computation of co-occurrences index and the application of hierarchical cluster analysis and multidimensional scaling on all codes. For example, based on proximity values calculated on all codes, we obtained a 2D concept map (figure 1).

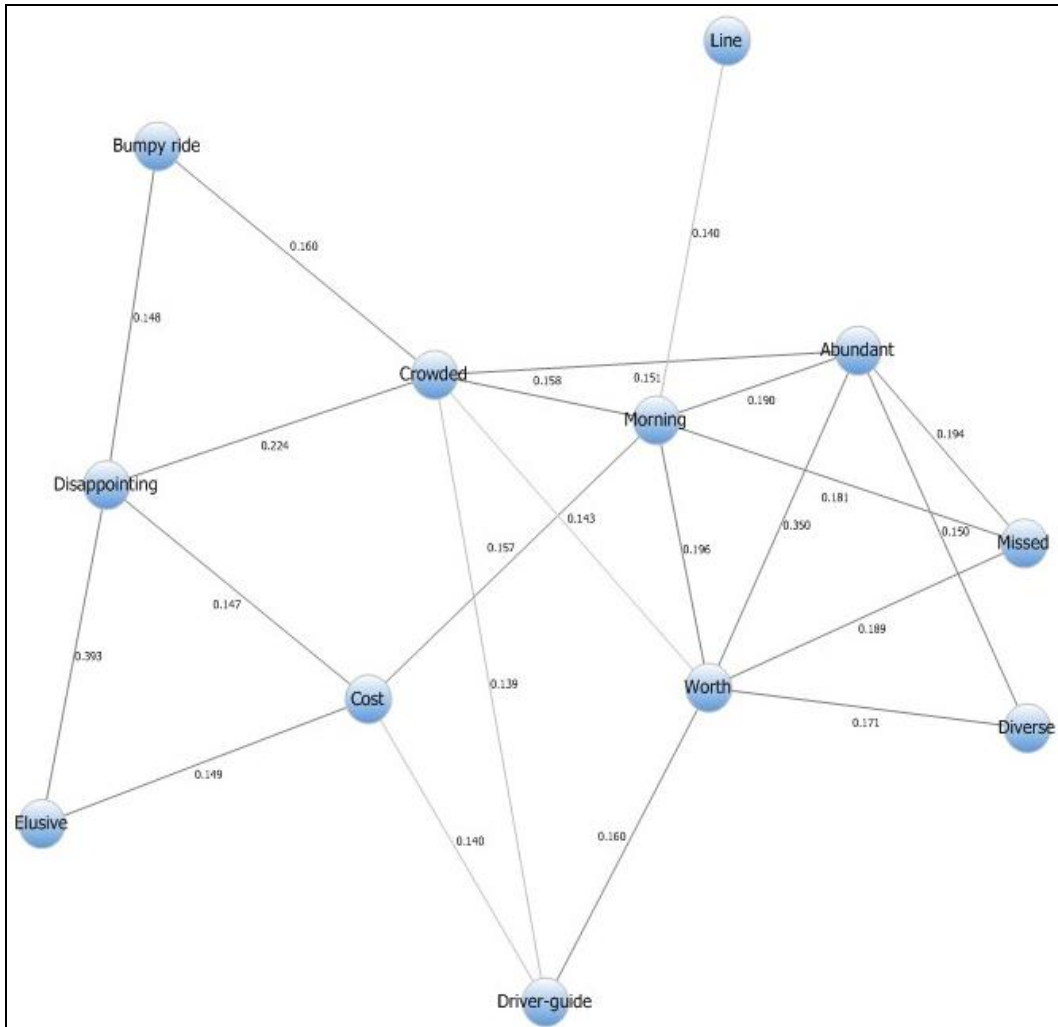
Each circle represents a code and the circle is proportional with the frequency of the code. The distance between pairs of circles indicates how likely these codes tend to appear together. The thickness of the connecting line is directly proportional to the strength of the link. Figure 1 shows that the code “worth” is very likely to appear together with “abundant” in reference to the wildlife and the link is shown to be very strong. On the other hand, the code “disappointing” is most likely to appear together with “elusive”

(strong link) and with “crowded” (connected by a somewhat weaker link). To confirm some of our assertions made earlier, we see that “driver-guide” is located approximately equidistant from “worth” and “disappointing”. The code “cost”, while located closer to “disappointing” than to “worth” is not particularly linked to “disappointing”. Another interesting finding is that, while “line” is always used as negative, it is situated at approximately the same distance from “disappointing” and from “worth”. This shows that, while definitely a drawback, long lines cannot be blamed for ruining the experience of the park visitors. Similarly, we notice that the code “missed” appears close to “worth” proving what we said earlier that, while some tourists were sorry for missing the iconic animals this did not deter them from enjoying their time in the park.



**Figure 1.** 2D concept map with links

An even better visualization of the connections between codes could be obtained through the link analysis tool using a network graph. This feature allows us to explore relationships among codes and detect underlying patterns and structures of co-occurrences. Again, the thickness of the lines connecting the nodes denotes the strength of the relationship (figure 2). Based on figure 2, we may conclude that the main factors that have contributed to a “disappointing” experience are (in this order): the scarcity of animals to be observed in the park and the high density of vehicles (all chasing the same, few animals). Bumpy roads and the relatively high cost of the tickets could also determine dissatisfaction, but to a lesser extent. On the other hand, those who assessed their experience as “worthy” were those who were lucky to observe an abundant and diverse fauna (even if, sometimes, missing the iconic animals) and who had the chance of hiring a capable driver/guide. Interestingly, these figures reveal that there is a connection between those who self-assessed their experience as “worthy” and those who took the morning safari (even though this had the disadvantage of long lines at the park entrance).



**Figure 2.** Link analysis

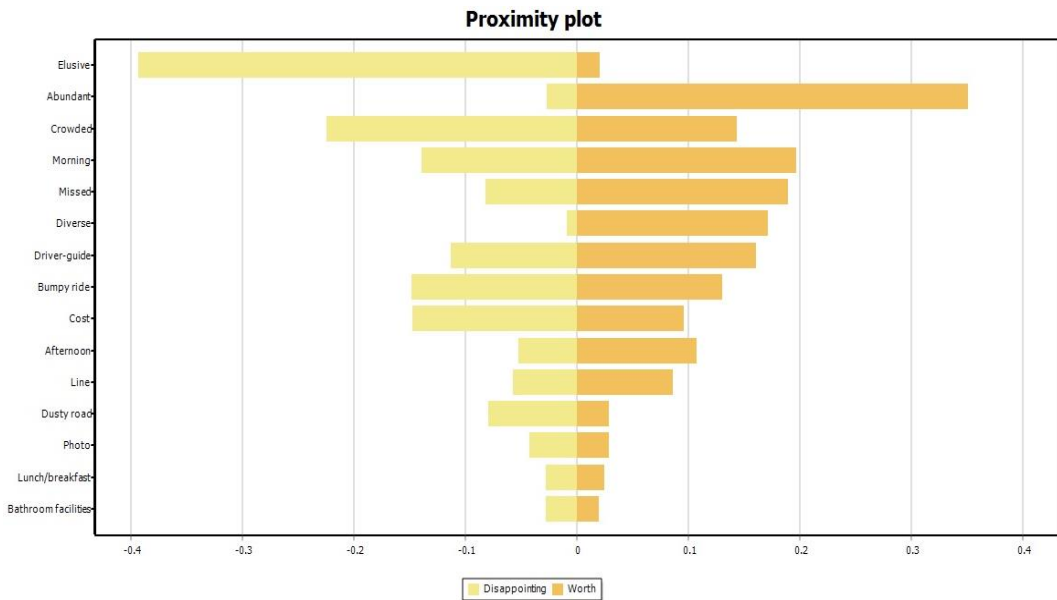
However, the most accurate tool to graphically display the distance between objects is the proximity plot. The proximity plot presents the measured distance from a selected code to all other codes on a single axis. All measured distances are from the 0 point. At 0 point there is absence of similarity or co-occurrence (figure 3).

Figure 3 shows that what matters most in the satisfaction of park visitors is the characteristics of wildlife as a very small percentage of cases include both “elusive” and “worth” codes or the code “disappointing” together with “abundant” and/or “diverse”.

### **DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In this study we attempted to assess satisfaction of foreign visitors with their safari experience in Yala Park, Sri Lanka, based on the reviews posted by them on TripAdvisor, the most popular website for travel advice. We found that the number of satisfied visitors was three times the number of disappointed tourists.

This is consistent with previous findings by Akama and Kieti (2003), and Okello et al. (2008) showing that between 66% and 86% percent of all international tourists visiting national parks in Africa were satisfied with their experience and were willing to return in the future and/or recommend the place to others. However, we agree with Buultjens et al. (2016) that this apparent satisfaction could mask a highly uneven visitor experience which can be only understood from reading the comments made by the visitors rather than from any numerical assessment.



**Figure 3.** Proximity plot for the “worth”/”disappointing” codes

Further, we found that satisfaction/dissatisfaction of visitors depends on three main factors:

### 1. The number and diversity of animals

Our study has shown very clearly that those visitors who were lucky to spot and observe a great number of different animals during their safari tended to be highly satisfied with their experience while those who complained about the shortage of animals in the park were generally dissatisfied with their experience. Another conclusion that has managerial implications is that, while many tourists choose Yala Park over other parks in Sri Lanka due to its high density and easy visibility of leopards, elephants and sloth bears, for most of these tourists getting to see these animals, while certainly welcomed and appreciated, is not a condition *sine-qua-non* for a satisfactory experience.

This can be seen from the fact that, while 22% of the visitors lamented for missing the main animal attractions, only 17% complained for having a disappointing experience. Moreover, as has been shown in this paper, the main reasons for disappointment had nothing to do with missing the main animal attractions. We agree with Alegre and Garau (2010) that the presence of these animals may generate satisfaction, yet their absence may not necessarily lead to dissatisfaction. This conclusion comes to confirm previous findings of similar research undertaken in African parks. For example, in Amboseli National Park (Kenya) it was found that “the big five” (lion, leopard, elephant, Cape

buffalo and black and white rhinoceros) were not as important tourist attractions as previously thought (Okello et al., 2008). Another study in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa revealed that less experienced and wealthier visitors may be attracted to the popular animals while more experienced and lower income visitors prefer to see a broader range of species (Di Minin et al., 2013). The conclusion is that tourists are, in general, interested in seeing a variety of wildlife rather than one or a few specific species.

## **2. The number of vehicles and visitors**

Our study identified vehicle crowding as one of the main problems causing dissatisfaction among visitors of Yala Park. This finding is by no means surprising. A number of previous studies have also reported overcrowding, and especially crowding of jeeps or motorized vehicles (Behan et al., 2001) as a major problem affecting the social and environmental carrying capacity of wildlife (Buultjens et al., 2005; Prakash et al., 2017c). Yet – and this is, indeed, surprising – in spite of 20 years of research showing the negative impact of crowding on tourist satisfaction, park management has done nothing to alleviate the problem. Drivers keep chasing the representative animals crowding around them and trying to get as close as possible in order to offer their customers the best view. This behavior is based on the belief that tourists want to get close and, if possible, even interact with animals. A number of recent studies seem to support this practice. For example, in a study that examined tourists' satisfaction with observing giant pandas in a Chinese national park, Cong et al. (2014) concluded that tourist satisfaction levels tended to increase with proximity and interaction with the animals. Also, in Australia, the level of interaction between visitor and wildlife is quite high. However, in Australia there are protocols in place for sustainably managing these interactions (Rodger et al., 2007) which is not the case in developing countries like Sri Lanka. Moreover, many tourists, especially from the West are highly aware of the environmental implications and perceive this practice as animal harassment rather than as a means to please tourists (Okello et al., 2008; Prakash et al., 2007c). Indeed, crowding around and in close proximity of animals can cause unnecessary stress to the wildlife (Buultjens et al., 2005; Sindiga and Kamunah, 1999) and diminishes the visitors' experience in the park (Buultjens et al., 2005; Rathnayake 2016b; 2015).

It is not only crowding and proximity that threaten animal welfare but also noise pollution (Buultjens et al., 2005; Rathnayake, 2015). The noise generated by the numerous vehicles congregating in close proximity of the animals as well as the behavior of some tourists could lead to behavioral changes of animals (Ranaveerage et al., 2015). Indeed, previous studies have shown that concentration of more than six vehicles greatly reduces the chances of an animal to hunt and inhibits mating which is important for the survival of the species (Okello et al., 2008). Another study in a protected area in Sri Lanka that examined the feeding activity of elephants in the presence versus in the absence of tourists found that feeding of elephants was significantly affected by the presence of tourists in the proximity. It was also found that elephants were disturbed by the noise made by the vehicles which came very close to the animals, by the behavior of tourists and by the time of the tours (Ranaweerage et al., 2015).

## **3. Knowledge and skills of drivers and guides**

One of the main reasons tourists go on wildlife safaris is to learn more about wildlife and their habitat. A good guide can help tourists better identify wildlife and learn more about wildlife behavior (Moscardo et al., 2004). A strong educational component to wildlife safaris can enhance visitor experience (Moscardo et al., 2004) and can significantly influence their biodiversity conservation attitudes (Apps et al., 2017). Our study also concluded that one of the major factors influencing satisfaction of

park visitors is the skillfulness and knowledge of safari guides and drivers. Those tourists who were lucky to be guided by knowledgeable individuals ended up being satisfied with their safari experience while many of those who had been assigned to inexperienced and/or unprepared guides wrote about an unsatisfactory experience.

Thus, our findings confirm previous conclusions that service quality has a significant positive relationship with tourist satisfaction (Chen et al., 2011) and that the tour guides can have a significant impact on tourist satisfaction (Huang et al., 2015). The main problem is that in Sri Lanka many guides are uneducated and untrained, with little knowledge of English or other foreign languages. Besides this, Buultjens et al. (2005) offer another explanation for the guides not communicating more with the visitors.

They argue that in a hierarchical society like the one in Sri Lanka it is difficult for guides coming from the country's lower class to guide middle and upper class local and international tourists. Similar to other studies (Okello et al., 2008), our research also revealed that tourists do not like the practice by drivers and tour guides of rushing from one animal to another and focusing on few species which guides assumed tourists want to see rather than spending more time watching animals.

In order to correct the shortcomings highlighted in this study and to ensure a more sustainable wildlife tourism operation in Yala Park, we recommend park management to:

1. Understand that animals are the main attraction of the park. Most tourists choose to visit Yala National Park for its abundance and diversity of wildlife. Due to being such a precious resource, resident animals should be treated with respect. In order to manage wildlife in a sustainable way, jeep drivers and guides should not be allowed to harass animals. Not only that this practice harms the animals but also most tourists disagree with it.

2. Understand that, while being able to spot a leopard could mean the apex of a safari, this is not the main reason most tourists visit the park for. Most tourists understand that the park is not a zoo; thus, viewing certain animals is not guaranteed. For most tourists, not being able to see a leopard will not make them dissatisfied with the tour. Drivers and guides should, therefore, stop chasing the so-called representative animals and instead try and show a diversity of species.

3. Ask tour leaders to slow down. They should organize their tour in a way to spend more time viewing wildlife than racing from one spot to another.

4. Reduce the number of tourists and vehicles allowed into the park. In order to ensure sustainability of a wildlife tourism operation not only animal management is important but also people management (Rodger and Moore, 2014). One major problem our study has identified regarding sustainability of the tourism operation in Yala National Park is overcrowding with tourists and motorized vehicles. In that the situation here is similar to other places in Sri Lanka that are popular with wildlife tourists and is a result of poor regulation that does not offer any control over the number of vehicles admitted (Buultjens et al., 2016). We agree with Ranaveerage et al. (2015) that, in order to maintain sustainability of tourism in protected areas, the number of tourists and the behavior of jeep drivers and guides should be controlled. This could be achieved by implementing a sustainable quota system (Buultjens et al., 2005) or, as Rathnayake (2016a) recommends, by introducing a pricing policy for observing animals in the parks.

5. In order to increase tourists' satisfaction, tour guides should be better educated and better trained in how to deal with tourists' needs (see also Reynolds and Braithwaite, 2001). Previous research has also shown that high levels of satisfaction were associated with tourist involvement in tour decision making regarding where to stop and what animals to watch (Okello et al., 2008).

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## What Makes Wildlife Tourists Happy and what Disappoints Them? Learning from Reviews Posted on Tripadvisor

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## **GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS OF GEOTOURISM BASED SEASONAL ECONOMY IN LAHAUL AND SPITI, HIMACHAL PRADESH (INDIA)**

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**Abstract:** Geotourism is a segment of tourism that has developed and gained significance worldwide in recent years. It is of paramount significance in the trans-himalayan region that has diversity of geomorphosites located amidst extreme climatic conditions being geophysical stimuli leading to seasonality embedded in human response. The aim of this work is to provide geographical analysis of seasonal economy based on geomorphosites and associated geotourism in the study area in 2017-18. The research is based on field work and qualitative research methods together with remote sensing, GIS and GPS for spatial analysis. The result shows that Langza village is the most significant geotourist site in Spiti valley having fossil abundance and exposure, fostering geotourism. The site needs to be protected and regulated by creating a fossil park, in order to harness the tremendous potential of geotourism and thereby boosting the seasonal economy.

**Key words:** Geotourism, Lahaul and Spiti, Seasonal Economy, Geotourism, Geomorphosites

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Geotourism is emerging as a new global phenomenon (Dowling, 2008a). It is a recent branch of tourism that has emerged from the ideas of nature conservation insitu. It is sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing the earth's geological features in a way that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation, and is locally beneficial (Dowling & Newsome, 2006). It is about creating a geotourism product that protects geoheritage, helps build communities, communicates and promotes geological heritage and works with a wide range of different people.

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According to James and Hose (2008), geotourism is a form of special interest tourism and focuses on geology and the formation of landscapes. It needs awareness for Geological and Geomorphological heritage. According to Dowling (2011), “geological/geomorphological tourism” includes two aspects. The geological element focuses on geology and landscape. It consists of ‘form’, such as landforms, rock outcrops, rock types, sediments, soils and crystals, and also ‘process’, such as volcanism, erosion, glaciation etc.

The other element, that is tourism, includes tourists visiting, learning from, appreciating and engaging in geosites/geomorphosites. Geomorphosite term was first proposed in 1993 by M.Panniza. According to Panizza, a geomorphosite represents “*a landform to which a value can be attributed*” (Panizza, 2001, p.4) – a very brief definition that allowed a wide range of values to be associated to geomorphosites, from scientific and ecological, to aesthetic, cultural and economical. The definition was later clarified by E. Reynard who separated the central – scientific – value from the additional ones (Reynard, 2005). Landforms are potential resources for geotourism which, following the assessment of their scientific value, become steady resources or “*geomorphosites*”. As an adequate management framework is implemented (hereby including good quality infrastructure, general and specific services and facilities), geomorphosites become authentic geotourism products (Neches, 2013). Geomorphosites are also defined as the geomorphological landforms which have gained scientific, historical, cultural, aesthetic or socioeconomic value due to human knowledge and exploitation (Shayan et al. 2011). Therefore, geomorphosites in combination with cultural, historical and ecological heritage would have great potential in the development of sustainable tourism (Coratza et al., 2008, 107).

Geological and geomorphological processes with high scientific and educational interest can be associated to aesthetics/monumentality and become geomorphosites or geosites with tourist potential. Geomorphosites based tourism can be defined as the science of studying geomorphosites or the special geomorphic landscapes which benefit scientific, ecological, cultural, aesthetic and economic value simultaneously (Pereira et al., 2007). Hence, both geological and geomorphological features are of paramount importance in understanding geotourism. Yamani et al., (2012) studied the tourism potentials of some geomorphosite of Guilan province applying Pralong and Pereira models and suggest that among the studied geomorphosites, raised beaches got the highest score and muds got the lowest score in tourism development. Geotourism is intended to stimulate the knowledge of geodiversity, geoconservation and use them for sustainable development. Now, looking at “geodiversity”, it may be defined simply as the natural range (diversity) of geological (rocks, minerals, fossils), geomorphological (land form, physical processes) and soil features. It includes their assemblages, relationships, properties, interpretations and systems (Gray, 2004). Geotourism tends to explore the establishment of geoparks as high quality destinations for alternative sustainable tourism, to promote recent developments in protection and promotion of natural heritage in combination with local development as well as in management and operation of Geoparks.

According to Dowling (2011), there are five key principles which are fundamental to geotourism. a) It is geologically-based (that is, based on the earth’s geoheritage), b) sustainable (i.e.: economically viable, community enhancing and fosters geoconservation), c) educative (achieved through geo-interpretation), d) locally beneficial and e) generates tourist satisfaction. It is imperative that the first three principles are considered to be essentially present for a function to be known as ‘geotourism’ where as the last two principles are considered desirable for all forms of tourism. Thus, geotourism may be initiated in any region as educational tourism so that it can be one of the most powerful tools for protecting the environment (Hassan et al., 2012).

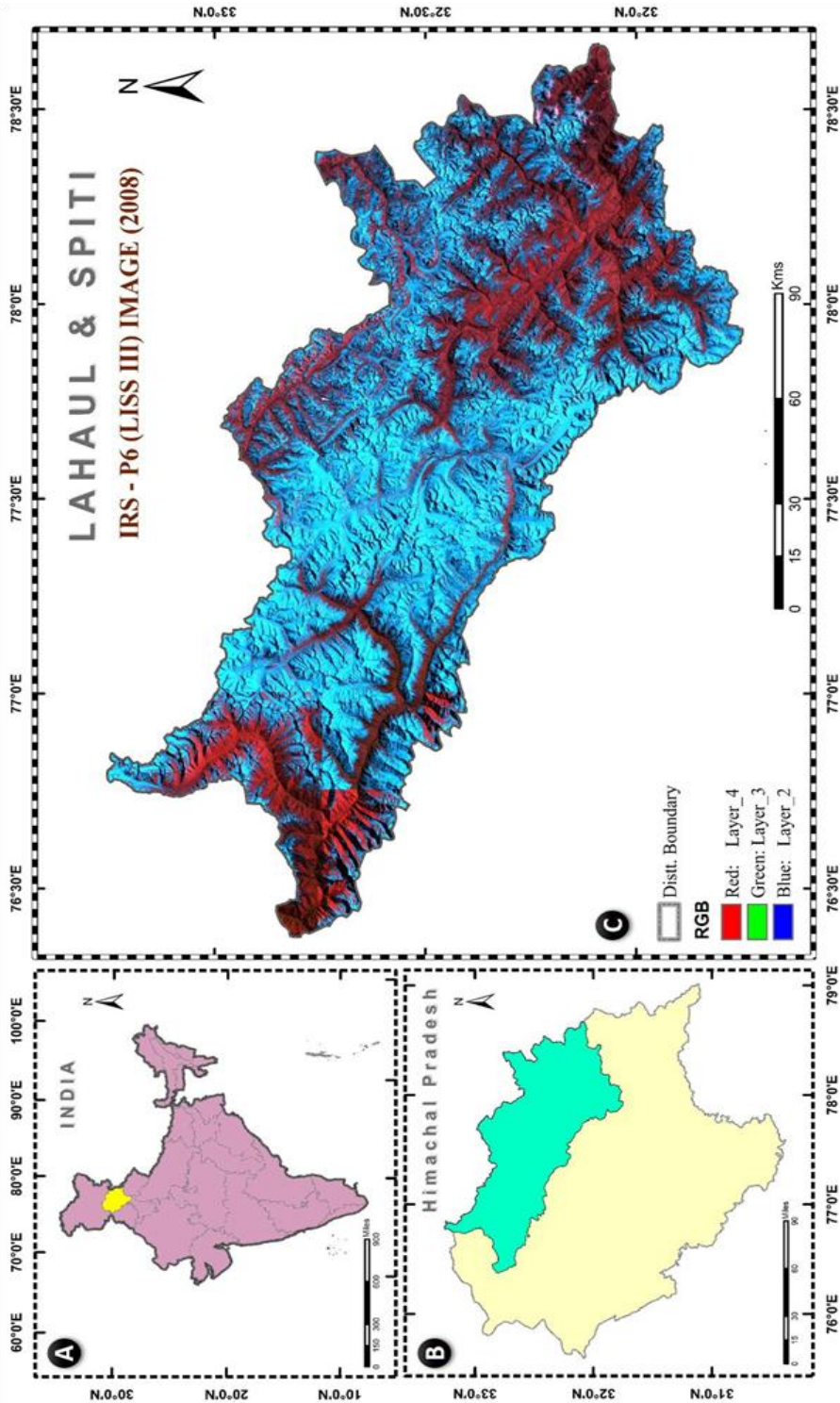
Geotourism may be further described as having a number of essential characteristics. These elements combine to shape geotourism in its present form as discussed across the globe. It comprises a number of interrelated components all of which should be present for authentic geotourism to emerge as a function of landscape. In other words, geomorphotourism is one domain of earth science studies and it studies of tourism that focuses on identifying geomorphosites or especial prospects of geomorphology. By combining cultural, historical and ecological heritage, this area offers a great potential in planning of regional sustainable tourism (Fakhri et al., 2013). A better understanding of the earth with reference to its geological attraction is the goal of geotourism which arises from the motivation of enjoying unique features amidst of landscape (Adriansyah et al., 2015). In their study, Pica et al., (2016) enhanced geotourism in the city centre, by describing the palaeogeography of ancient Rome through the landforms that were still visible and identified two geomorphosites. In their investigative attempt, Pica, et al., (2016) developed an evaluation model of the geotouristic value of a Site (VSG index), which consisted of the quantification of five fundamental attributes for a geosite, characterizing its scientific and geotourist interests.

### **STUDY AREA**

Lahaul and Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh, India (Figure 1) is a land of mountain passes that act as gateway for outsiders as well as the locals. The district has an inherent seasonality in character due to the seasonal opening of mountain passes and thereby exchange of goods and services during this fixed time period. The Rohtang pass, Kunzum pass and the Baralacha pass are the most important among all the passes in the district. Rohtang pass in the eastern Pir-Panjal range of greater Himalaya, connects Kullu district to Lahaul and Spiti district while Baralacha pass is the gateway from Lahaul to Ladakh and Kunzum pass connects the Lahaul and Spiti tehsils. Hence, these passes facilitate inter-district as well as intra-district accessibility for tourists and locals both. The tentative time period of opening of these passes vary between 20<sup>th</sup> May to 5<sup>th</sup> June every year depending upon the climatic conditions and they close by 15<sup>th</sup> October. Therefore, the season for various activities including business and tourism is confined to these four months of June, July, August and September.

Lahaul and Spiti district falls in the rain shadow area of the Great Himalayan Range and thereby restricts the monsoon winds to traverse through and keeps the district dry and gives it a cold desert character. In Lahaul valley, annual rainfall varies from about 10 to 40 cm. Southern and south western part of the Lahaul receives higher rainfall as compared to northern part. In Lahaul valley snowfall varies from less than 1 m to 6 m and may be higher at higher altitudes. Maximum temperature at Keylong (headquarter) ranges between 7° C and 23° C while minimum temperature from -10° C to +10° C in the month of February and July respectively. As per 2011 census, entire 100 per cent population of Lahaul and Spiti district live in rural areas as there is no urbanization. The district accounted for the second lowest population for any district in India in 2001 census and is the least populous district in the country according to the 2011 census since its population has declined from 33,224 in 2001 to 31,528 in 2011.

The people of Lahaul and Spiti are both Hindus and Buddhists, and their dialect is Indo-Tibetan. These people have a close affinity with Ladakhis and Tibetans. The people and the culture in the region evolved over the centuries largely isolated from the rest of the world. In 1992-93, Government of India lifted all the restrictions, including for foreigners, for travelling into the ancient Kingdom of Lahaul and Spiti, that has been virtually forbidden to outsiders for over 30 years since 1962 i.e. during Indo-China war.



**Figure 1. Location: Lahaul and Spiti**

Source: Survey of India and IRS LISS III Imageries from BHUVAN

A. Position of Himachal Pradesh in India

B. Position of Lahaul and Spiti in Himachal Pradesh

C. Lahaul and Spiti (LISS III extract view)

The main source of livelihood for the people are agriculture and allied activities and the main occupations include animal husbandry, daily wage earning as labourers in government programs, regular government service, business (mainly shop keeping), crafts like weaving and very few involved in travel and tourism industry which is recently gaining significance in this region. The large scale of tourist influx together with the communities that carry out various businesses and earn seasonal livelihood from geotourism and allied activities during this period, generate a huge demand for refreshments (food, water and other day to day utilities) during their treacherous journey in the difficult terrain of Lahaul and Spiti district. This seasonal mechanism of demand is fulfilled by the supply through various "*dhabas*" (a roadside food stall having bedding and camping facilities for the travellers along with other necessary goods such as woollens, shoes, socks, torch, batteries and edible items) which are lifeline for the commuters, explorers and travellers in the district. The area is characterized by seasonality evident through the fact that these *dhabas* open every year at the start of the season and continue throughout the four months with reinforced supplies from the Kullu and Kinnaur districts as the roads are open and transportation is easily available. They have a unique setup in which food and shelter both are available for the guests with minimal charges. The initial investment required to setup these *dhabas*, which the owners spend in the hope that the tourism activities will fetch effective and sustainable benefits at the end of the season. After the detailed study of these *dhabas* in both the Lahaul and Spiti tehsils (administrative units), it has been observed that Lahaul tehsil has larger number of guests at their *dhabas* in comparison to Spiti tehsil. The main reason for this is the Manali-Leh high way, along which these *dhabas* are located and thus have greater income levels and dividends. The Lahauli *dhabas* are far more enterprising than they are in Spiti as Rohtang pass opens earlier than Kunzum pass and intra-district accessibility is almost a month late.

### **PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY**

The main objective of the study is to identify and analyse the linkages between geotourism and seasonal economy in Lahaul and Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh.

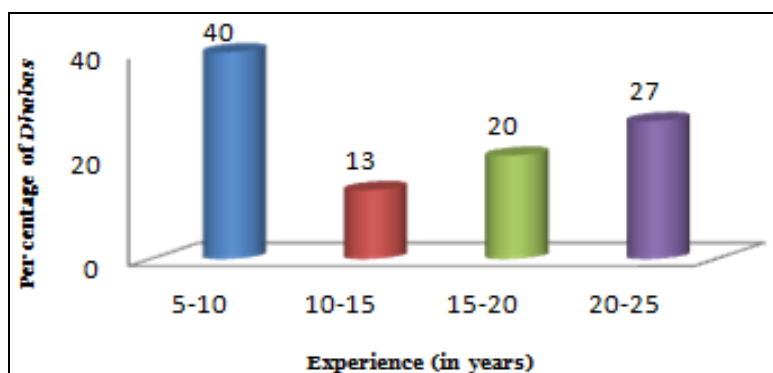
The study is based on primary data collected during the field visits to Lahaul and Spiti during 2017 and 2018. Primary data sources include the field observation tables collected through extensive field survey that includes in-depth interviews and observations through photographs in the study area. For the analysis of the *dhaba* based economy, an open ended questionnaire based survey was conducted during the various field visits in both opening and closing season in 2017-2018. The sample was based purely on the location in order to understand the relationship of *dhaba* economy with geomorphosite based tourism and accessibility. The *dhabas* of Lahaul include the locations such as Gramphu, Tandi, Udaipur, Thiro, Darcha, Zing Zing Bar, Chhatru and Batal while the locations in Spiti include Losar, Kibber, Kaza, Langza, Komic, Tabo, Hurling, Sagnam and Mud. The locations of these places have been mapped using the coordinate points marked through GPS (global positioning system) during the field survey on free source web GIS (geographic information system) software.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

In the selected samples of *dhabas* (i.e. seasonal restaurants with overnight stay facilities for tourists) at field survey sites (Table 1), few of them are found to be running businesses since long time and the most experienced of them are from Lahaul tehsil i.e. about 20-25 years old (Figure 2). It signifies that the opening of the district for outsiders by relaxation of the inner line permits (ILP) in 1992-93 paved way for these seasonal establishments.

**Table 1.** Field Survey Sites, Lahaul and Spiti, Himachal Pradesh, India (Data source: Primary Survey 2017-2018)

Field Survey Sites	Altitude (msl)	Population (2011)
Udaipur	2661 m	1237
Keylong	3113 m	1977
Jispa	3275 m	332
Sissu	3032 m	398
Losar	4114 m	227
Hanse	3988 m	214
Rangrik	3717 m	738
Kaza	3693 m	1367
Kibber	4130 m	295
Komic	4536 m	114
Dhankar	3863 m	319
Tabo	3297 m	635
Langza	4437 m	137



**Figure 2.** Experience of the *Dhaba* Owners (Source: Field Survey, 2017-2018)



**Figure 3.** Seasonal Cost of the *Dhaba* Establishments (Source: Field Survey, 2017-2018)

The most recent ones have come up in last decade or so because of considerable rise in the tourism influx in Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh, mainly due to the reduction of tourism in Kashmir valley because of numerous terrorist issues and incidents.

Simultaneously, Spiti tehsil also has the older dhabas in the interior locations such as Losar and Kibber while the newer ones are at Tabo and Sagnam due to proximity with Kinnaur.

The establishments have to be renewed every year and the average cost varies between 1 lakh to 1.5 lakh rupees including the transportation cost as well as the other taxes such as electricity and water. Their income per season (excluding all the expenses) varies between 2.5 lakh to 3.5 lakh rupees per season. On an average about 2-3 labourers are engaged for entire season and they are paid about 30-40 thousand rupees per season. The construction, reconstruction and management of the sites together with the transportation charges account for the majority of the cost in the seasonal establishments (Figure 3). As evident from the collected data during field survey, the commodities that these *dhabas* offer to the customers include Maggie noodles (Rs. 20-25 per plate), tea (Rs.10 per cup), coffee (Rs. 25 per cup), *dal chawal* (Rs. 40-50 per plate), *rajma chawal* (Rs. 60-70 per plate), Momos (veg. at Rs. 50 -80 per and non veg. at Rs. 80 per plate), *mutton chawal* (Rs. 80-90 per plate), local beer and wine (Rs. 80-150 per bottle), biscuits, chips and cold drinks (at Rs.10 higher than the cost price) and the mineral water or package drinking water (at Rs. 50-60 per bottle). These prices vary on an average of Rs. 10 per item from place to place. The charges for accommodation vary between Rs.100-150 per night per person per bed at these *dhabas*. Most of these *dhabas* have an accommodation capacity of 12-15 persons per night. The tough terrain and treacherous journey has a tiring and draining impact on the outsiders and hence they are willing to pay these prices without any bargaining. Although, some of the *dhaba* owners in Lahaul prefer foreigners over Indian tourists as they don't bargain and are more stable in terms of stay and payment. They also sell handmade woolen socks, caps, mufflers and gloves at varying prices between Rs. 150-300 at different sites.

The issues and the challenges as highlighted during the interviews with *dhaba* owners are mainly ascribed to the difficulties in restoration of these temporary structures, construction of newer ones in many cases and the transportation of the goods to these remote areas. They hire mules in few cases while the most of them hire tempo travellers and tractors that are very expensive. Secondly, the problem of labour is faced specially by the local *dhaba* owners, as they have to negotiate with the season labourers coming mostly from Nepal and other states of India such as Bihar, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh, who charge them heavily for construction work. They build these structures using tent, locally available boulders and rocks, local wood (usually poplar trees) and in some cases with tin shades for roofing. Another significant issue that is highlighted during the field survey includes the ratio of these seasonal establishments between the locals and the outsiders. Analysis of the sample data gives the result that 60 per cent of these *dhabas* are run by people from Nepal and lower Himachal Pradesh like Mandi and Bilaspur. This leads to the monopoly of the outsiders who have better access to technology and resources and hence the locals who are poor in resources have to suffer as there is tough competition in the business especially during the peak season of June and July when there is maximum tourist influx. The locals have to depend on the external middlemen and labour contractors for the goods and services every season and hence their income levels are less than the outsiders. The price manipulation, lucrative offers for stay and meal together with the customer relations play significant role in the success of the business.

Asha Bodh, aged 39, resident of Gemur village in Lahaul, who is widow with all the family responsibilities on her, gets the only income from the seasonal *dhaba* at Jispa where many foreigners stay because of the trout fishing and other activities such as nature camps and cultural festivals (Buddha purnima celebrations). She lamented that "*the Nepalis win over the local in this business as they have larger labour force and bigger*



establishments. They hire vehicles at lower prices than us and also manipulate prices too often to attract customers which affects our business. . . we have to pay heavily for the reinstallation of the private water pipes sold by the outsiders every year and the electricity charges for the temporary commercial meter installation at the own expense of wire is 8 to 10 thousand with a monthly fixed tax of Rs. 1000 apart from the additional tax on land i.e. Rs 2000 levied by the panchayat . . ." (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Field Survey Sites (*dhabas*) Coordinates

1. *Dhaba* under construction at Darcha village - N32 40.323, E77 11.8;
2. Sonam in her *Dhaba* at Jispa - N32 37.985, E77 10.585;
3. Peace cafe at Zing Zing Bar - N32 47.246, E77 20.901;
4. Tourists at *Chandra dhaba*, Batal - N32 21.493 E77 37.148 (Source: Field Survey, 2017-2018)



**Figure 5.** *Chandra Dhaba*, Batal, Coordinates: 32.3504° N, 77.6170° E (Source: Field Survey, 2017-2018)

The other important issues are the government facilities of health and sanitation. The toilet and medical facilities are not available at most of these sites and the owners themselves have to make arrangements for the same, that becomes a burden in many cases due to financial crunch. The rising prices of the fuel i.e. gas and kerosene also becomes significant as many of them were found to be dependent upon the purchase of this fuel from the brokers who earn profits by selling them at much higher prices than original, in the name of inaccessibility and remoteness of the area. The problem of waste disposal has become alarming by the advent of increasing tourism in last decade. There is lack of dustbins and disposal sites for the large amount of biodegradable as well as non-biodegradable waste, of which the plastic bottles and the wrappers have the largest share. Hence, mostly they are disposed off and buried in the locally created pits at the end of the season. The role of climate also becomes very significant as the delayed opening of the passes due to late snowfall often result in lesser business opportunities and lesser time for maximum earning. When asked about the significant changes observed by the owners in last decade, the most significant answer was the increase in number of tourists and considerable growth in business. Hence, they are not willing to switch to any other profession during the season. During off season, the outsider owners go back to their respective base locations and perform labourer jobs and selling of woolen clothes and handicrafts. Many locals also migrate to lower Himachal Pradesh during harsh winters and sell handmade woolen garments. According to an article "Saviour-couple-of-Spiti valley, 2010", Bodh Dorjee also known as *Kakoo*, aged 55 at Batal has the biggest and oldest establishment. He comes with his wife Chandra Dorjee (Figure 5) and few workers during the onset of season when even the motorable roads are not open by hiring mules and stays till late end of the season every year. He has been given a satellite phone by the government in order to serve the locals and the research expeditioners who work on glaciers and glacial lakes in the area. He is a recipient of bravery award for saving lives of expedition team who were tuck in harsh weather condition and is well known among the Lahaul and Spiti district.

Off season, he goes back to Delhi and stays at *Majnu ka tilla* (a place of Tibetan refuge in Delhi) i.e. Aruna Nagar Tibetan colony with his relatives. The unpredictability of the weather and seasonality in the nature is further emphasized as they narrated the story of a group of 17 trekkers who were stranded for over 10 days at Batal in the month of May in 2010 due to a massive and unexpected snowstorm. They helped the group before a rescue unit of they could airlift them out of the area. He has been featured in TOI (Times of India) newspaper for his unique *dhaba* and services to the travellers in this treacherous terrain. The main obstacles in geotourism development as pointed out during the tourist surveys, emphasize upon the poor quality of roads and transport facilities and complementary difficult terrain. Only a small fraction of tourists also referred to harsh climate, lack of medical facilities and remote location as hinderances for geotourism in the area. Some of the very important features of geodiversity like fossils, glacio-fluvial deposits, lacustrine sediments, unnamed waterfalls, highest settlements on almost vertical slopes and many more such features that may allure any tourist from outside the district. The tourism based on these geomorphosites, have immense potential to generate livelihood opportunities and strengthen the economic conditions of the local people in the region.

It is always a pleasure to reach Chandra *Dhaba* at Batal because that means lunch and meeting the owners of the *Dhaba*. Their son Tenzing runs a camp at Chandratol (<http://traveltalesfromindia.in>, 2015). He says that " *every year we come here in April on foot and carry the goods on mules from Manali and go back in November first week...I have seen tremendous rise in tourism in last decade and more since the Chandratol was declared as Ramsar site for conservation and management in 2005...every season*

people from various research organizations come here and stay who are working on Samudratapu and Bara Shigri glaciers. . . ".

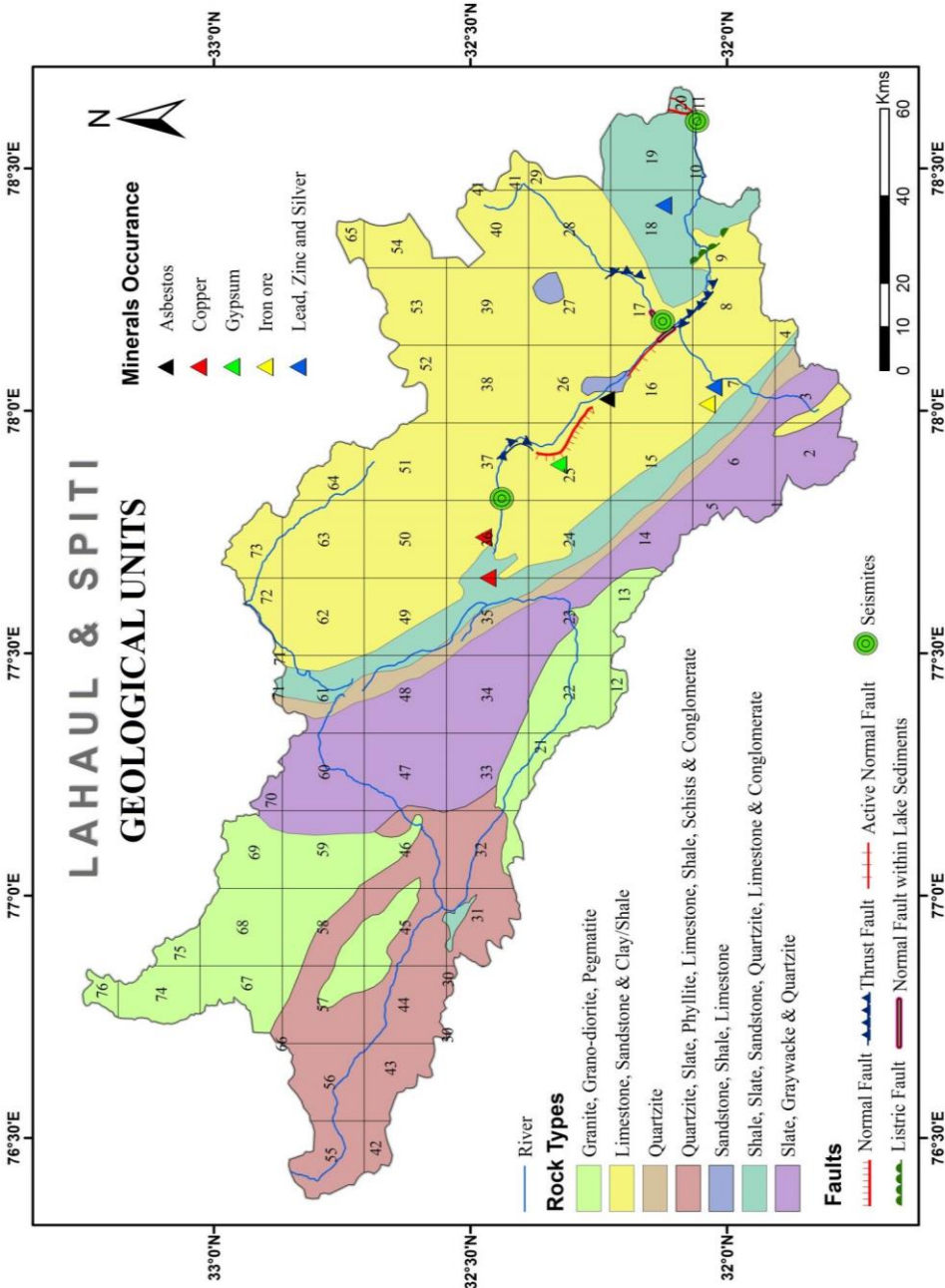
Similarly, Sonam Bodh, aged 42 at Sagnam in Pin valley, Spiti tehsil owns a dhaba and two floored homestay. He also works as tourist guide for adventure treks across Pin-Parbati pass and for the Pin Valley National Park. He says that "*the main hurdle is the accessibility due to the mud flow over the road connecting Attargo and Sagnam which is very unpredictable and government has not taken it seriously enough to build any alternative bridge. This also leads to loss of agro based economy as the harvested peas from Pin valley many times can't reach the market on time and gets rotten. The Shilajeet is main demand of the tourists which we collect from higher altitude while crossing the National Park area and get big returns...also there is menace of cattle predation by snow leopards which attack during the evening and night and no protection has been assured by government in this regards. . .*".

**Table 2:** Geological Formations in Lahaul and Spiti (Data source: Geological Survey of India)

Era	Time (million years)	Age	Group / Formation	Lithology
Cenozoic	1.8	Quaternary	Fluvial / Fluvio-glacial / Alluvium	Sand, silt, pebbles, cobbles, boulders
Mesozoic	65	Cretaceous	Giumal-Chikkim Formation	Sandstone, siltstone, shale, conglomerate
Jurassic	243	<b>Spiti Formation</b>		Shale, sandstone and siltstone
Triassic-Jurassic		Lilang Group / Kalhel Formation		Limestones, shales, dolomites and sandstones.
Permo - Triassic-Jurassic		Tandi Group		Limestone
<b>Palaeozoic</b>	270	Devonian to Permian		Kuling group; Quartzites, sandstones and black shales
Lower Cambrian to Silurian	570	Kunamla-Thango-Takche Formation		Shale, schist, sandstone, dolomite
		Rohtang Granitoid		Granitoids
<b>Proterozoic</b>	670	Neoproterozoic to Terminal Proterozoic		Batal formation, shales, phyllites and quartzites
Neoproterozoic	900	Manjir Formation		Sandstone, limestone, shale
Neoproterozoic	1600	Bhalai Formation (Salkhala Group)		Slates, schists, slates, phyllites, quartzites
Mesoproterozoic	2500	Vaikrita Group		Slates, phyllites, quartzites, schists

Overall, by the various cost benefit analysis of the seasonal *dhaba*, it can be said that these are lifelines for the locals as well as the tourists as it is enterprising and source of livelihood for the former while life saving for the later. The geotourism in the region can play a pivotal role for its economic development and seasonal dhaba economy can be a main contributor to this if regulated properly by the local governance. The improved government aid can help locals in sustaining their livelihood and at the same time help in the economic growth of the district. Geologically, the Spiti Shales are dominated by black sandy Shales that are divided into three units i.e. *Chidamu* beds, *Belemnites* beds and *Lochambal* beds that are rich in fossils. The uppermost unit ranges in age from uppermost Jurassic into the lowermost Cretaceous and is richest of the three in varied ammonite fauna that is generally found in the rounded nodules known as "*saligrams*" in Sanskrit (shale in English). The geographical uniqueness and distinctiveness is entirely

based on the sets of geological attributes (Table 2, Figure 6). The occurrence of similar fluvio-glacial deposits has also been reported in parts of Spiti. Small unconsolidated deposits of illuvial and glacial origin, occurring throughout the region is clearly visible along side the river. The remnants of terrace deposits have been found along the valley sides and most of the recent gravel and boulder beds occur along the rivers bed. The geographical uniqueness and distinctiveness is entirely based on the sets of geological attributes.



**Figure 6. Geological Units of Lahaul and Spiti, Himachal Pradesh, India**

Source: National Atlas Thematic Mapping Organization, Kolkata



Langza village (4437 mts. above msl) in Spiti valley, considered to be one of the highest villages in the world connected with a motorable road is enriched with ammonite fauna i.e. cephalopod fossils. Locally, it is also known as fossil village and attracts tourists who come looking for pre-himalayan formation fossils. Although possession and collection of fossils are illegal in India, the locals in the village sell these collectibles to the travellers visiting their village. Local people can be seen around the village collecting and displaying fossils in order to persuade the travellers to buy them in return for money. The local name of fossil in the village is '*chaudua*' (Figure 7). In Spiti valley, the fossiliferous Spiti Shales are exposed near the villages named Gete, Kibber, Komic, Rangrik and along the sides of Pin river (a tributary of Spiti river).



**Figure 7.** Langza Fossil (saligram) Coordinates: 32.2738° N, 78.0816° E (Source: Field Survey, 2017-18)

### **Strength Weakness Opportunities and Threat {SWOT} Analysis for Lahaul and Spiti**

**Strength:** Beautiful, cold desert landscape surrounded by mountain passes on all sides; source of major glaciers, glacial lakes and rivers; indigenous knowledge preserved; cultural uniqueness (Buddhist practices); unique floral/faunal diversity.

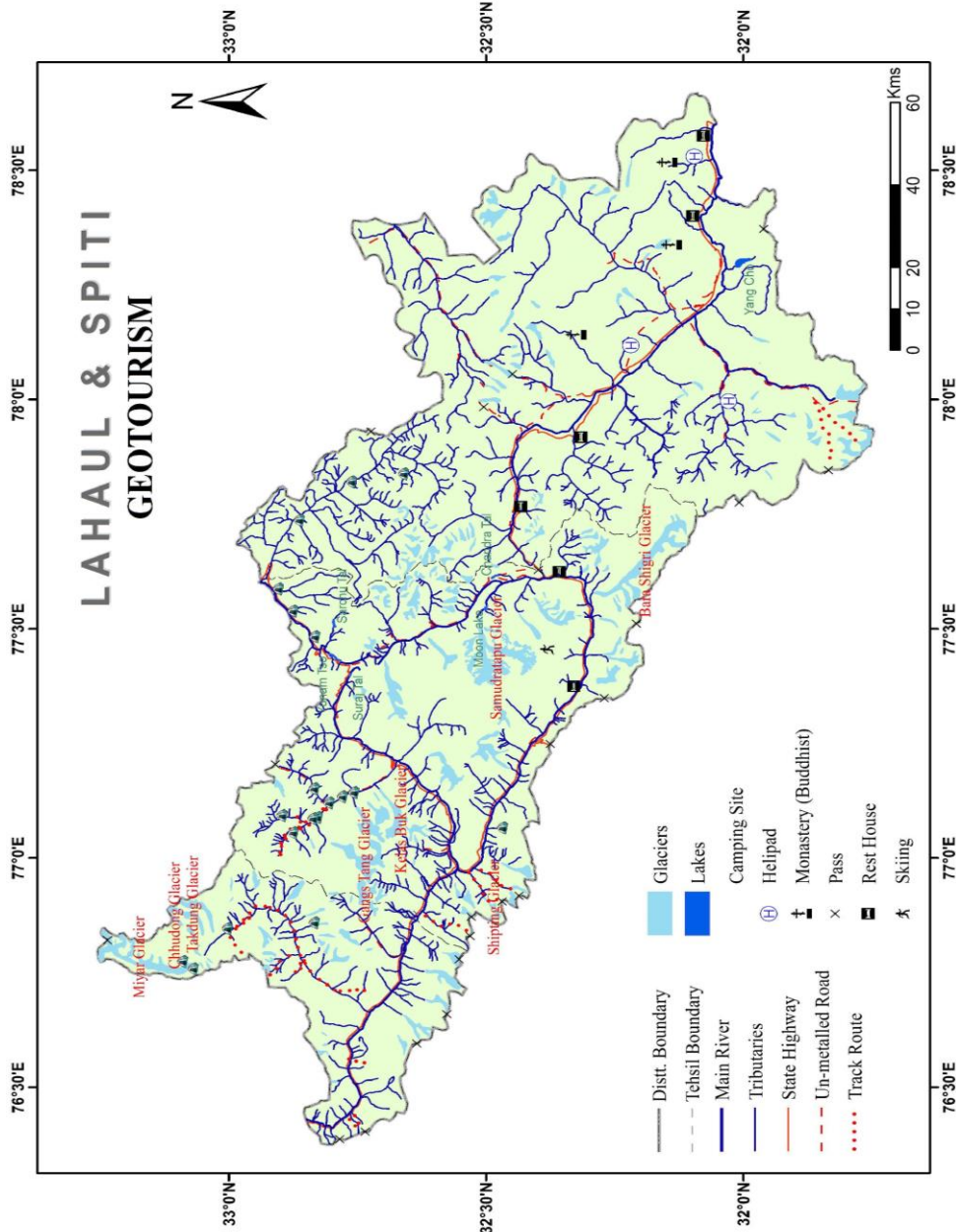
**Weakness:** Vulnerable to natural hazards and seasonal in character; lack of awareness among the planning bodies; lack of awareness among the research fraternities; remote landscape restricts the cultural interface from other areas; lack of Awareness amongst the tourists as well as planners.

**Opportunities:** Immense Geotourism potential in the region with the modern technological development.; immense potential to harness the hydropower, water rafting and other sports activities; the knowledge can be harnessed and cure for many ailments can be discovered in the region; immense cultural tourism potential (Ancient monasteries and cultural practices; immense potential to create a Geo/Eco park/Fossil park at the highest villages connected by motorable roads and thus help in sustainable livelihood generation together with geoconservation.

**Threat:** Deformation of landscape due to increasing developmental pressures; ecological balance may be disturbed without proper research and development methods; loss of knowledge due to ageing population and outmigration of the youth; unchecked tourism and influence from outside may fade the cultural uniqueness over time; degradation of landscape due to natural and anthropogenic hazards may lead to extinction.

**CONCLUSION**

The geographical analysis of human response to the geomorphosites and geotourism based seasonal economy in Lahaul and Spiti makes it evident that the response manifested by the various human attributes to the stimuli of nature has a dynamic relationship. The geophysical-response mechanism comes to the picture as the mountain passes, seasonality, availability of rocks and boulders, mud together with the water resources provide ample opportunity for the hard working population that use available georesources in the best possible manner to shape their milieu and create livelihood for themselves.



**Figure 8. Geotourism in Lahaul and Spiti, Himachal Pradesh, India**  
Source: Field Survey 2017-2018 using GPS (Garmin eTrex and Trimble Juno SA)

The geomorphosites and geotourism (Figure 8) act as the natural regulatory entities and function respectively for the area that has seasonal character embedded in the lifestyle of the people for centuries. The advent of new technologies in agriculture together with improved communication lines makes the life of the tribal communities easier. The role of government in providing aid and subsidies to the poor and marginalized communities has a significant impact on the day to day life of the locals. The tap water facilities and the rural electrification i.e. for 100 per cent of the households certainly seem to ease out the miseries of hash terrain and extreme events.

The role of geotourism is gradually becoming very significant in the district as it has a vast reserve of georesources and geomorphosites that accrue large tourists from all across the world. The glacial lakes, glaciers, snow mountain peaks, hot water springs and the waterfalls are few of many physical features in the landscape that has maximum impact on the geotourism in the region which has evolved and grown over the last decade. The ancient reserves of Tethyan sediments and lacustrine deposits in the area make it a paradise for geoscientists. The exposed rock surfaces, various glacio-fluvial deposits and the associated settlements having unique interface that make the area distinct from other parts of the state of Himachal Pradesh. The role of seasonal *dhabas* can't be undermined in the economic development of the area as they are lifelines for the travellers, explorers, tourists and geoscientists coming to the area every year. They form an important part in the season economy based on geotourism due to their presence as a facilitator.

The major suggestions for the well being of the betterment of geotourism and seasonal economy in the area are following:

➤ In the case of mineral extraction, quarrying and road construction many times the important permanent or temporary rock exposures are broken off. In case where these permanently exposed rocks sections are left after completion of the project, the subsequent maintenance of these rock structures should be done.

➤ Construction of new buildings should incorporate retrofitting to withstand a particular degree of earthquake. Geological and geomorphological inputs must be included in the engineering design as they are extremely important in for site planning.

➤ The digging of drainage ditches often alters the geomorphological and hydrological character of the area. This accelerates runoff and leads to heavy soil erosion that has to be checked.

➤ Another interesting observation based suggestion would be that, the footpath erosion caused by trekkers and travellers on steep mountain slopes, initially tramples the seasonal vegetation and ultimately exposes the soil and subsoil. This leads to significant gulleying later. Hence, the trekking routes may be delineated for the vulnerable sites.

➤ During the open season in Lahaul and Spiti, the potential threat to the landscape in many vital areas like Kunzum pass, have increased with the increasing use of mountain bikes, motorbikes and all-terrain vehicles that often leads to soil compaction, erosion or gulleying on slopes. This needs to be addressed by the road monitoring agencies as well as the local communities.

➤ Seasonal economy, has to be strengthened in the region through the coordination of local people, self help groups, local government and the NGOs. The potential tourism sites and associated livelihood opportunities have to be further identified and developed.

➤ The villages such as Darcha and Sarchu in Lahaul valley, and Kibber, Langza, Komic, Gulling, Mikkim and Mud in Spiti valley have fossiliferous rocks. It may be inferred that the region has tremendous potential for establishments of fossil parks and geoparks.

➤ The analysis of geodiversity data may be useful for defining the priority areas for conservation as this methodology may be useful to define the protected areas,

ecological zones, geoparks etc. Therefore, the Geodiversity Index should be considered as a tool for nature conservation (geoconservation), natural resource management and formulation of geotourism strategies.

At last but not the least, the geophysical stimuli and corresponding human response finds itself the best fit framework to study the geotourism based seasonal economy in the Lahaul and Spiti district due to the cold desert type geotourism, seasonality in opening of passes and the corresponding human response which is essentially seasonal in character. Thus, the seasonal economy of the area is directly linked to the stimuli provided by the geotourism of the area.

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## COMPARATIVE COMPETITIVENESS INDICATORS, WHICH RANKING FOR THE ALGERIAN TOURISM?

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**Abstract:** This article presents an analysis of the different methods and summary indicators published by international organizations (World Economic Forum, United Nations, etc.) to rank the countries globally in terms of the attractiveness and competitiveness of tourism. The study focuses on the case of Algeria, a country with a rich and diversified tourist potential that should definitely be a destination on the international or regional scale, just like its neighbors in the Maghreb (Morocco and Tunisia). Recent figures on Algeria's world rankings in terms of competitiveness described a reality far from this hypothesis. The 2017 Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report ranked Algeria in the 118<sup>th</sup> out of 136 countries. Same wise the World Economic Forum (WEF) in its 2018 edition, put Algeria in the least attractive countries ranked 92<sup>nd</sup> out of 140. As generally known the territorial attractiveness is at the core concept of the competitiveness of the touristic destinations. However, this does not apply in the case of Algeria, as developed further in this article the country is attractive but not competitive. An American researcher Allain Lew (Lew, 1987) established a framework for the tourism attraction. Lew proposed a definition to attractiveness as: "The basic element on which tourism is developed" (Lew, 1987, p. 554) if we consider the definition of Lew, the Algerian territory is extremely attractive, therefore contradictory to the above mentioned rankings. This definition brings out a substantial problem, related to the measurement of attractiveness. On what basis can we say that one territory is attractive or that it is more attractive than another? What indicators are used to classify the territories according to their degree of attractiveness? To answer this problem, we have proceeded to a comparative approach of different rankings and their respective effectiveness. We also proceeded to a quantitative approach which consists in calculating two indicators

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of tourist attractiveness across the Algerian territory for the period 2008-2017. (The index of territorial attractiveness and the average duration of stays).

**Key words:** Territorial Attractiveness, Competitiveness of Destinations, Tourist Attractions

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## INTRODUCTION

In this introduction we will present difference scientific views that shaped the definition, calculation and indicators of touristic attractiveness and competitiveness.

Gollain & Lepage have privileged the endogenous attractiveness approach that consisted on identifying the reasons behind the territorial attractiveness (Gollain & Lepage, 2015). These analyses will help identifying and analyzing the factors of competitiveness that create comparative advantages and will have impact on the attractiveness (presence and quality of infrastructures, human capital, services provided, etc., measure the impact of the external environment (variation of the currency rate, regulation, rate of economic growth, etc.) on attractiveness performance.

This concept has also been studied by other researchers from different fields (economics, marketing, geography, tourism, sociology, etc.) (Ritchie & Zins, 1978; Smith 1980, Lew, 1987; Smith, 1987; Leiper, 1990; Nolan & Nolan, 1992; Kim, 1998; Deng et al., 2002; Gallarza et al., 2002; Enright & Newton, 2004; van der Ark & Richards, 2006; Escadafal, 2007; Khadaroo & Seetanah, 2008; Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2008; Wang & Hsu, 2010; Kusen, 2010; Kim, 2010). Essentially, the concept of attractiveness of the territory is associated to attributes that compose the territory and make it attractive, whether for living, business, for visit, etc. The attractiveness of the territory can therefore be associated with the attractiveness of its composition and the retention of its population. This concept is not related exclusively to geography, but the territory makes it indivisible. From a tourist point of view, the attributes that constitute the territory are a set of tangible and intangible attractions that will positively or negatively influence tourists. To be attractive, a territory must be able to provide infrastructure and services that will provide travelers with a remarkable, unique and intense experience. Tourist infrastructure plays a major role in the development of a touristic product.

The question of tourism attractiveness can therefore be part of a general reflection on the development of attractiveness through the valorization of "Territorial" resources (Lew, 1987). These resources can be generic or specific, active or dormant. The valorization processes assume that the tourism business engage in strategies of differentiation by the costs or by the quality of the offer (excluding cost) that consider the specificity of the offer and its components.

The comparison of the concepts of attractiveness and competitiveness between the economy of tourism and the Geography of tourism reveals the ambiguity of these notions because it is common to use the terms competitiveness and attractiveness as synonyms (Lepage & Gollain, 2015). This observation leads us to clarify these terms and to distinguish several underlying concepts, such as level of amenity or source of amenity. In addition, the reconciliation of these two literatures leads to the idea that attractiveness is likely to influence the location of tourists on two different scales. From the work of (Courlet & Pecqueur, 2013; Devereux & Griffith 1998; Hatem, 2004). Among other things, the attractiveness of a territory can be defined as its capacity over a given period to:

- Attract and retain various economic activities and mobile factors of production

(companies, professional events, people of talents, entrepreneurs, capital, etc. which are sometimes external to the region.

- Promote the creation of wealth and the growth of endogenous enterprises, centers of excellence and economic sectors.

Most of the work on this topic has so far touched on it in different ways, but no theoretical model has succeeded, to our knowledge, in establishing the empirical links between attractiveness and competitiveness.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The methodology used in this article will make use of a multi-step approach:

- Documentary research to clarify our theoretical argument: they will focus on the examination of articles and books on the tourist economy, territorial attractiveness, and competitiveness of destinations;

- A qualitative analysis that consists of evaluating the reliability of global competitiveness indicators obtained from international institutions such as: the World Tourism Organization, the World Economic Forum and ... etc;

- A quantitative analysis that consists of calculating two tourist attractiveness indices through the Algerian territory for the period 2008-2017.

- ✓ The index of territorial attractiveness that results from the ratio between the number of tourists returning to the Algerian territory and the number of residents leaving the territory.

- ✓ The average length of stay which is a direct and objective means of assessing the success of tourism, the difference between the data of two successive years being a transparent and simple way of demonstrating that there has been growth or contraction. But overnight stays better reflect the impact of tourism on the economy than other indicators such as the number of visitor arrivals.

To simplify the reading of the results of calculation, we realized a hotel night card by province and a map of Flow tourist towards Algeria by continents of Provenance.

## **RESULTS DISCUSSIONS**

### **THE ATTRIBUTES THAT DETERMINE THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE ALGERIAN TERRITORY**

In his research (Galarneau, 2015) clarified the attractiveness of a territory as a relatively complex concept that relates to the motivations of individuals to travel, the specificities of his decision-making and the influence of socio-economic and cultural variables. Therefore, the attractiveness of a territory is not acquired since it must be constantly renewed to meet the new realities. The attractiveness of the territory is therefore the potential of a region to attract tourists according to the quantity and diversity of the natural and human attributes that compose it while adapting to the market demand. A territory that wants to develop its lures in order to make its product more attractive must be able to diversify its offer of services and to rely on natural places, tourist infrastructures, a diversity of attractions including historic and cultural places, entertainments, in addition to providing transportation services and introducing welcoming people with a culture different from tourist's culture. The territory is therefore a product that can be modeled according to the segments of the targeted markets.

To measure the impact of the lures of the regions on the attractiveness of the territory, our work will cover the study of the touristic position of Algeria, the accessibility of the territory and the various attractions present in certain touristic regions.

Table 1 presents a summary, by category, of all the attributes making up the attractiveness according to the research conducted by the authors consulted in the context

of this article. The compilation of the attributes shows that some of them are more important than others such as: the presence of natural places, the infrastructures of reception, tourist attractions, the historic places, the accessibility and transport. None of the authors associate attractiveness to a single attribute. On average, each of the authors referred to eight attributes to determine the attractiveness of the territory. Based on this table, Algerian territory has all the advantages that will allow us to qualify it as attractive.

**Table 1.** Attributes of the attractiveness of the Algerian territory  
(Data source: Tourist Priority Projects, SDAT 2025, book 1 Ministry of Tourism of Algeria 2008, p.6)

	Attributes	State in Algeria
Natural heritage	Climate and landscape	The climate is typically Mediterranean with hot and dry summers but with mild and rainy winters. 2.38 million Km <sup>2</sup> (10 countries the largest in the world) has many facets ranging from the coastline, the Atlas Mountains, the Highlands, the Sahara*.
Logistics	Home infrastructure	1185 hotels with a capacity of 112 264 (2017 tourism and craft dashboard, p.12).
	Accessibility and transport	The Algerian road network remains one of the densest on the African continent, its length is 133,741 km, It is dense in the northern fringe of the country, quite loose on the highlands and is reduced to a few axes in the south the feral network 4 500 Km 35 airports13 main ports.
Tourist product	Cultural and historical place	07 World Heritage Sites 437 Historic Sites( <a href="https://whc.unesco.org/fr/etatsparties/dz">https://whc.unesco.org/fr/etatsparties/dz</a> )
	Event	29 international festivals, national 33, local 100 (Statistics 2017 Ministry of Culture Yearbook, p.167).
	Shopping centers	05 Hypermarket with international standards, Supermarket 1739, (National Trade Registry Center).
Economic social factors	Security	Ranked 54/138 in security (Global Terrorism Index 2018, p.9.) Algeria no longer in the top 10 of high-risk countries
	Price	Ranked 4/136 in TTCR 2017

\* The Algerian Sahara occupies more than 2 million km<sup>2</sup>, or nearly 80% of the surface of Algeria. But it is a huge reservoir, natural cultural and historical, playing a key role in the economic activity of the country

### TERRITORIAL ATTRACTIVENESS A CONCEPT OR A MEASURE?

According to international literature, only one work referred to the calculation of the territorial attractiveness (Giotart et al., 2012).

The authors of this work have calculated the coefficient of territorial attractiveness CAT as the ratio between incoming and outgoing flows, the CAT can be used as a macro-indicator among the various methods of evaluation of tourist attractiveness of a territory.

According to (Hatem, 2004) economic vision, five main categories of approaches include the concept of attractiveness, the image-based approach, the decision-making approach, the macro approach by global indicators, the "meso" approach through the differentiated offer and the "micro" approach.

### CALCULATION OF THE COEFFICIENT OF TERRITORIAL ATTRACTIVENESS (CTA)

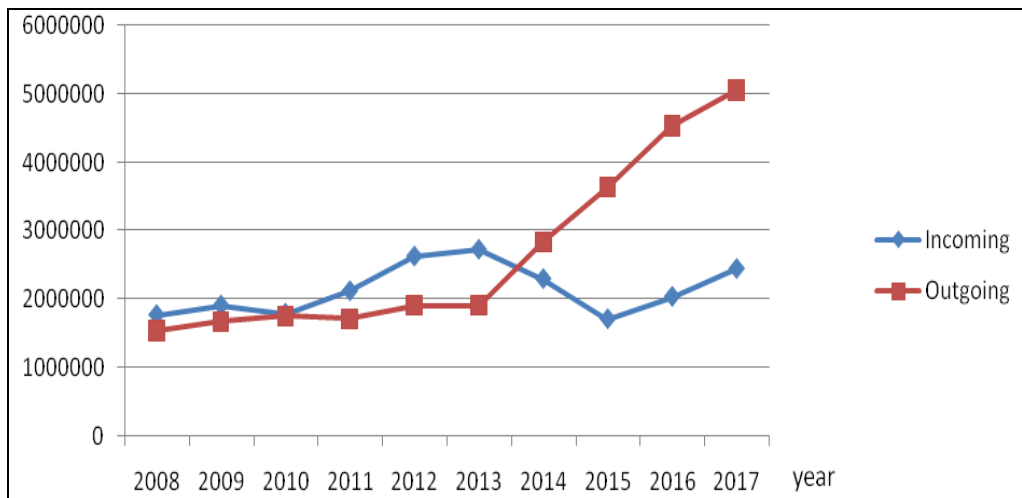
The calculation of the CTA according to Giotart, J. Balfet, M., Leroux, E. (Giotart et al., 2012) is often a convenient indicator to follow the evolution of the attractiveness of a touristic place, it is the calculation of the ratio between incoming and outgoing flows, and the CAT can be used as a macro-indicator among the various methods of evaluating the attractive power of a territory.

According to the Table 2 and graph in Figure 1, for the period 2008-2013 The CTA has known a constant evolution accompanied by a significant evolution of the number of inflows while the period 2013 - 2017 is marked by a remarkable reduction of the CTA and an increase of the flows outbound with stability of inflows. Its figures denote the unreliability of this coefficient measured the attractiveness of a territory.

**Table 2.** Evolution of the coefficient of attractiveness of the Algerian territory  
(Data source: Report on the Algerian tourism indicators 1999-2017 Ministry of Tourism, 2017, p.4 )

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Incoming flows (10 <sup>2</sup> )	1771	1911	1792	2123	2634	2 732	2 301	1 709	2 039	2 450
Outflows (10 <sup>2</sup> )	1539	1676	1757	1714	1910	1910	2 839	3 638	4 529	5 058
CTA	1.15	1.14	1.01	1.23	1.37	1.43	0.81	0,47	0,45	0,48

\* attractiveness coefficient = incoming flows / outflows



**Figure.1.** Evolution of the number of incoming and outgoing Algerian territory  
(Source: Report on the Algerian tourism indicators 1999-2017 Ministry of Tourism, 2017, p.4)

### MEASUREMENT OF ATTRACTIVENESS BY THE WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION (UNWTO)

UNWTO is the United Nations Agency responsible for promoting tourism. This institution uses tourist flows, and especially the number of arrivals as a unit of measurement to determine the level of competitiveness of a destination. A drop in the tourist numbers for example is synonymous with a downward performance of activity, and consequently a decrease in the competitiveness of the destination in question. The attractiveness of the territory is a phenomenon that can be quantified since it can be measured according to the flows it generates (Viceriat et al., 2007; Khadaroo & Seetanah, 2008). This attractiveness is also quantifiable since it can also be related to the perception of tourists (Kim, 1998; Gallarza et al., 2002; Wang & Hsu, 2010; Kim, 2010). According to an (UNWTO Tourism Highlights, 2018 edition, p. 18). Algeria is the fourth most visited country in Africa with 2, 4 million foreign tourists welcomed in 2017, behind Tunisia, South Africa and Morocco. This result is quite contradictory to the results obtained by the indicators of synthesis applied on Algeria which is often ranked at the bottom of the table.

For even more accuracy, we have consulted (report on the Algerian tourism indicators 1999-2017 Ministry of Tourism, 2017, p.5) the observation was that of 2,4

million tourists who visited Algeria in 2017, more than 742 410 were Algerian expatriates returning to the country for the holidays represented 30 % of foreigners. Just over 1 470 243 tourists are foreigners. Thus, the number of flows adopted by the OMT to measure the attractiveness of the territory is to revalue. The map of flows by continent (Figure 3) and graph (Figure 2) shows that Africa is the leading emitter of international tourism followed by Europe, Asia the Middle East and America in last position. Therefore, the Algerian territory attracts the African population by excellence.

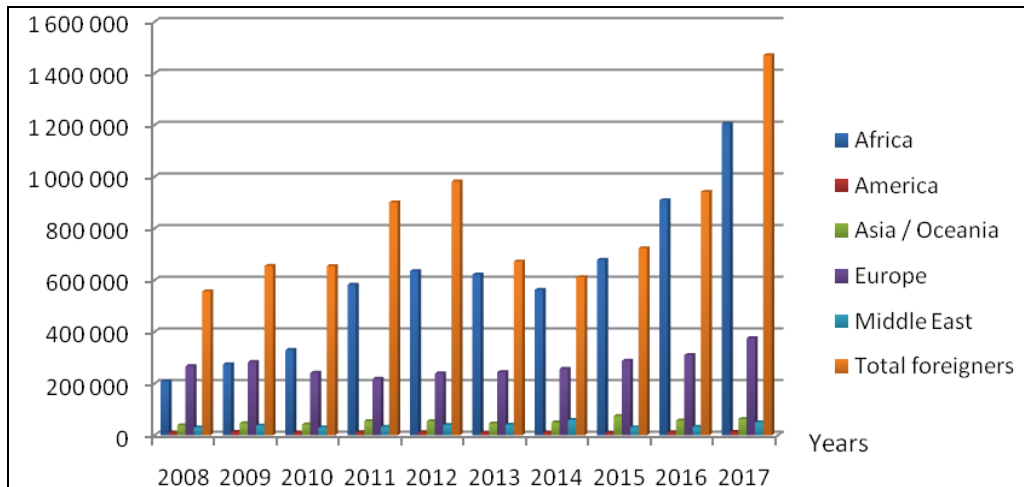


Figure 2. Evolution of border entries of foreign tourists (Source: 2017 tourism and craft dashboard, p.9)

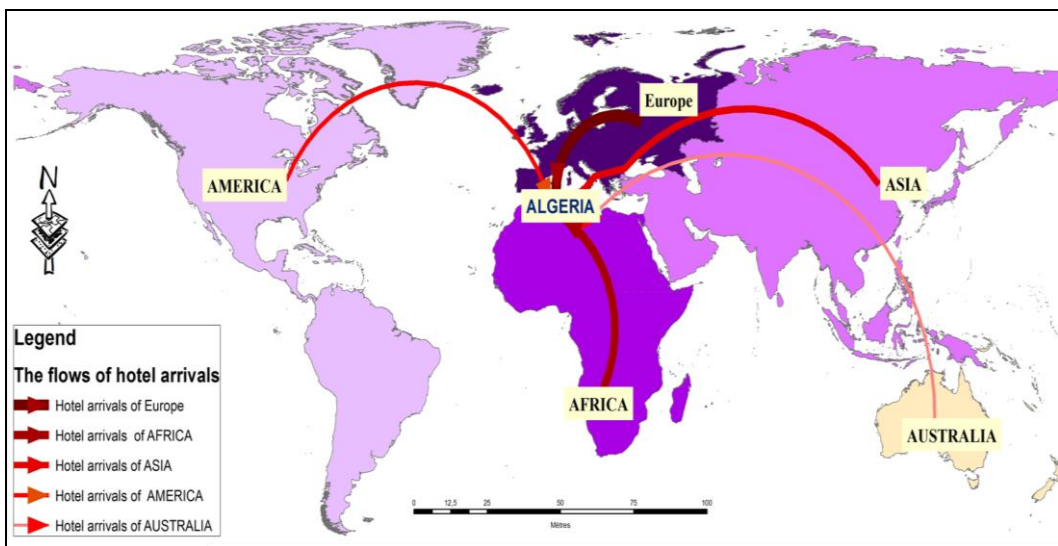


Figure 3. Distribution of hotel arrivals by continent (Source: 2017 tourism and craft dashboard, p.5)

### IS THE NUMBER OF HOTEL NIGHTS AN INDICATOR OF ATTRACTIVENESS?

Tourism attractiveness can be measured by the number of hotel nights, this indicator reflects both the length of stay and the number of visitors.

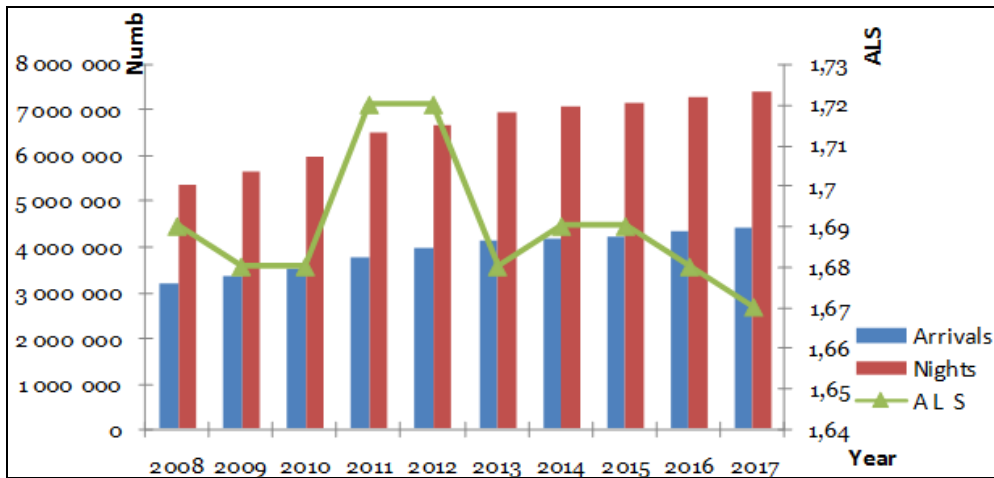
Figures 4 and 5 shows that the overnight stays in Algeria show a breakdown by province of the total number of overnight stays in all types of tourist accommodation in 2014. Tourism activity in Algeria was often concentrated in the coastal regions (mainly along the Mediterranean), in the desert gate.

**Table 3.** Evolutions of arrivals and hotels nights 2008-2017

(Data source: Report on the Algerian tourism indicators 1999-2017 Ministry of Tourism, 2017, p.9)

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Arrivals(10 <sup>2</sup> )	3 167	3 347	3 527	3 762	3959	4119	4 173	4216	4320	4423
Nights (10 <sup>2</sup> )	5 346	5 645	5 939	6 472	6 640	6 921	7 053	7 146	7276	7406
A L S*	1,69	1,68	1,68	1,72	1,72	1,68	1,69	1,69	1,68	1,67

\*ALS: Average Length of Stay (ALOS) = Number of Nights / Number of Arrivals

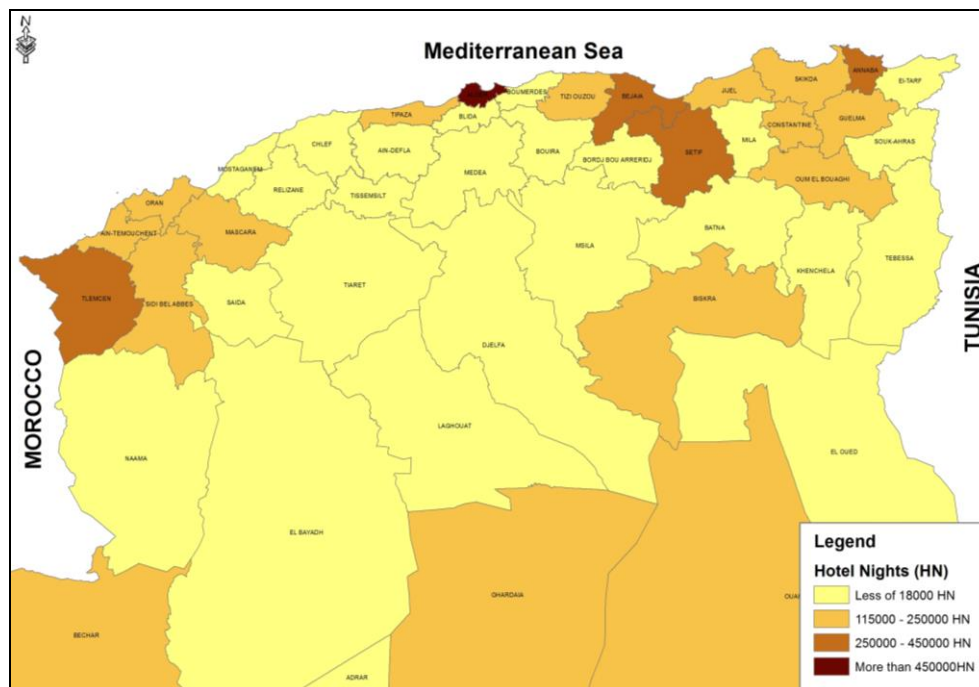


**Figure 4.** Evolution of arrivals and hotels nights 2008-2017

(Source: Report on the Algerian tourism indicators 1999-2017 Ministry of Tourism, 2017, p.9)

**BETWEEN ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE TERRITORY AND COMPETITIVENESS OF DESTINATIONS (POSITIONING OF ALGERIA BY THE INDICATORS OF SYNTHESIS)**

What can be noted from the empirical work on attractiveness is that in many cases the concept of attractiveness is equated with that of competitiveness the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) from which we extracted the following definition: "The competitiveness of tourism for a given destination corresponds to the capacity of the place to optimize its attractiveness for residents and non-residents, to offer the costumer quality, innovative and attractive tourist services (good value for money) and to gain market shares in the domestic and global market, while ensuring that the resources available to support tourism are used efficiently and sustainably (Dupeyras & Maccallum, 2013, p. 15). Based on this definition, key indicators have been developed to address the challenges of competitiveness analysis in the tourism sector. However, the synthetic indexes of competitiveness such as those built by the World Economic Forum are not enough to measure the attractiveness. The theory assuming that Algeria was not attractive, lacked homogeneity, was not founded based on a clear theoretical vision of the determinants of attractiveness, and generated contradictory and volatile rankings. The following table lists the most popular indicators, and gives a historical background of development of these indicators.



**Figure 5.** Breakdown of hotel stays by province (Source: 2017 tourism and craft dashboard, p.12)

**Table 4.** Measure of the Competitiveness of Algeria by the different indicators of synthesis (Data Source: The Global Competitiveness Report 2017, World Economic Forum, p.11; World Investment Report 2017; United Nations Conference On Trade And Development, p.44; World Travel & Tourism competitiveness Report 2017, p.96; Human Development Index trends, 1990–2017, p.27)

Publication	Year	World Ranking	Method
World Economic Forum (Business Competitiveness Index)	2013	110/144	Composite index based on 12 pillars indicators measuring conditions, competitiveness: Institutions, Infrastructure, Macroeconomic environment, Health and primary education, Higher education and training, Goods market efficiency, Labor market efficiency, Financial market development, Technological readiness, Market size, Business sophistication Innovation
	2014	100/148	
	2015	79/144	
	2016	87/140	
	2017	87/137	
World Investment Report (FDI Potential Index)	2017	101/140	Composite index based on a dozen indicators of attractiveness of the country for foreign investment flows
WTTC (WORLD Travel & Tourism competitiveness Report 2017)	2017	118/136	The set of factors and policies that enable the sustainable development of tourism
ONU, (Index of human development)	2016	83/188 Rank 3 in Africa and rank 6 in the Arab world	Composite index based on a few health, education and per capita income indicators
	2017	85/189	

According to the Table 4, between two rankings (2014 and 2015) Algeria was in 21<sup>st</sup> position in the world ranking, which is indeed positive. Although considerable effort is



still required to improve the competitiveness of the Algerian economy. The World Economic Forum's 2015 annual report, focused in the competitiveness of African economies, Reported an improvement of the competitiveness in the northern countries including Algeria. It is based on criteria such as GDP (Gross Domestic Product), the global value chain, the evolution of infrastructure and the education system that Algeria has been able to gain rank. The positive evolution of its ranking is therefore linked to these specific criteria. The economies of North Africa are noted according to the evolution of three major sectors that determine the score of each country in the region.

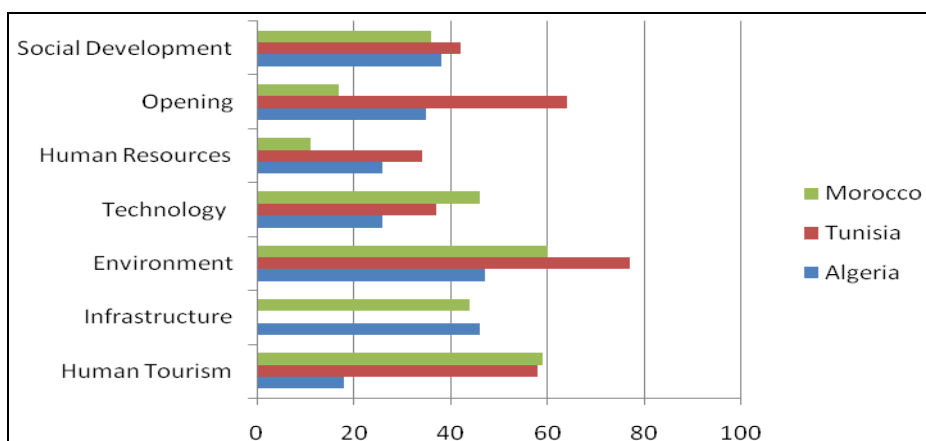
The first is the basic needs sector, which includes institutions, infrastructure, the macroeconomic environment, health and education. Secondly, performance concerns the quality of education, the efficiency and size of the market, and the finance and technology development. The third sector is innovation. This is how countries earn points in some of these sectors and lose in others. Regarding tourism competitiveness it was first developed in 2001 by WTTC (WORLD Travel & Tourism competitiveness) a competitiveness index of tourism in collaboration with the University of Nottingham. It is based on eight synthetic indicators that make it possible to assess the performance of each country relative to others. Price competitiveness is one of the major components. Built from an indicator based on hotel prices and purchasing power parity, the price competitiveness indicator ranges from 0 (the least competitive country) to 100 (the most competitive country). At the global level, there is a correlation between income level and price competitiveness: countries with high income levels are the least competitive. But this correlation weakens a lot when we consider the only emerging countries: the lowest income countries are not the most competitive and the most competitive countries go from Ethiopia to South Africa through Brazil. Algeria is in this category among the most competitive destinations, tied with Thailand. Among the Mediterranean countries, it appears as the most competitive country with a score of 91 ahead of Turkey, Egypt, Jordan and Morocco (Chaponnière & Lautier, 2005, p.18).

However, performance under this criterion does not systematically imply higher incomes for the country concerned. The price competitiveness of a destination depends on endogenous factors (costs, productivity) and on a set of indicators the notional actors miss. It depends in particular on air fares, which are related to the degree of liberalization of the sector and mainly related to travel agencies who play a significant role in the profitability of the sector, because of their influence on lowering the prices on bulk reservations. In a context of hotel overcapacity, their commercial power often allows them to impose on their own price conditions that barely cover their fixed costs. In the (World Travel & Tourism competitiveness Report 2003) approach, tourism competitiveness is based on other, more qualitative elements (Figure 6):

- The index of openness covers several indicators (visa process, ease of currency exchange, tax policies);
- the "human tourism" index is the average of the tourism participation index (ratio of the number of tourists to the population) and an indicator measuring its economic impact;
- the infrastructure index is based on data on roads, sanitation and access to water
- Environmental Index aggregates data on population density, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and implementation of international environmental agreements;
- the technology index is mainly based on telecommunication diffusion rates;
- the Human Resources Index is based on the UNDP Education Index;
- social development index aggregates "social" indicators and media and Internet dissemination indicators.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) published its second report (World Travel & Tourism competitiveness Report 2008, p.14) based on the competitiveness indicator of

130 countries in terms of travel and tourism. This report assessed the determinants of the competitiveness of the travel and tourism sector by identifying the ways to improve its competitiveness. It also identified the main obstacles to tourism competitiveness in each country. According to this report, Algeria was ranked 102nd behind most countries considered in index. The WEF has established an index to assess the competitiveness of each country in the travel and tourism. The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) (World Travel & Tourism competitiveness Report 2017).



**Figure 6.** Ranking of Algeria in relation to the country of the Maghreb by the indicators of WTTC (2003) (Data Source: World Travel & Tourism competitiveness Report 2003)

It measures, in a synthetic way, the factors and determinants of the competitiveness of the sector in 130 countries, as well as the effectiveness of policies to maintain and increase the attractiveness of this sector at the international level. The reputation and the improvement of the tourist competitiveness of a country evolved, indeed, according to multiple political, regulatory, human and environmental actions. These actions considered as part of the overall index consisted of 14 pillars structured in three broad categories:

**(a) the regulatory framework for travel and tourism:** includes factors essential to the stage of development of travel and tourism, such as the regulatory environment, the level of safety and the degree of priority accorded by the government to this sector and levels achieved in terms of health and hygiene;

**(b) The business environment in the sector,** the quality of air and land transport infrastructure, as well as information and communication technology infrastructure and price competitiveness in the industry;

**(c) The quality of human, cultural and natural resources.**

Each pillar is composed of several variables (71 in total) and described a stage of development of the tourism sector of the country. The TTCI (The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index) was elaborated in collaboration with a certain number of associated organizations and partners as well as heads of companies in the field of travel and tourism. It is based both on quantitative data from public sources, international institutions, travel and tourism experts, and on the results of surveys and opinion polls conducted by business leaders and investors in the field of travel and tourism.

#### **Methodological deficiencies**

Some limitations that impacted the relevance of the TTCI index. We noted:

- The subjective nature of the questionnaires: 40% of the variables used come from surveys

Public opinion (qualitative variables). At this level, the risk of having wrong answers reflecting perceptions is not negligible;

- The incomplete information of the respondents, which risks generating a systematic bias of Responses and therefore bias aggregation of the overall index;
- The cultural bias of international opinion surveys because of the cultural differences to the interviewed persons (they may show patriotism in favor or against a given country, possibly under the influence of objectives of the body conducting the survey);
- Problems of international comparability of responses: the formulation of questions orients the answer to favorize the countries against authors which compromises the overall accuracy of the ranking.

The ranking of Algeria at 118 ranks is interesting in the comparisons it allows to make with the various countries selected, numbering 136 in 2017, and especially in the indicators and sub-indicators that it covers, and the comparison scores achieved at these levels with those of other countries in the same parameters. The report, which analyzes the performance of 136 economies through the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI), provides a unique overview of each country's strengths and development areas to improve industry competitiveness. It allows for cross-country comparisons, for assessing progress in country policy and for making investment decisions related to business and industry development.

First compiled in 2007, the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) measures "all factors and policies that enable the sustainable development of the Travel & Tourism sector, which, in turn, contributes to development and competitiveness of a country ". The index was developed as part of the World Economic Forum's Industrial Program for Aviation, Travel and Tourism and in close collaboration with data partners Bloom Consulting, Deloitte-STR Global, the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature the T & T competitiveness index measures four main factors of competitiveness. The following fourteen factors are organized under four categories covering the general settings needed for the the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index:

Business environment

- Safety and security
- Health and hygiene
- Human Resources and the Labor Market
- ICT preparation

T & T's Activation Policies and Conditions sub-domain, which captures specific policies or strategic aspects that have a more direct impact on the T & T industry:

- Focus on travel and tourism
- International opening
- Competitiveness of prices
- Environmental sustainability

Sub-index of Infrastructure, which captures the availability and quality of the physical infrastructure of each economy:

- Air transport infrastructure
- Terrestrial and port infrastructure
- Tourism service infrastructure

The sub-domain of natural and cultural resources, which captures the main "reasons to travel":

- Natural resources
- Cultural Resources and Business Travel

This flagship report is one of the most effective and instructive in the world, considering the quality of the teams that have been responsible for its elaboration, the

tools and indicators it uses to measure the performance of countries in the fields of the research it retains, its methodology, as well as its usefulness for the managers and decision-makers in charge of the national and sectoral policies it concerns.

## CONCLUSION

The attractiveness of the territory does not therefore constitute an "absolute" concept, capable of being the subject of a single measure, nor, a fortiori, of a concept fixed in time. It can only be defined in a relative way, as the capacity of the territory considered to respond more effectively than its competitors to the demand of tourists.

The different approaches to attractiveness have been presented in this article lead each has specific implications for territorial development policies:

We have tested through this study of the factors that affect competitiveness and we have found that its last can change quickly, which makes the task even more complex.

The Algerian territory responds to all the criteria of tourist attractiveness, but this manager still occupies the last ranks in terms of competitiveness this is due mainly to the economic development model adopted by Algeria which does not allow the latter to increase its returned. Algeria, which has experienced a security crisis, has seen a few years ago thanks to a legal text of reconciliation ([www.interieur.gov.dz/index.php/en/dossiers/168-the-charter-for-the-peace-and-national-reconciliation.html](http://www.interieur.gov.dz/index.php/en/dossiers/168-the-charter-for-the-peace-and-national-reconciliation.html)) a changeover to peace, in 2018 Algeria is no longer in the Top-10 countries at high risk of terrorist attack Indeed, this is what emerged from the last report of the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) (Global Terrorism Index 2018, p.9) the country has combined political, economic, social, cultural and religious measures involving all institutions and inhabitants.

Some proposals are vital for a country like Algeria:

- Capitalize on competitive attributes
- Affirm a positive and rewarding image of Algeria for all clientele (national and Foreign)
- Boost the country's overall attractiveness
- Restore trust
- Renew the image of Algeria by building on its main competitive advantage over the perception of Morocco and Tunisia destinations: the Sahara at the gates of Black Africa

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## THE ROLE OF TOURISM MARKETING IN ENHANCING TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN CONSTANTINE AND AMMAN CITIES

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**Abstract:** Tourism marketing is a key policy focus in the tourism sector development strategy of most countries in the global south. This is because of its potential as the most optimal alternative for achieving economic and social development, even in economies with daunting economic climates. In this research paper, Authors illustrates the role of tourism marketing in introducing the tourism product in the City of Constantine (Algeria) and the City of Amman (Jordan), through various methods of tourism marketing in practice, which have had a dissimilar impact on tourism revenues in both cities. The importance of the research lies in clarifying the importance of tourism marketing in achieving tourism development, as well as highlighting the tourism product as a major attraction factor for tourists. This research is based on the analytical descriptive approach in clarifying the tourism product in Constantine and Amman Cities. The research also depended on a collection of theoretical reference. The study reveals that there are wide and sharp differences in tourism marketing strategy of Constantine and Amman Cities and that there is A sharp contrast in the quality of tourism development projects of both cities, reflected by the numbers and categories of tourists coming to them.

**Key words:** tourism marketing, tourism product, tourism development, Constantine, Amman, Algeria, Jordan, tourism planning

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### INTRODUCTION

Tourism has flourished in recent years, becoming an attention-attracting industry worldwide, because of the considerable role it plays in stimulating consumption, developing trade, and promoting international communication (Qian et al., 2018). Many

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countries of the world have, in recent decades, heavily depended on their tourism sectors for promoting economic development and have, hence taken major steps to develop it.

The World Tourism Organization reported a growth in tourism revenues as a result of increases in the number of tourists and the expansion of the global tourism market, which in 2015 achieved a growth rate of 3% per annum, accounting for about 10% of the world's net income. In addition, in 2014, the number of tourists worldwide reached 1.13 billion tourists, marking an increase of 51 million tourists compared to 2013. Tourism has also provided 260 million job opportunities globally, representing around 11% of total jobs worldwide (WTO, 2016). With the exception of the increased number of natural disasters, tourism will become the largest industry in the world. This is an increasingly important motive for globalization in terms of intensive cross-border economic, social and cultural relations. Alongside that increase, individual countries are trying to attract potential tourists to earn tourism-related gains (Arasli, 2014). Consequently, tourism marketing constitutes a key factor in achieving tourism development due to its role in promoting tourism and providing services. Therefore, tourism marketing through publicity and advertising has become a necessity for attracting tourists and create the motives of consumption of the tourism product and expand the tourist market. The studies relating to the extent of the popularity of tourism products are of no less importance in the field of tourism marketing (Benhaddou, 2017). It is worth mentioning that adopting a successful marketing approach is expected to create uninterrupted communication between the tourism industry and its consumers. This requires a comprehensive national plan for tourism marketing, in addition to the individual efforts made at the level of touristic and hotel companies. The joint efforts at the governmental and community levels, especially during events such as festivals, conferences and others, play an important role in promoting the tourism product as well. In sum, tourism marketing helps introduce the tourism product and provide the suitable conditions for attracting tourists and creating spending opportunities to raise the volume of revenues and expand investments, which will have a direct impact on activating the tourism development movement.

### **RESEARCH PROBLEM**

In the context of global economic changes, many countries have prioritize the tourism industry especially Arab countries that have found in the development and improvement of tourism sector an appropriate alternative to compensate their losses in other economic sectors through its financial revenues, or a strategic option to build an economic base with its revenues amidst the limited resources (Benghadbane, 2013).

In this respect, Algeria stands out as an example of the former case, Algeria seek new opportunities to diversify its economic offers. Tourism is considered one of the sectors that deserve attention and giving priority (Boumendjel, 2010). However, with the stability in security that Algeria witnessed, coupled with the adoption of a balanced and coherent strategic planning, they can ensure a sustainable growth of tourism.

On the other hand, the second case is represented by Jordan; a country with limited natural resources, which depends on the tourism sector (which represent 13% of GDP) to develop its economy (Abuamoud et al., 2014). The tourism sector in Jordan has seem significant improvements (Sullivan, 1999) with the Jordanian government undertaking several initiatives in recent years . The tourism sector in Jordan has seem significant improvements (Sullivan, 1999) with the Jordanian government undertaking several initiatives in recent years (Al-Akra et al., 2010). In both cases of Jordan and Algeria, it is necessary to follow a tourism marketing strategy to bring about change for the better through adopting organized and effective promotional plans to achieve the

desired tourism development. In this research, we shed light on the City of Constantine in Algeria and the City of Amman in Jordan, which are living this situation and tourism marketing played in them a vital role in identifying the tourism product and achieving different levels of tourism development regardless of size and degree of marketing efforts. Hence the problem of this research emerges, which is centered on this question:

What is the role of tourism marketing in enhance tourism development in the cities of Constantine (Algeria) and Amman (Jordan)?

### **RESEARCH PURPOSES**

The aim of the research is to identify the role of tourism marketing in enhancing tourism development in Constantine and Amman Cities as tourist destinations, along with clarifying the existing variation in the use of tourism marketing methods and tools. This Study aims at providing recommendations to decision makers to improve marketing methods.

### **RESEARCH IMPORTANCE**

The importance of the research lies in clarifying the importance of tourism marketing in enhancing tourism development, as well as identifying the most appropriate tourism marketing methods and ways as a key factor in expanding tourism investment opportunities and raising its revenues, along with highlighting the role of stakeholders working in the field of tourism in the process of marketing.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

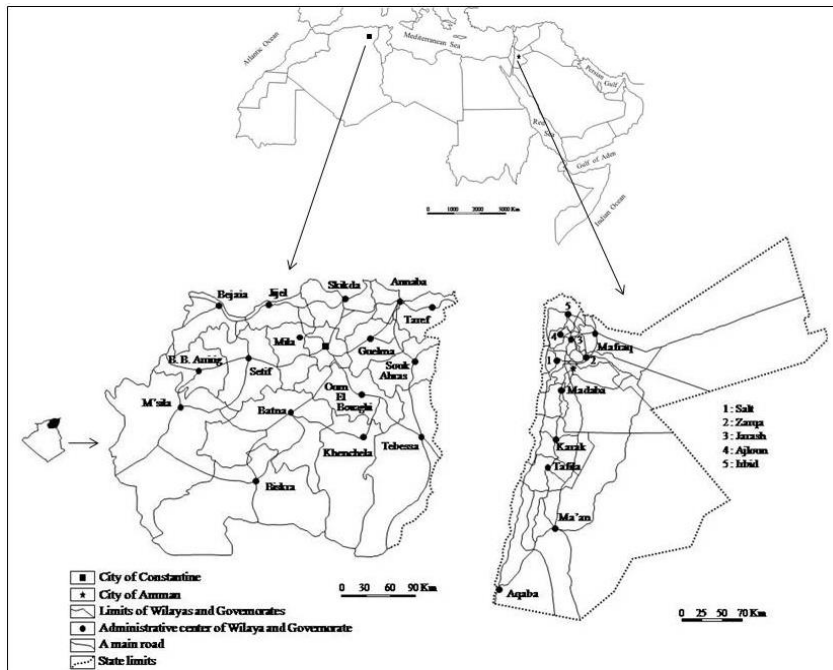
This research is based on the analytical descriptive approach in clarifying the tourism product in Constantine and Amman Cities, and how to clarify the role of tourism marketing in promoting tourism development projects, in addition to the comparative approach, which is concerned with clarifying the various discrepancies existing in the use of ways and methods of tourism promotion to highlight the level of tourism development achieved in Constantine and Amman Cities. It is noticeable that despite the difference geographical locations of the two cities, as the former is located in Africa and the latter is in Asia, they have a resemblance in their specific location. Despite the geographic difference between the city of Constantine and the city of Amman, both have a long inveterate history. The research also depended on a collection of theoretical references from books, magazines, articles and documents that allowed to identify the tourism product in the two cities and the completed and programmed tourist projects and the importance of practicing tourism marketing in developing them.

### **GEOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS MOTIVATING TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

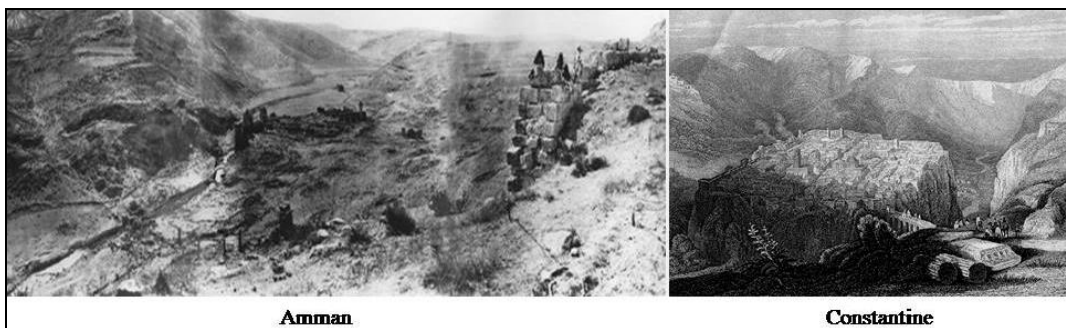
The city of Constantine is located in the east of Algeria at a latitude of 36.23 ° N and a longitude of 7.35 ° E, thus occupying a distinct region with suitable topography (Larouk, 1984), within the hill atlas between the coastline and the northern border of the desert, as it is 245 km far from the Algerian-Tunisian eastern borders, 431 km from Algiers in the west, 235 km from the town of Biskra in the south, and 89 km from the town of Skikda in the north. The strategic location allowed it to play an important role in the Algerian East, which it mediates geographically through historical functional relations, which increased the importance of the city on the economic, social, cultural and political levels as the meeting point of all land and air transport, and an industrial economic center at the national level, especially in the mechanical industries. Constantine has a population of 418,672 in 2008, which makes it the third rank in the ranking of Algerian cities after



Algiers and Oran (ONS, 2011). The city of Amman is located in the north-west of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, between the intersection of the latitudes of 31.25 ° and 32.1 °N with longitudes of 35.66 ° and 36.42 °E (Khawaldah, 2016) (Figure 1). This location allowed it, thanks to its various features, to be a city representing a capital, through its connection to all regions of the Kingdom, as it has a strategic location with easy access. The size of the city of Amman according to the last general census of the population and housing for the year 2015 is 4.007.526 people, with indication that this size covers all the Greater Amman Municipality (Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 2016), which represents 42.04% of Jordan's total population. This means that nearly half of the Kingdom's population is concentrated in the Greater Amman Municipality (but by less than eight degrees percentage), making it stand on the top of the Jordanian urban system.



**Figure 1.** Administrative location of Constantine and Amman cities (Source: Michelin, Carte routière et touristique: Algérie- Jordanie, 1/10.000, Michelin édition des voyages, Paris, 2003)



**Figure 2.** The original location of the cities of Constantine and Amman in its infancy stage (Source: Archives of Constantine Municipality, Greater Amman Municipality, 2014)

It is noticeable that despite the difference geographical locations of the two cities, as the former is located in Africa and the latter is in Asia, they have a resemblance in their specific location. Both cities are internal cities within a mountainous spot. The location of Constantine is composed of a group of mountains that are high and a number of surrounding hills. The location of the Constantine city is divided into Rhumel Valley and Boumerzoug Valley. A mountainous nature also dominates the location of the Amman city and which was called "city of seven mountains", in relation to the first seven mountains that make up this location (Figure 2). All these available elements make the two cities a fertile place for multiple tourist products that require proper planning to market them to achieve tourism development in both cities.

**DIFFERENT TYPES OF CLIMATE FOR VARYING TOURISM ACTIVITIES**

The city of Constantine is dominated by the warm Mediterranean climate in summer and the cold in winter (Benghadbane, 2001). The city of Amman has a Mediterranean climate, especially on the western highlands of the region, while some of its areas in the eastern part cover the semi-desert climate (Potter et al., 2009) (Table 1). These climatatic characteristics affect tourism activities negatively in that climate shortens tourism season.

**Table 1.** Some climatic characteristics in the both cities of Constantine (Algeria) and Amman (Jordan) (Data source: Aeronautical Observatory in Ain El Bey-Constantine, 2016 and DOS in Jordan, 2016)

Elements of Climate		Constantine (Algeria)	Amman (Jordan)
Temperature (° C)	Annual rate	15,40	25.8
	Minimum (winter)	9,19	13
	Maximum grade (summer)	41,00	32
Quantity of precipitation (Mm /yr)	Annual average	512	259,8
	Minimum Quantity (Summer)	8	0
	Maximum quantity (winter)	71	61

**IMPORTANT HISTORICAL LEGACY PROMOTING THE TOURISM PRODUCT**

Despite the geographic difference between the city of Constantine and the city of Amman, both have a long inveterate history, reflecting the successive civilizations that have remained largely untouched, which is now an important tourism product that needs to be reintroduced and marketed through important promotional plans to attract tourists. The rock (Le Rocher) is the most important topographic unit: the first nucleus of the city of Constantine, with an area of 40 hectares. It is surrounded by natural obstacles (sand dunes and steep slopes), from all directions except the western side where it is naturally connected to a 300 m bar (Figure 3). The history of the city of Constantine dates back to 1450 years BC. It was the capital of the Kingdom of Nomidia for 157 years.



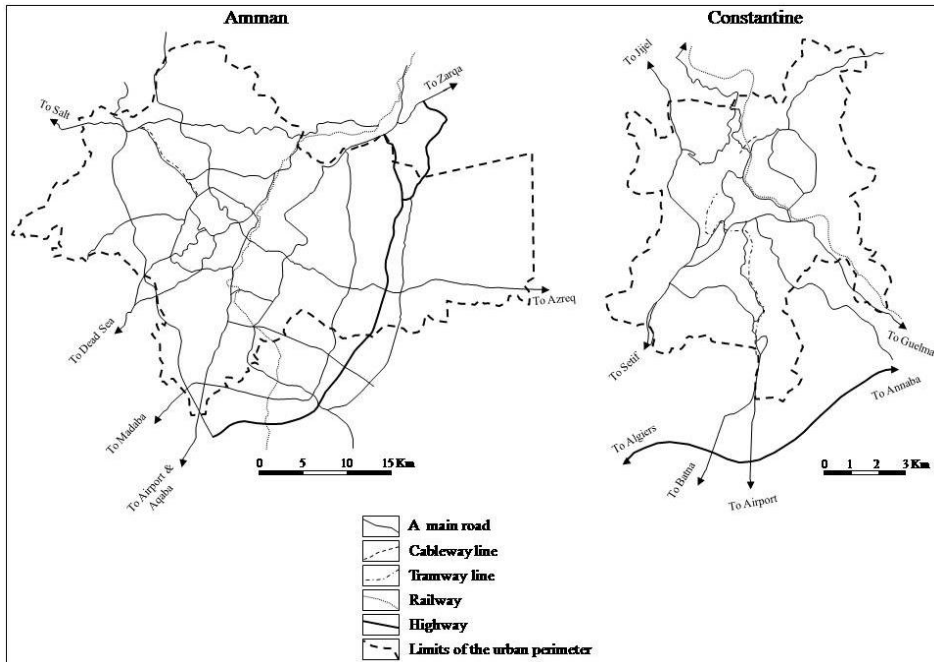
**Figure 3.** Qantara Bridge, Sidi Rashed Bridge, Sidi M’sid Bridge, Al Shalalat Bridge in Constantine city (Source: Archives of Constantine Municipality, 2001)

It was known as the "Cirta" (Boucharab, 2006). The city of Constantine turned into Islam after seventy (70) years of attempted Arab Islamic Invasion of the region of Maghreb (Benidir, 2007). After the French colonization and the fall of the city in 1837 after violent resistance from the residents, the city became divided into two sections, a special section for French and Jews and a section of the Algerian Muslim population (Régis, 1880). Following its independence, the city of Constantine became increasingly urbanized as a result of inflow of migrants from neighboring (Nait-Amar, 2015). The city of Amman dates back to more than 5000 years BC. During this long period of human history, the city has witnessed many ancient civilizations that have left their mark on their location, the marks that were uncovered by excavations in many areas of the city, as the first human presence in the city was on the eastern side, specifically in the region of "Ain Ghazal" (Bakij, 2002).

On May 25, 1946, the country became independent and the Emirate became a kingdom. The city of Amman was declared as the capital of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The importance of the city as a development pole for the Kingdom has increased, as all planning policies in the Hashemite era have applied the concept of "center and periphery" as a regional development method that examines the relationship between the capital and its urban edge located within its territory on the one hand, and between its territory and the developing regions of the Kingdom on the other hand (Al-Asad, 1997).

#### ESSENTIAL AND DIVERSE INFRASTRUCTURE THAT SUPPORTS THE MARKETING OF TOURISM PRODUCT

The infrastructure includes all the services supporting tourism development.



**Figure 4.** Transport infrastructure in Constantine and Amman cities (Source: URBACO-EDR, Schéma de cohérence urbaine de Constantine, Mission II, URBACO, 2007, p. 62, Map of Amman city : [www.visitjordan.com](http://www.visitjordan.com))

The most important of these are the highways, railways and airports, which have a large share in both cities, and which facilitate the movement of tourists from one area to

another to explore the various sites, especially by providing public transportation of all types (Boukerzaza, 2015). Furthermore, the communications network in both cities is good enough to meet the needs of tourists (Benghadbane, 2001; Dayafla, 2014) (Figure 4).

Furthermore, health services are intensively and efficiently provided for visitors, whether local residents or tourists, especially for emergency cases, as the two cities have many governmental and private hospitals (Belbacha, 2011; Zyoud, 2016).

Among the most important infrastructures that serve tourists in the first place are the accommodation structures. In this regard, both Constantine and Amman Cities have a number of graded and ungraded hotels with various capacities allowing tourists to be accommodated according to their socio-professional categories. However, the number of hotels in Amman is very high compared with the city of Constantine, which has a direct impact on the number of the incoming tourists, as well as the quality of the services and the job positions provided (Bader et al., 2016) (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Distribution of hotels in Constantine (Algeria) and Amman (Jordan)  
(Data source: Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industries of Constantine, 2016 + DOS in Jordan 2016)

Hotels	Constantine (Algeria)	Amman (Jordan)
Number of hotels	23	452
Number of categorized hotels	14	239
Number of uncategorized hotels	09	303
Total number of beds	2.437	Data are not available
Job positions provided	966	Data are not available

## **TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLANNING VIS À VIS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TOURISM MARKETING**

A development strategy has been adopted based on the marketing method of the tourist product in both cities in a different style **according to the prevailing economic trends in each city**, enhanced by the completion of a number of tourism projects, which had a clear impact in raising the level of quality of tourism services. The most important ones are:

### **Important projects based on tourism product :**

The strategy of tourism development in Constantine and Amman Cities was based on the enhancement of tourism product through a number of tourism projects in response to the expected number of tourists. In the city of Constantine, many major urban touristic projects have been carried out, including:

- Projects aimed at increasing the capacity of tourist accommodation through building Marriott Hotel on the northern edge of "Ain El Bey" plateau (Figure 5). The hotel is a branch of the international American hotel chain (Hecham-Zehioua, 2010).

- The Grand Exhibition Hall "Ahmed Bey" is located in the southern part of the city of Constantine (Figure 6). The Hall hosts all national and international cultural events, as well as the city's theaters and opera (Zaidi, 2013).

### **Structural projects related to the easy access of tourists:**

- The Tramway Project, completed in 2013, has a capacity of 6,000 passengers / hour, which extends for a length of 8 km between Constantine city center and its southern destination. Currently, the project extends south to the new city of Ali Mendjeli passing through the international airport and the university city (Hecham-Zehioua & Labii, 2009).

- The aerial tramway project was completed in 2008, connects the city center with its eastern neighborhoods. It passes through the sand heights, reaching the neighborhoods of Emir Abdelkader and TatashBelkasem. The tourist can identify the

different tourism potential of the city from the top; The tramway is equipped with 33 passenger cabins with a capacity of 1200 passenger/ hour in one direction (Rebai, 2010). This line is expected to be extended to Djebel El Wahch in the north-eastern part of the city where the Mosta – land is located.



**Figure 5.** 'Marriott' Hotel  
in the City of Constantine



**Figure 6.** Grand Exhibition Hall  
'Ahmed Bey' in the City of Constantine

- Pont Geant Salah Bey Project: Completed by the end of 2013, it connects the United Nations Plaza (the beautiful scenery hill) in Mansoura town (Mansoura Plateau). It passes over the Oued Rhumel with a length of 4,300 meters, with double passageways, one for pedestrians and the other for vehicles (Boudjadja, 2014) (Figure 7).



**Figure 7.** Pont Geant 'Salah Bey'  
in the city of Constantine



**Figure 8.** Preparation of the district 'Bardo' in the  
city of Constantine (Source: Boudjadja, 2014, p. 37)

- Reinforcing and renovating the existing cultural and religious structures and facilities in the city to ensure their cultural role in tourism development. In particular, the rehabilitation of Dar El Thakafa "Mohammed Al Eid Al Khalifa" and converted to the Palace of Culture, and the same thing to the Dar El Thakafa of " Malik Haddad " beside the rehabilitation of the Wali in the Casbah district and turn it into a center for the arts, rehabilitation and equipping "Bey Palace " and the regional theater, and the equipping of Emir Abdelkader Mosque (Rebai, 2010).

- Restructuring of the city center of Constantine, a process of urban intervention carried out by the participation of merchants, inhabitants and local authorities, aimed at rehabilitation of the fabric of the old city and exit buildings along the main axes in

order to improve the tourism form of city center of (Boufenara, 2008) it was specified 19 Joan Street, Awati Mustafa Street and Blozdad Street, in addition to the preparation of public squares (Hecham-Zehioua, 2010).

- The removal of anarchic housing in Bardo district estimated at 2000 homes during the period 2008-2010 on an area of 115 hectares and the expulsion of 5700 inhabitants to the new city "Ali Mendjeli" In order to recover a strategic property adjacent to the city center to program important projects, on the one hand, and on the other hand to improve the urban landscape (Milous, 2006) to suit the desired tourism development strategy.

- The preparation of the district "Bardo", by programming many tourism investment projects on part of the property recovered after the destruction of anarchic housing, and the establishment of an entertainment and amusement park on an area of 65 hectares (Figure 8), By preparation of the sides of Oued Rhumel and by completing ecological, commercial and environmental facilities and structures (Boudjadja, 2014).

- The establishment of a university city named "Constantine 3 Saleh Boubnider university" on an area of 170 hectares of the aims of strengthening the role of the university in economic and social level, and it represents continuity of the city of Constantine as a city of science and scientists since the establishment of Association of Muslim Algerian Ulema led by "Abdul Hamid bin Badis".

#### **Future Projects Include**

- The establishment of a village for the traditional industry in Bardo District in the field of industry of copper pots and copper engraving, because Constantine was known throughout the ages of copper and its traditional industry, so it was necessary to preserve the handicraft character of the region and promote it with traditional industries, especially the gold industry and jewelry (Zaidi, 2013), In addition to the project of preparing the underground tunnel adjacent to the Culture Palace "Mohammed Al-Eid Al-Khalifa" in the city center, by allocating shops to display and sell traditional handicrafts and industries and to create jobs.

- Preparation of the "tourist trail" located at the bottom of the sand along the rock, Starting from the Roman baths located under the bridge " Sidi Rached Viaduct" and the passing under the bridge "Qantara", down to the bridge "waterfalls" with a distance up to 1800 m ,width of 1.5 m and a height of 150 m.

- Completion of 03 areas for tourism expansion in: Djebel El Wahch, Shattabah and El Meridj, including many tourism and leisure projects (Belbacha, 2011).

In addition to these projects, the city of Constantine includes several tourism destinations; perhaps the most important can be mentioned: The old city of Suweika, Many museums (Cirta, Mujahid), Bridges, Ahmed Bey Palace, EmirAbdelkader Mosque, Many of Dar El Thakafa, theaters and festivals (music, roses).

For the city of Amman with its unique and its proximity to the Dead Sea and Al-Maghtas and its archaeological cities of Umm Qais and Jerash in the north and the city of Madaba in the south, beside it is a political and economic capital of Jordan (Orieqat, Saymeh, 2015), Which has gained increasing importance of the central authorities to support it with tourism projects, as follows:

- Creation Project of Raghdan Tourist Complex: The Raghdan tourist complex is one of the historical and archaeological monuments that characterize city center.

- Abdali Project: The city of Amman represents a fertile ground for the completion of various investment projects, especially real estate, the adequate stable political and security conditions the and the availability of information and communication technology, the potential of investment extends to the completion of business offices and luxury hotels and luxury residential neighborhoods (Aljafari, 2014), The Abdali project



comes as a pilot project to develop the city center and redevelop urban areas with multiple uses, and the collection of local and international investments in an environment conducive to the business center and the capital center (Figure 9).



**Figure 9.** Abdali Region before and after the project execution in Amman City (Source: Aljafari, 2014)

The built-up area is 1.7 million square meters,, it includes office towers, luxury hotels, leisure facilities, high residential areas, recreational and cultural facilities, government buildings and a transport center, as well as a national museum and two elegant hotels. The 55 hectares of land adjacent to the project will be consumed. Upon completion, the project is expected to house 40,000 inhabitants, 15,000 jobs, 25,000 car parking, The project is supposed to consist of 70 High towers with a height of about 220 m (Beauregard et al., 2011). Abdali has been developed as a smart center for the city, combining media and communication infrastructure to ensure that the most advanced technologies are delivered to all homes, offices, shops, It also has general energy solutions and central gas systems to provide a sound and clean environment, as well as a significant savings in the energy bill, The project will be fully equipped with technically sophisticated systems for building management, fire protection, safety management and precautionary measures. The Abdali development will contribute to get effective traffic solutions around and within the project, ensuring the flow of 90,000 people / day of the inhabitants, employees and visitors when the project is fully operational.



**Figure 10.** First Track of Execution Project of Tramway in "Princess Ranya Al Abdulla" in Amman City

- Rapid Bus Project (Tramway): The strategy of the "Rapid Bus" project is illustrated by the Greater Amman Municipality plan to improve public transport services in the capital, Which aims to provide a quick, safe, and convenient transport service with priority at a reasonable cost, taking advantage of current and future infrastructure, and

based on balancing between the priorities, so that the project is compatible with internal and external traffic patterns and the implementation of traffic improvements to achieve a gradual shift in the structure of current services (Pinel, 2013).

The rapid bus project includes three tracks. The first is to connect "Sweileh" to the "station" at a distance of 16 km, and the second connects the sports city and the Ras Al-Ayn district at a distance of 90 km, and the third connects the station and As Sakhras Al Musharrafah in the south at a distance of 7 km, where it is connected with the Al-Wehdat area in Ash-Sharq Al-Awsat Interchange, and is currently underway to complete the first track of this project (Figure 10).

- Tourism projects that promote social integration and communication between the different groups in society: At the level of the Greater Amman Municipality, many urban projects (Daher, 2008) enable them to enjoy the panoramic views of the city without payment of fees (a sum of money). These projects include creating the "Rainbow" street in Jabal Amman in 2005 and "Agencies" street in Sweifieh district. The Hussein Cultural Center, formerly a playground for children living in Jabal Amman and Jabal Nazif, was also established (Ababsa, 2011). In 2005, an open theater was opened on the slopes of Jabal Amman serving as a bridge between the east and west of the city and welcoming all social groups in the eastern part of the city (Ababsa, 2007).

- Tourism projects to preserve the heritage: Many urban projects have emerged that aim to promote urban renewal in some spaces through urban and architectural interventions in the context of preserving the urban heritage of the city and to emphasize on identity and belonging, including: "Gara" market and "Rainbow" street, Jabal Amman, enabling all local people and different associations to promote and sell their traditional products. (Ababsa, 2011).

Therefore, these tourism projects are of great importance in attracting tourists and lengthening the duration of their stay. This requires a solid plan of marketing in both cities .

## **TOURISM MARKETING AN ESSENTIAL PILLAR OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLANNING**

Tourism marketing methods and promotional plans vary between Constantine and Amman Cities; this has a direct impact on the level of tourism development achieved in both cities, which is illustrated below:

### **Tourism Marketing connected to the minds of dealers with modest initiatives with multiple obstacles in the city of Constantine**

The city of Constantine has received great attention from the central authorities since independence (1962), especially after receiving a large migration from the interior areas, by signing several residential projects, providing jobs by expanding the industrial zone inherited from the colonial era "Palma Lamouriciere", (Benghadbane, 2011) and establishing another industrial zone "Boumerzoug" as well as the industrial complex for the mechanical industries of agricultural equipment in the valley of Hammim. However, tourism sector was marginalized; the share of tourism projects was not more than 2.55% of the total projects (Tessa, 1993).

In spite of the promotional plans adopted by the National Tourism Bureau to market the Algerian tourism product in the period 2007-2015 locally and internationally to increase the number of tourist arrivals using many methods to introduce the Algerian tourist product, these plans remained limited due to many obstacles such as the minds of the dealers of the tourism sector and many other problems. The statistics indicate that the tourist movement in Constantine is characterized by fluctuation and decline.. It is worth mentioning that since the selection of the city of Constantine as the capital of Arab culture



in 2015, the city has seen an acceptable increase in the number of tourists, which amounted to 169,609 tourists, including 28,472 foreign tourists (16.78%); however, this increase was not commensurate with the size of the cultural event in Constantine.

Despite the presence of many stakeholders in the field of tourism, but their role was very limited in marketing the tourist product of the city of Constantine.

Major stakeholders include the following:

- Directorate of Tourism and Traditional Industries of the State of Constantine: which is one of the external interests of the Ministry of Tourism?

- The Algerian National Bureau of Tourism: which monitors the bodies that practice tourist activity, collects data related to tourists and participates in tourism events in order to develop tourism product?

- The Municipal Office for Tourism: It prepares programs promoting the tourism in the medium and long term and ensures their implementation.

- Directorate of Culture of the State of Constantine, which is keen to protect the urban and cultural heritage and historical monuments and follows up its restoration and rehabilitation.

- Travel agencies and tourism: the number of which is 35 tourist agencies, including 05 government agencies and 30 private agencies; it organizes trips individually and collectively inside the city of Constantine to visit sites and monuments and to organize Hajj and Umrah trips outside Algeria.

- Tourist associations: There are many associations in the city of Constantine, amounted to 104 associations, most of them are concerned with preserving the musical heritage of the city, "Malouf music", and urban heritage especially the buildings of the old city (Directorate of tourism and crafts of the Wilaya of Constantine, 2016); this made tourism marketing not prioritized by these bodies and actors in the field of tourism activity of the city of Constantine.

### **International tourism marketing based on the experience and voluntary will to achieve sustainable growth in the city of Amman**

The current tourism marketing plan in Amman is based on the principle of "Sustainable Tourism for Development", drawing on local and regional experiences and expertise to achieve the best practices in the development of tourism and sustainability in the city within the framework of the global trends for the sustainable development of the prospects of 2030. The city of Amman is increasingly growing as a result of the high rates of urbanization which have had repercussions on the lifestyle of the city and tourism on the one hand, at the same time; the city is growing in the travel and tourism sector compared to the rest of the other economic sectors on the other hand. The marketing plan ensures that the competition between urbanization and tourism is compatible with sustainable growth, taking into consideration the needs of the local population, businessmen and tourists, so that this plan is purely tourist oriented to develop the city and its prosperity, competitive with tourism and includes strong marketing programs to attract the largest number of tourists in the Middle East. The marketing plan engages various actors in the tourism sector of the city, especially the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, the Greater Amman Municipality, the Tourism Promotion Authority, the World Tourism Organization and all investors from the public and private sectors, national associations and tourism companies. All participants adhered to the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism aiming to achieve tourism development for making sustainability of cities and tourist destinations. This plan calls for commitment to common social responsibility towards human and society in planning and practicing tourism activities to achieve responsible, sustainable and accessible tourism for all social groups (Bader et al., 2016).

## **RESEARCH RESULTS**

The analytical study revealed that there are clear differences in methods of tourism marketing, reflected in the level of tourism development achieved through and projects. Despite the difference in geographical location and the convergence in the types of tourism products (natural, historical, urban, cultural), they are Arab cities similar in characteristics of their location.

- There is a sharp contrast in the quality of tourism development projects of both cities, reflected by the numbers and categories of tourists.

- The completion of tourism projects of Amman was subjected to specific plans to ensure the following-up and handing the projects over in the horizons set for them by facilitating procedures and granting incentives, while in the case of Constantine, most tourist projects was delayed and others have not yet started due to a number of obstacles related to tourist property, inadequate funding in areas of tourism expansion, village of traditional industries and many hotels ...

- Tourist marketing in Amman was represented by intensive participation in world fairs of tourism, e-marketing, updating the Jordan Tourism board website to include almost all languages of target tourists, promotion of new products, intensive efforts to promote niche markets for potential tourists. However, tourism marketing in Constantine targeted only the local, national and even regional levels.

- There are many factors that contributed to the success of promotion of tourism in the city of Amman, while tourism marketing in Constantine encountered many obstacles, perhaps the most important of which are the mentality of various stakeholders and the lack of training in hotel industry and tourist services, which had a direct impact on quality of tourism services.

Finally, the study concluded that the development of a tourism marketing strategy requires an accurate information system, enabling market research studies in of Amman. In Constantine, this information system is characterized by the inadequacy of data making it difficult to develop market research studies.

## **RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the light of the previous results, some recommendations that would enable the effective and strict implementation of the tourism marketing strategy in Constantine are included to achieve the desired tourism development on the one hand, and upgrading the city of Amman as a world tourist city on the other hand, the most important of which are described below:

- The need to adopt a strategy for marketing of tourism in Constantine to achieve the tourism development envisaged taking into account all clients and partners as a voluntary process.

- Developing renewed plans for tourism promotion in the city of Constantine, to adapt to the available financial resources, to take into account the requirements of the tourist market at different spatial levels starting from local (domestic) marketing before the international, and to take into consideration the body and category to be targeted.

- Promoting the culture of tourism and tourism awareness among the various actors, especially the inhabitants of Constantine, and encourage them to participate in the tourism promotion plans as they are community that can develop traditional industries that contribute directly to tourism development.

- Taking care of infrastructure and tourism services, and providing various facilities for tourists because of its importance in attracting tourists.

- Providing various investment incentives in the city of Constantine to integrate the

private sector as a key partner in tourism development, especially fees and taxes, and banking facilities ... in order to speed up the completion of various tourism projects.

- Benefiting from the experience of the city of Amman in a rational manner in conformity with the specificity of the Algerian tourism market.

Maintaining tourism marketing in the city of Amman and promoting digital tourism in it and upgrading it to be an international tourist city.

It is obvious from the above that there is a need to develop a strong and effective tourism marketing system preparing the individual to be engaged with the tourism activity through tourism awareness and culture, which can be carried out only with the tourism voluntary will of the state to facilitate the tourism movement and contribute to marketing studies through its support to various stakeholders of tourism activity.

## CONCLUSION

This study stresses the importance of tourism marketing in achieving tourism development in Constantine and Amman Cities. Despite the fact that the tourism products of the both cities are similar, that of Constantine is superior in terms of its tourism potential, although the city of Amman has made great strides in its tourism development through various tourism projects, the city of Constantine is seeking to adopt a strategy of tourism marketing as decision maker are convinced that it has a great role in developing tourism which was marginalized. This strategy should be included in the tourism development guideline.

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## **COMMON CHARACTERISTICS IN THE ORGANIZATION OF TOURIST SPACE WITHIN MOUNTAINOUS REGIONS: ALTAI-SAYAN REGION (RUSSIA)**

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**Abstract:** Tourism in mountainous regions is a rapidly developing industry in many countries. The aims of this paper are to examine global tourism patterns in various mountainous regions and to define the factors that differentiate tourism development in the mountainous environments from tourism development in the lowlands. The authors have taken a regional approach to examining these patterns. They consider the mountainous areas to be a system and recommend analyzing them accordingly. The features of mountainous tourist systems and their associated hierarchies are defined in the study. The study involved creating a diagram to depict the differentiation in the tourist space and to identify the types of tourism represented in mountainous areas throughout the world. Reviewing and analyzing studies focusing on tourism in the mountainous areas has allowed the authors to distinguish common features of mountainous regions that influence the organization of tourism space. The authors suggest creating hierarchies to represent the mountainous tourist regions and the trans-boundary mountainous tourist system. The Altai-Sayan region is featured as one example of a mountainous area that has its own distinguishing characteristics and that faces unique challenges in the development of its tourism industry. The authors suggest that it is possible to identify trans-boundary mountainous tourist systems and tourist regions, specifically in the Altai-Sayan region. The study identifies the main tourist centers and types of transport infrastructure that determine tourist space in this region.

**Key words:** Russia, Altay-Sayan region, mountainous region, regional approach, tourist system, types of tourist regions, tourist space.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The development of the tourism industry is determined by the diversity of regions throughout the world. Moreover, mountain experience can improve mental well-being and it may be beneficial for people trying to cope with experiences such as stress-inducing disabilities, traumatic experiences and various diseases. There are key factors that determine the organization of a commercial tourism industry in the mountainous areas. In fact, the mountains are often geographically isolated regions where climatic conditions, water resources, flora and fauna and ethnic groups can differ considerably. On the one hand, mountainous areas are very attractive for travelers but their ecological and socio-cultural environments can experience huge pressure from negative impacts of tourism in mountain environments. The type of surface is particularly essential for differentiating tourist space in mountainous areas. Its considerable elevation above the sea level and the strong dissection of the relief determine a variety of properties and objects of the natural environment. Mountainous regions are rich in various natural, cultural and historical resources. The mountains of the world are objects of economic development, scientific study and tourist activity. The mountainous areas occupy 24% of the Earth's land, and about 12 % of the global population lives in the mountainous regions (Jack et al., 1999). In addition, people living in the mountains vary significantly in terms of their living standards and incomes. Also, the mountains are sources of water, energy, agriculture and forestry as well as being main centers of religious, biological and cultural diversity for many people (Godde et al., 2000). It is also of interest to examine differences in the organization of commercial tourism industry in mountainous areas. It is essential to understand where it is difficult to construct and develop a tourism industry. In the present study the Altai-Sayan Region is considered as a model territory in order to compare mountainous areas. It is a trans-boundary region, and it is located in the center of Eurasia. The Altai-Sayan Region is famous for highly diverse landscapes, tourist attractions and remoteness from the main economic centers, and low standards of living.

### **Literature review**

Mountainous areas are a unique system of landscapes. The physical-geographical mountainous region is a part of the continent that is characterized by the geomorphological unity of the territory, the similar macroclimatic conditions, types of landscape diversity and high - altitude zone of landscapes (Godde et al., 2000). Mountain regions are vast areas of the land surface with extreme fluctuations of altitudes. Mountain regions are significantly elevated above the plains and they have natural boundaries (tectonic faults, rivers, sharp boundaries of plains). These mountainous regions may stretch for several thousand kilometers and possess very complex configurations.

Many mountainous regions cross state borders. Some scholars consider borders to be dividing lines that represent the end of something and include peripheral characteristics. There are four significant functions of borders: division, connection, conflict and filtering that can be present in concentrated, sporadic, linear and zonal forms. In addition, borders can separate ethnic groups and can even be barriers among ethnic communities. If the border is demarcated after a given ethnic group is settled down and these coincide, boundaries are established. If a border is established after the settlement and the ethnic group has adjusted to the line, the border is called an antecedent boundary. When the border line does not conform to the ethnic group's line of settlement, it is known as a superimposed boundary (Bujdoso et al., 2015).

Scholars in the field of mountainous regions have studied the issues in a proper way. Yu. Seliverstov focuses on the necessity of the interdisciplinary study of the physical, chemical, geological, and biological aspects of mountain regions; the study of the lifestyles

and economic concerns of people living in these regions - "montology". He states that "montology" should include the achievements of socio-economic sciences, to deal effectively with challenges concerning environmental protection and the dynamic development of the economy and culture in mountain areas in the processes of globalization (Seliverstov, 2002). The montological approach is presented and illustrated in the following literature: Mountains of the World. Global Priority (Jack et al., 1999), Tourism and Development in Mountain Regions (Godde et al., 2000), Mountains and People: Changes in Landscapes and Ethnoses of the Inland Mountains of Russia (Chistyakov et al., 2010). The significance of the integrated study of mountainous regions results in organizing a number of conferences and publications regarding mountainous areas. D.V. Sevastyanov considers "montology" in the frame of integrated regional studies of mountainous areas. In addition, much attention is paid to the issues of sustainable development of mountainous regions in the Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Badenkov et al., 1998).

B. Rodoman (2002) highlights the specific nature, the population and the economy in the mountains. The increase of the tourist flow in mountainous regions requires special approaches to the territorial organization of tourist activities, the creation of tourist infrastructure and the functional zoning of the territory. Some scholars state that tourist activities in the mountains should be considered and viewed in terms of tourist environmental management (Suprunenko, 2003). The key difference of mountain lands is a diverse array of habitats in which a large range of plants and animals can be found. Moreover, there are changes in the total solar radiation, air temperature and humidity and oxygen level in the air in mountainous regions. In fact, an increase of absolute altitude can rapidly cause changes of the characteristics of a species' habitat at short distances and has an impact on life-support processes. In the mountains, there is an elevation interval of the ecological optimum for human life and activity (Kalesnik, 1970; Sevastyanov, 2008). Mountainous areas are the largest ecosystems of our planet, which play an important role in the cycling of the planet's substances and energy. Such regions may be of interest for integrated regional studies. They are the most important sources of water, energy and biological diversity, possessing significant mineral, agricultural and tourist resources (Jack et al., 1999; Golubchikov, 1996; Dunets, 2011). Orographic conditions of mountains have an influence on the climate and other components of the environment. Also, the impact extends beyond their borders even in lowlands. Mountain areas are relatively less developed due to the inaccessibility and technical complexity. Economically, mountain populations may also lack of the appropriate skills and the resources to benefit from a tourist industry (Price et al., 2004). Mountain ridges (particularly very high ones compared to other mountains) are often borders between states and administrative entities. The mountains are essential in the territorial structure of the tourist market. Various "high-altitude floors" of mountain areas are characterized by certain types of accommodation facilities (Suprunenko, 2003). Horizontal roughness of relief determines variety and passes ability of the territory. It also determines whether it is possible for vacationers and stuff transportation to travel through the territory and influences the creation of infrastructure associated with recreation (Zhensikbaeva et al., 2017). It should be noted that the Altai-Sayan region is mostly examined in the work of Russian scientists, however, parts of this region have been studied by many well-known scientists (A. Humboldt). For a long time the Altai-Sayan region was viewed as the political borders of Russia and considered in the terms of the different types of environmental management (Rudsky, 2000). V. Revyakin highlighted the features of anthropogenic changes in landscapes of the mountains (Revyakin et al., 2001). M. Sukhova (2009) studied the ecological and climatic potential

of landscapes for the life of mountain people and recreational nature management. In 2000, with the support of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), a landscape map of the Altai-Sayan region was developed. G.S. Samoilova, an author of the map, notes that steppes landscapes (26% of the area of the region) and dry steppes prevail among other types of landscapes in this region. For example, taiga occupies 19%, while tundra, alpine/subalpine meadows, glacialnival landscapes make up about 14% and desert and semi desert landscapes make up approximately 19% of the region. Interestingly, Altai is characterized by a contrast in landscape diversity (Samoylova, 2000) and states the features of tourism development, its main features and types of tourism in the region (Dunets, 2009).

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

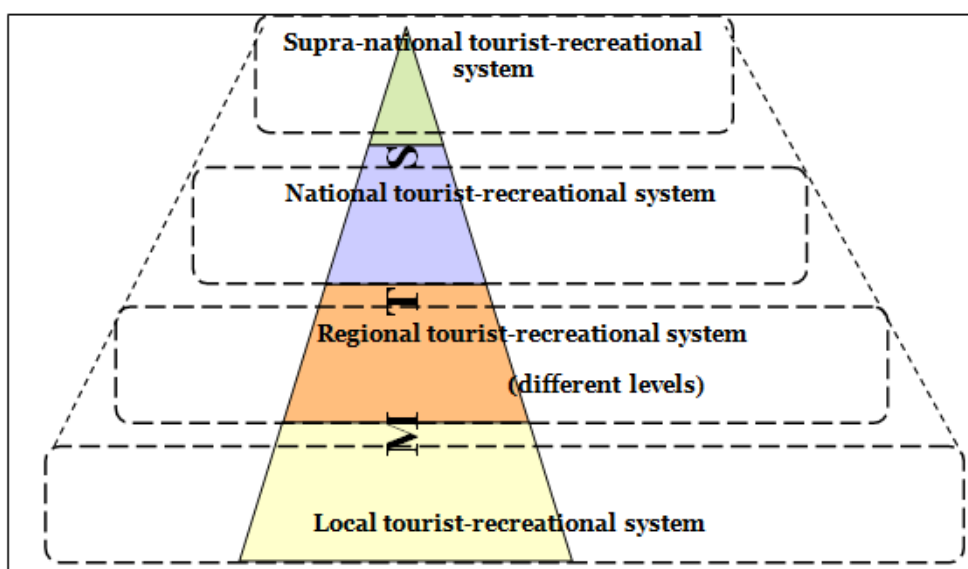
Regional studies and tourism are essential for the integrated study of the tourist space in the region. The methodology of tourist regional studies can be found in the works of M. Ananiev (1975), Yu. Dmitrevsky (1997, 1999, 2000), A. Alexandrova (1996, 2002, 2009). The founders of the Russian school of regional studies are V.P. Semenov-Tian-Shansky, L.S. Berg, N. Baransky (Sevastyanov, 2008). The scholars of the Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Moscow State University, and the St. Petersburg State University contributed much to the development of the theory of regional studies. The methodology of regional studies is interdisciplinary, and it is based on a combination of a number of approaches (analytical, chronological, formal logic, economic, culturological, etc.). Tourist regional studies is the branch of "regional studies" and it studies the patterns of the formation and functions of integral territorial entities (local communities) – various tourist regions. Also, it defines various factors in regional differentiation of tourist space. Much of the work on "geography of tourism" is concerning tourist regional studies. Its research subject is the tourist space of the region from units of higher taxonomic levels (for example, North-Western Europe, Southeast Asia), the level of the country, tourist regions in the state. The continual and discrete elements in the structure of the tourist space make it possible to study the space in terms of the geosystemic approach. The key concept in the study of the tourist space of the regions is "organization", which includes the structure, functions and interrelationships of structural elements. More specifically, the organization of the tourist space of the mountain region is easily understandable. The mountain region can be a territorial tourist system with its elements, physical and biological features and interrelations. Some researchers state that mountain regions are geosystems in which tourism is the basis of various links such as cultural, economic, ecological, political, social and technological. In such regions, geosystems are formed and containing both the natural and social components (Ives J. D., Moss L. A., Price M. F., Zimmermann F. M., Godde P.). The tourist system is an essential part of the geosystem of the mountain region. The complexity of tourism development in the mountains is determined by the harsh conditions regarding the development of other systems. The concept of tourism in mountain regions is based on the concept of a discrete and continual tourist space. Among the characteristics of mountain tourist systems, we note:

- vast open spaces;
- low density of tourism infrastructure in the spaces in connection with their concentration in separate places;
- relief influence on the location of the tourist infrastructure;
- services and seasonal demand;
- differences in tourism specialization, depending on the height of the terrain;
- the opportunity to develop different types of tourism in the transitional seasons of the year (rafting and mountain skiing);



- lack of social and cultural infrastructure;
- insufficient number of staff.

Global, national, regional and local tourist systems are defined in the hierarchy of tourist systems (Mazhar, 2008). In addition, the trans-boundary location of the mountain area determines the perspectives for the formation of mountain tourist systems of a trans-boundary level of the mountain region (Figure 1). The similarity of the natural and socio-economic characteristics of the trans-boundary territories and the development of mutually beneficial international cooperation can result in the formation of mountain tourist systems. However, in general, discreteness of mountain tourist systems does not allow the identification of the state and perspectives of tourist space development in the mountain region. Therefore, it is important to study the space where the tourist system develops and interrelates with other regions and systems. As a result, in order to study tourism more effectively, it is necessary to explore the mountain tourist region as a continuum entity.



**Figure 1.** Trans-boundary mountainous tourist system (MTS) in the hierarchy of territorial tourist systems

**Table 1.** Hierarchy of mountainous tourist region

Hierarchical Level	Territorial Features of Mountainous Regions	Examples of Mountainous Region
Supranational Macroregion	The region within the natural and historical boundaries of a mountainous country or countries located in a mountainous area	the Alpine Region the Altai-Sayan Region
Macroregion	The mountainous region within the borders of the state	the Altai-Sayan Region in Russia
Megaregion	The mountainous region within a big tourist-recreational region (region)	Tourist Regions: Altai-Kuzbass, the North Caucasus
Mesoregion	The mountainous region within the administrative entity	the Republic of Altai, the Tyva Republic and others
Microregion	The mountainous region within the tourist-recreational area or administrative entity	Priteletskiy Region (Lake Teletskoye), the tourist area "Lake Aya"

In accordance with the provisions of recreational geography, the tourist system forms the basis of the tourist region. The hierarchy of territorial tourist systems and the existence of its trans-boundary type provide an opportunity for distinguishing different levels of mountain tourist regions, located within territorial entities that have natural, administrative or tourist borders (Table 1). Mountain territorial tourist systems of a trans-boundary level are of very different sizes. Regions of different hierarchical levels form separate territories possessing terrestrial, administrative-political, ethno-cultural borders. Intersection of natural structures of mountain territories (ranges, rivers) is a foundation for zoning mountain tourist-recreational regions. Information on the hierarchy of mountainous tourist regions and territorial tourist systems are a basis for studying of the process of formation of tourist space in the mountains.

### **RESEARCH AND OUTCOMES**

It should be noted that European scholars turned to the mountainous regions in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, for example, the Alpine mountains were formed into a recreational and entertainment area for tourists from a quiet rural area. The development of transport networks led to tourism development in the region (Beatty, 2008). In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century people were able to use mountain areas and create economic and social tourist spaces in the mountain areas. In addition, there were necessary prerequisites for the sustainable tourism development. The main tourist areas were coastal and mountainous ones. In the frame of an integrated approach towards a sustainable local development, the tourism industry interacts with ecosystems. Consequently, the development of the tourism industry can be shaped by environmental heritage (Forleo et al., 2017). Essentially, mountainous areas have a marked and complex topography and seasonality, and the factors reduce the construction of resort complexes and prevent increases in international tourist flow (Neidze, 2007; Godde et al., 2000; Price, 2007). However, picturesque mountain landscapes, the impact of human activities on the mountain climate, and opportunities for developing sports facilities have resulted in the sustainable development of the tourist industry over recent decades in the mountains. The ski resort construction is a key factor for building tourist development in the region.

In mountainous regions the proportion of local and foreign tourists differs. For instance, about 40% of European tourists prefer mountainous areas. In France, domestic tourists make up 30% in the mountainous regions. In India, 95% of tourists visiting the Himalayas (Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh) are Indians. In Austria, up to 77% of tourists are foreign tourists. Russian tourists exceed the number of foreigners in the mountainous regions of Russia (Jack et al., 1999). The basis for the tourism development in the mountainous area is the unique combination of natural resources: orography, climate, water, mineral and raw materials, flora and fauna. However, a good part of the resources of mountainous regions has not been used yet. Moreover, the tourist infrastructure is being intensively improved in all regions all over the world. Assessing the mountain resources is an essential requirement of tourist activities, in particular mountain resources, their territorial differentiation and prospects for tourism development. In the case of tourist and recreational development of mountainous areas, the following criteria and properties are assessed: hypsometric, climatic, landscape-aesthetic, glaciological (glaciers, mudflows, avalanches), geodynamic (seismicity, landslides), and also socio-economic (transport networks, infrastructure, good service sectors, labor resources and landmarks) (Vedenin, 1990). Also, the mentioned features determine the type of tourism resources that prevail in the region: rock climbing, mountaineering, health tourism, eco-tourism. The type of recreational use of mountain

resources refers to certain forms of territorial organization : for rock climbing type - a camp, temporary base camps, for mountain tourism - hotels, camps, for health tourism – resorts and wellness centers (Suprunenko, 2003). Pilgrimage to the mountainous areas is the oldest form of tourism because mountains are sacred places for many spiritual practices and religions. For instance, in India, a number of pilgrims go to the Indian mountainous states - Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. In Japan, more than 1 million people visit Mount Fuji every year. In Altai, pilgrims from different regions of Russia go to Belukha (mountain), they want to find the famous place "Belovodie" and the energy of the place (Neidze, 2007; Godde et al., 2000). In addition to tourist attractiveness in the mountainous region, the accessibility is a very important factor for the tourism development. Over recent decades, Western Europe and the United States have significantly improved transport infrastructure and the quality of mountainous roads. All types of transport can be available in the mountains. Western and Central Europe, in particular, have a widely used railway network. High-speed trains are the fastest way to reach the high mountains in Western Europe, Japan and North America. In these regions, the main roads are gradually merged with a network of cable cars and chairlifts, local roads, and walking/bike trails. In the mountains, airports and helipads have been established. Moreover, gradually transport networks are being developed in Asia, Africa and South America. The construction of highways and railways is crucial for the tourism development along with airlines and air communication being very important for mountainous communities (Jack, 1999). According to the World Tourism Organization, the tourism potential of mountainous regions is based on natural, cultural, and socio-economic elements that influence tourist flows (Vijulie et al., 2018).

As M. Price notes, tourist mountainous regions currently compete with each other internationally (Price, 1999). It is evident that maximizing economic benefits of mountain regions depends on strategic advantages such as location, location of large settlements, and accessibility. Comparing the organization of tourist space within the natural boundaries of mountainous regions is challenging. One reason for this is the lack of objective statistical data. Information related to tourism in mountainous regions is scant and data is not readily available. For example, information about the amount of internal tourist flow related to adventure tourism and information about accommodation in guest houses is generally not included in statistical reports. Studies on the geography of tourism in countries all over the world have contributed to a foundational understanding of mountain tourism. The classification of countries suggested by A. Aleksandrova, has advanced the understanding of centro-peripheral structure of the international tourist space (Alexandrova, 2009). This classification approach considers countries according to their involvement in the international tourism division of labor (Alekseeva & Mironenko, 2004). More specifically, modern tourism development involves new regions. Additionally, transportation systems, new information technologies, and the tendency to "blur" the borders have resulted in increasing numbers of tourist centers and the redistribution of tourist flows between traditional and new tourist destinations (Alexandrova, 2002).

The process of globalization plays a crucial role in the tourist industry and has contributed to a spatial hierarchical structure of international tourism. The centers of world tourism development in mountainous regions are formed in economically developed countries of North America, Europe and certain regions of Asia. The periphery consists of the countries of Central and South America, Africa and some Asian countries (Alekseeva & Mironenko, 2004). Using the isoline approach, W. Ritter and S. V. Odeser defined six types of tourist use of the territory, taking into consideration the level of

tourist infrastructure development. We used their approach to compare the types of organization of the tourist space and identified the following types based on the analysis of the tourism development of mountainous areas (Resources and environment, 1998):

1. Mountainous areas of the economically developed countries with well-developed infrastructure, functional zoning and significant tourist flows (the Alps, the Appalachian Mountains, the Cordillera and Rocky Mountains, the mountains of Japan);

2. Regions with a high degree of natural resource use and good material-technical base of tourism (the Pyrenees, the Apennines, the Rhodopes, the Carpathians, the Sudetes, the west of the Dinaric Mountains, the Western Taurus, the Appalachian Mountains, the south of the Scandinavian mountains, the eastern part of the Great Dividing Range etc.);

3. Regions of developed (wealthy) countries, less densely populated and characterized by medium and low levels of natural resource use and the availability of an extensive-technical base (the Rocky Mountains in Canada, the eastern part of the Balkan Mountains, the Drakensberg Mountains, the north of the Scandinavian Mountains, the southern part of the Andes, the Cape Mountains, north-west of Altai, etc.);

4. Regions characterized by a combination of high levels of natural resource use with low and medium levels of infrastructure provision (accommodation / hospitality facilities) (the Caucasus, the Urals, the Himalayas, western Balkan Mountains, the Atlas, the Andes in the southern part, the Tien Shan);

5. Regions with low levels of natural resource use and poor infrastructure development and countries with low population density that can only take advantage of tourism services to a limited extent (the Altai Sayan, Pamir, the Drakensberg Mountains, the Andes, the Cordillera in Mexico, many mountain ranges of Africa, South-East Asia, etc.);

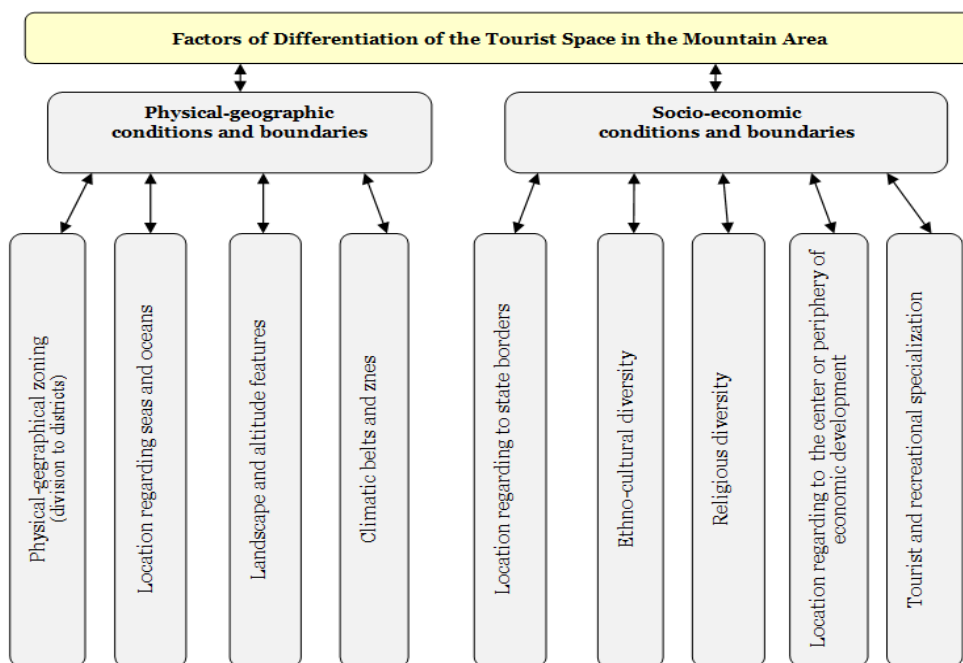
6. Regions with a scarcity of natural resources to support tourism and that have poor infrastructure (Tibet, a large part of the mountains of the central and northern parts of Siberia, the Tanentundzhi Range, etc.);

7. Regions where tourism is poorly developed due to armed conflicts or civil disorder (the Hindu Kush, part of the Pamirs, the Ethiopian Highlands).

Essentially, mountain ridges can serve as borders between states. In these cases, different ethnic groups living in these regions can be separated by natural (physical) and administrative borders. In addition, ethnic groups can be divided by a state border. Some scholars have asserted that the boundaries can become a "barrier" to cooperation (Badenkov, 2002). Other locations demonstrate how a single tourist space in a trans-boundary mountainous region can contribute to interaction of diverse ethnic groups (for example, in the Alps). State borders in mountainous regions are represented by physical-geographical (sea and continental boundaries) with the continental boundaries divided into orographic watersheds and in-basin areas. In addition, state borders in the mountains divide regions into different religious systems: Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Islam, Buddhism. The typology of tourist spaces of mountainous regions can be based on their location, which is determined by physical-geographical and socio-economic criteria (Figure 2). The geographical location can be defined by a position of an area in the parts of the world (European, African, Asian, North American, etc.) by zonal location (equatorial, circumpolar, etc.), and by natural and geographical boundaries.

Also, the geographical location (center, semi-periphery, periphery) is quite essential for economic development of the region. Thus, the combination of several conditions forming a geographic location of a mountainous region can include both negative and positive points in the organization of tourist space. Factors such as: cold (or moderate) belt; cross-border territory; the intra-continental position, ethno-cultural and religious diversity, the periphery of the economic space can affect the tourism

development and recreational activities. The most challenging areas for the organization of tourist space are the inland mountainous trans-boundary regions that lie at the periphery of international tourism. These regions include the Himalayas, the Pamirs, the Altai-Sayans and others. Evidently, it is difficult to organize and develop tourist space in such regions because of their remoteness from travel industries and consumers, and low levels of socio-economic development of the regions.



**Figure 2.** Differentiation of the tourist space of the mountainous region

Over recent decades, the number of tourist activities happening in mountain regions have significantly increased all over world. Furthermore, new technologies and competition among tourism destinations have led to the availability of a wider range of service and activities in the global and regional markets. Governments of many countries and mountain communities consider tourism to be the most essential and integral aspect of their policies in the frame of economic development (Jack et al., 1999). Since tourists can participate in recreational activities in the mountain areas both in winter and summer seasons, the tourist season lasts much longer there than in the lowlands. This yields economic and social benefits for mountain communities (Mironenko & Bochvarova, 1986).

Our research and analysis of tourism studies (Baburin, 2005; Mironenko & Bochvarova, 1986; Rudsky, 2000; Suprunenko, 2003) made it possible to identify and describe the following characteristics of mountainous regions that influence the organization of tourist spaces in such regions:

- height and terrain relief roughness, which results in significant diversity of tourist activity;
- a variety of climatic (microclimatic) conditions that determine the vertical and seasonal differences in tourist and recreational activities;
- diversity of landscapes (from steppes or semi desert flat lands to snow-glacial complexes);

- species diversity, the high concentration of endemic species (plants and animals);
- high degree of environmental sensitivity, vulnerability of natural and cultural-historical heritage;
- vulnerability of the socio-cultural environment of mountainous regions to all types of external impacts and the urgent need to protect the cultural values of local people and preserve the authenticity of mountain communities.
- increased risks of natural and man-made disasters;
- inaccessible transport system costs associated with economic entities;
- poor economic diversification of mountainous areas related to the traditional economy and lifestyle of mountain people, and the existence of rural settlements there (lower profitability of commercial recreation and tourism enterprises);
- diversity of landscapes providing the development of different tourist activities;
- environmental (natural) barriers (mountain ranges and water bodies), which are one of the most important factors in the formation of state and administrative boundaries;
- trans-boundary location of mountainous regions that results in the interaction of states.

In mountainous regions, tourist space can be characterized by large remote wilderness areas and poor network infrastructure. This is due to high levels of biodiversity, ethno-social groups, and cultural and economic patterns of the regions. It is important to emphasize that the environmental (natural) barriers (mountain ranges and water bodies) are considered to be the most important factors that contribute to the formation of regional boundaries. The development of tourist space and the sustainable development of mountainous areas are closely connected. In addition, tourism studies can play a crucial role both for the development of these regions and the surrounding territories. In addition, tourism studies can play a crucial role both for the development of these regions and the surrounding territories. Furthermore, tourism development in mountainous regions contributes to the improvement of the socio-economic status of the territories. One of the relevant examples is the development of recreational areas in the Alps. It is difficult to imagine this region without its thriving tourism industry. However, it is important to acknowledge that the development of industries (including mining) can damage the environment. Fragile ecosystems continue to be threatened by tourism development. Extreme topography and surface, and inaccessibility of the regions have led to organization of certain types of infrastructure. There are obvious contradictions between the ecological and economic interests of the local people. As a result, land that is considered to be unprofitable for other industries is often relegated to supporting tourism [328]. At present, environmental organizations (UNESCO, WWF and others) contribute to the protection of mountain people's interests and the conservation of biodiversity of the mountain areas. However, commercial recreation and tourism enterprises disregard for environmental standards and requirements have caused conflicts between departments of wildlife protection and representatives of tourism industries.

### **Characteristics of the Altai-Sayan Region**

The Altai-Sayan region as a model territory is examined at two hierarchical levels: supra-national (natural-historical boundaries) and macroregional (within the borders of the Russian Federation). The tourist-geographical position of the Altai-Sayan Region is remotely located from the main tourist centers. The region is located in the center of the ultracontinental zone. The distance to the sea is 2000 km and the world's largest urban areas lie far beyond the region. The Altai-Sayan region, located in the center of Eurasia, borders four states. Moreover, it is of strategic importance for the Russian Federation. The Russian region is located in the territories of the Altai, Tyva, Khakassia and partially in the Altai and Krasnoyarsk regions, Kemerovo, Novosibirsk and Irkutsk regions and the south-western part

of the Republic of Buryatia. The foreign areas of the region include: eastern regions of the East Kazakhstan region; Altai Administrative District of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (XUAR, China); twelve aimags (administrative subdivisions) of Mongolia. The Altai-Sayan ecoregion is a combination of mountains, coniferous forests, steppe and alpine meadows. Harsh continental climate and complex relief are determining factors for an abundance of flora. The landscape of the Altai-Sayan region is formed by a combination of the middle position within the steppe zone of Eurasia with the predominance of the Asian anticyclone and the leading western transport of Atlantic moisture. There is a contrast and diversity of the altitude-belt zonality of some ridges. The region is characterized by a variety of the orographic features and geographical complexity. There is a shift from boreal forests (taiga) of Siberia to semi-desert and desert landscapes of Central Asia (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Main tourist centers in the Altai-Sayan region

Furthermore, there have been socio-economic transformations in the neighboring states of the Altai-Sayan region in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. These changes have contributed to the complexity and the increase of fragmented tourist and recreational spaces: the formation of new administrative entities in the Russian Federation and the emergence of the state - Kazakhstan in the early 1990s, the changing of geopolitical landscape of the region, demographic processes, and a sharp increase in the number of tourist enterprises in some administrative entities. Additionally, changes in legislation defined the concept of ownership (tourist and recreational resources). The period is also characterized by the development of ethno-cultural cooperation between countries (regions), the transformation of the economic structure of administrative entities and the development of trade and economic cooperation. Trans-boundary is related in many ways to geopolitical factors, which are represented at different levels of the organization of tourism. The geopolitical situation for tourism is quite favorable in the region because the political situation is stable. There are no armed conflicts or ethnic tensions. In the region,

tensions are often caused by: transit-infrastructure policies (road construction and building of economic centers) and eco-regional planning (development of a system of protected areas and improvement of mountainous communities). Modern socio-economic conditions and processes that determine the formation of tourist and recreational space in the administrative entities of the Altai-Sayan region vary significantly. This is due to political-administrative division, national and regional policies and planning. The most productive and economically successful regions are the Kemerovo Region and the Krasnoyarsk Territory, while border territories are not as prosperous. Based on the analysis of tourism infrastructure in the Altai-Sayan region we are able to highlight prominent concerns and propose suitable policies for tourism development.

We have defined the following problems:

- areas are geographically isolated;
- frontier zones make construction of accommodation facilities and organization of tourism more difficult;
- low levels of service;
- disparities in the territorial distribution of the tourism infrastructure;
- tourism flows are determined by transitory and seasonal nature factors;
- inadequate supply of qualified tourism infrastructure/management workers.

Interestingly, the tourist infrastructure is much better developed in the peripheral areas (with the exception of the southern and south-eastern parts of the region, the territory of Mongolia). Important "tourist axes" are being formed, connecting tourist centers. Along the lower course of the Katun River, where many accommodation facilities have been constructed over 100 kilometers from Gorno-Altai and beyond the village of Chermal, and along the Chuysky Tract. The most competitive and attractive tourist destinations are tourist centers in Krasnoyarsk, Belokurikha, Kyzyl, Abakan, Novokuznetsk, Sheregesh, the Blue Gulf (Kazakhstan), Khovd (Mongolia), Altai City and Kanas National Park (China). Roads have a great influence on the development of tourism. The main directions of the roads are Novosibirsk, Biysk - Tashanta; Krasnoyarsk-Minusinsk-Kyzyl-Khandagayty; Ulang - Ulgiy - Khovd; Khovd - Altai - Bayarkhohor; Urumqi - Altai - Kanas; Barnaul-Rubtsovsk-Ust-Kamenogorsk; Ust-Kamenogorsk - Ridder - Rakhman Keys; Irkutsk - Arshan. There are concerns about the roads connecting the state with the Altai-Sayan region. In recent years, to create favorable conditions for the reception of tourists, construction of roads in Mongolia is underway. It should be noted that efficient transport systems affect tourism development. Major areas of roadways include Novosibirsk, Biysk - Tashanta; Krasnoyarsk-Minusinsk-Kyzyl-Khandagayty; Ulang - Ulgiy - Khovd; Khovd - Altai - Bayarkhohor; Urumqi - Altai - Kanas; Barnaul-Rubtsovsk-Ust-Kamenogorsk; Ust-Kamenogorsk - Ridder - Rakhman Keys; Irkutsk - Arshan. Several problems impede the development of transport networks, in particular roads connecting the states in the Altai-Sayan region.

In recent years, roadways have been built in Mongolia to improve tourist infrastructure. Building viable roads in the Chinese part of Altai have made it possible to visit Lake Kanas. In addition, international tourism development in the region is associated with the construction of highways. For example, the region's transportation system has failed to meet travelers' needs and has prevented the implementation of the cross-border project known as the "Golden Ring of Altai". Our analysis of the focus and functionality of the tourist centers of the Altai-Sayan region allows us to distinguish specific types: cognitive, recreational, sports - recreational, therapeutic and recreational, multifunctional. Due to the fact that the region is located on the periphery of the economic space, most tourist centers do not have a well-developed infrastructure or significant tourist flows. The emphasis on sustainable development is associated with a growing interest of travelers both



in lands and communities in acting according to their environmental, cultural and economic values. Due to the geopolitical location, in the center of Eurasia, the Altai-Sayan region united various ethnic groups and cultures. Therefore, in the region there are demands for the formation of an integral tourist-recreational space. The prerequisites include the natural and ethno-cultural similarity of the region, the necessity of cultural and natural heritage of the region, closeness to the markets of neighboring countries, the economic benefits of trade cooperation and the organization of cross-border tourism.

### CONCLUSION

Tourist space in mountainous regions is very unique. On one hand, the diversity of tourism resources can lead to fulfilling the economic potential of the area. However, socio-economic contradictions have a strong impact on the formation of tourist space. It should also be mentioned that the development of tourism in mountainous trans-boundary regions can foster efficient cooperation among different ethnic groups. In fact, regional studies play an important role in the formation of a methodology that can be applied to study tourist-recreational regions. Currently, regional studies qualify as promising scientific directions because they acknowledge that there are distinct types of tourist regions. Mountainous regions can be regarded as separate structures of tourist space at different hierarchical levels. They are characterized by various conditions and factors that determine the formation of tourist complexes. In mountainous regions, landscape differentiation of the territory determines the complexity of socio-economic development of tourist space. Mountainous regions differ significantly. In other words, geographic location, natural and socio-economic conditions, geopolitical status, level of tourist development and specialization of tourist centers influence the development of mountainous regions. The hierarchy of tourist systems and their cross-border status have allowed us to define the levels of tourist regions. Different hierarchical levels of tourist-recreational regions can be correlated with the relevant levels of mountain tourist systems. Mountainous regions of the supranational level are trans-boundary ones. The studies propose that the most effective approach for comparing different mountainous regions is a classification system based on the level of tourism development. This tourist development is characterized primarily by the development of infrastructure. To compare features of the organization of the tourist space in mountainous regions, you can use different indicators. Moreover, it is very important to take into account:

- geographical position regarding to cities and urban agglomerations (a highly developed spatial form of integrated cities.), oceans (coastal, temperate continental and inland);
- natural conditions (climatic belt, annual river runoff in the highlands and on the periphery of the region, high elevation landscape conditions);
- ethno-social conditions (population density, ethnic and religious diversity);
- geopolitical conditions of the region, characterized by relations between the countries of the mountainous region;
- specialization of the main tourist centers (importance of tourist centers for the modern development of tourism in the mountainous region).

Thus, the combination of conditions and factors forms the geographic location of a mountainous region and determines challenges and advantages in the organization of tourist space. The negative points of its formation (tourist space) can be the inland mountainous trans-boundary areas, which belong to the periphery of international tourism. The Altai-Sayan region is one of the inland mountainous trans-boundary areas. Problems with the organization of the inland tourist space include the remoteness from the main tourist centers and low levels of development of the social-economic spheres in the region.

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## TOURISM IN SOUTH AFRICA'S BORDERLAND REGIONS: A SPATIAL VIEW

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**Abstract:** Borderlands tourism is attracting a growing international scholarship in particular in Europe and North America. This paper adopts a spatial view in order to pursue an exploratory analysis of the geography of tourism in South Africa's borderlands regions. The specific focus is upon understanding the growth and structure of tourism in those South Africa's metropolitan and district municipalities which adjoin the surrounding six countries of Southern Africa. Key results are that borderland spaces are a growing component of South Africa's tourism economy, albeit there is the spatial unevenness of borderlands tourism. The major anchors for borderlands tourism in South Africa are VFR travel, nature-based leisure tourism founded on iconic wildlife assets, and religious tourism. Although short-distance cross-border shopping tourism is in evidence it is far less significant than for borderland tourism in North America or Europe. The study opens up further research questions about tourism in South Africa's borderlands in particular concerning the varying structure of tourism in particular spaces and of the specific geographies of different kinds of borderlands tourism.

**Key words:** Borderlands tourism; spatial distribution; South Africa; VFR travel; nature-based tourism

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### INTRODUCTION

Borderland regions are attracting a rising interdisciplinary scholarship as indicated by viewing the contents of the cluster of specialist journals such as *Journal of Borderland Studies*, *Journal of Borderland Research* and *Journal of Border Studies*. Borderland regions are defined broadly as "subnational areas whose economic life is directly and significantly affected by proximity to an international frontier" (Hansen, 1977: 2). Of significance is that borderland regions usually exhibit critical challenges for economic

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development (Hansen, 1977). For regional planners border zones or borderlands often are categorised as ‘problem’ or ‘special regions’ (Friedmann, 1966). As highlighted by Gelbman & Timothy (2011: 110), communities living in borderland regions “often find themselves in a complex reality of living ‘in the middle’ between two societies and cultures, between two economic systems and in the shadow of changing international relations”. In many cases geographically marginal borderland regions are some of the poorest and underdeveloped in national space economies. Often poor, sometimes with substantial tracts of land for military usage, borderland areas exhibit particular characteristics, challenges and opportunities as regards local and regional development. Remote geographically from the major centres of economic and political power borderland regions can be highly problematic for governments in terms of generating economic development (Friedmann, 1966; Hansen, 1977). During the 1960s and 1970s era of advancing globalisation and the making of a ‘new international division of labour’ the promotion of manufacturing activities, often situated in special economic zones with tax incentives and deregulated labour regimes, was viewed as a positive strategy for promoting the economic development of border regions (Fröbel et al., 1976, 1980).

The best examples are Mexico’s *maquiladoras* or export-processing factories that were set up in a ring of towns close to the United States border to import materials for processing, transformation and subsequent re-export mainly back to the USA (Stoddard, 1990; Kopinak, 1996, 2003). Clothing, shoes, electronics and motor-car parts were among a range of industrial products undertaken in these assembly plants which are situated on or close to Mexico’s northern border (South, 1990; Wilson, 1992). More recent examples of industrialisation in borderland regions are the ‘growth triangles’ of South East Asia with the Malaysia-Indonesia-Singapore growth triangle seen as one vehicle for local and regional development in such borderland zones (Henderson, 2001; Hampton, 2010). Nevertheless, with the global shift of manufacturing to the even cheaper labour attractions of China, and most recently to Vietnam, the momentum of borderland export-oriented industrial development in Mexico and parts of Southeast Asia has begun to ebb.

Increasingly, an observed trend is that local and regional planners show growing interest in the potential for developing tourism in borderland spaces (Henderson, 2001). This policy concern as well as the distinctive character of borderland regions underpins a rise in importance of these regions for tourism scholars. However, among others Elliott (2011: 1) points out that while the subject of borders is at the heart of international tourism it “remains an understudied component of tourism research”. Likewise, Askew & Cohen (2004) maintain that border tourism demands more systematic attention by scholars and not least as a geographical phenomenon. Indeed, understanding the production and organization of tourism spaces as well as the changing dynamics of the tourism space economy remain central challenges for tourism researchers (Hall & Page, 2006; Hall, 2013; Lew et al., 2014). Against this backdrop the present paper adopts a spatial perspective in order to pursue an exploratory analysis of the geography of tourism in South Africa’s borderlands regions. Over the past 30 years tourism geographical research has diversified in its scope and moved away from issues of spatial analysis *per se* and instead to embrace a range of different theoretical issues, methodological perspectives and empirical agendas (Butler, 2004; Hall & Page, 2009; Che, 2018; Gill, 2018). This said, it remains that the ‘spatial view’ is the most distinctive contribution made by geographical scholars to the international corpus of tourism studies (Butler, 2004; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2019). As reiterated recently by Richard Butler (2018: 2) it is “of critical importance to tourism research to keep the spatial element in tourism research strong and visible, thus reminding researchers and others of the importance of the geographical viewpoint” (Butler, 2018: 2).

The changing tourism space economy of South Africa has been scrutinised in a number of research publications which have been produced during the past decade (Rogerson, 2014a, 2015a, 2015b, 2017a, 2017b; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2019). No attention, however, so far has been given to the role of borderland regions in the country's tourism economy and the particular characteristics and issues around tourism development in those regions. South Africa shares an international boundary with six other African countries namely Swaziland, Mozambique, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Namibia and therefore the country contains a range of different borderlands regions. The objective of this paper is to undertake an exploratory analysis of the geography of borderlands tourism across South Africa's metropolitan and district municipalities which adjoin these surrounding six countries of Southern Africa. Two sections of material follow. First, as context, an international review of literature and debates concerning tourism and borders and of borderlands as tourism regions is undertaken. The second section unpacks the size, complexion and patterns of borderland regions of South Africa.

### **RESEARCH ON BORDERLANDS TOURISM**

Borders have significant implications for tourism flows as well as for tourism scholarship. As argued by Prokkola (2010: 223) the relationship between tourism and international borders is fundamental as "travel almost always involves crossing some political or other border, and borderlands are often the first or last areas of a state that travellers see". In addition, Timothy et al. (2016: 1) point out that whilst international borders conventionally have been seen as barriers the connections between borders and tourism "are highly diverse" (Timothy et al., 2016: 1). In the environments of borderlands tourism the social, cultural and economic aspects of life of local communities can be impacted by international politics (Sofield, 2006). This said, it is argued both that "border landscapes can also provide opportunities for collaboration and development" and that border areas can be transformed by transnational border crossings (Timothy et al., 2016). Critically, borders and their adjacent regions – borderlands – often function as tourism attractions such that several regions' tourism economies are founded almost entirely on the existence of a political boundary (Timothy, 1995). Arguably, cross-border tourism can be a useful developmental add-on to more conventional forms of international tourism for the growth of certain local and regional economies (Hampton, 2010).

The several works produced by Dallen Timothy (1995, 1999, 2001; Timothy and Butler, 1995) were highly influential in initially alerting the attention of tourism scholars to the importance of borders and of the need to interrogate issues around borderland tourism. Timothy (2001) argued that despite the significance of borders and a long history of foreign travel "very little has ever been written, and thus little is known about them in the context of tourism". Further, it was observed that only since the late 1990s that "scholars started to merge border research with tourism" and that its recent character was explained as a reflection of "the relative infancy of tourism as an area of academic study" (Timothy, 2001). In some of the foundational studies concerning borders and tourism Timothy (1995: 525) highlighted the particular role of certain borders as tourist attractions and "the tendency of various types of international frontiers and their associated environments to attract significant tourist numbers". Examples are the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea (Hunter, 2015), the transformation of some of Israel's hostile borders to inviting tourist attractions (Gelbman, 2008; Gelbman & Timothy, 2010; Gelbman, 2016) and the potential for heritage clusters in borderland regions (Blasco et al., 2014a).

For borderland regions of North America Timothy (1995) and Timothy & Butler (1995) drew attention to the significance of the phenomenon of cross-border shopping

and of bordertown gambling as generators of tourism. This underscores the fact that whilst the borderline itself might not be of great significance to tourism “its socio-economic implications in frontier regions are” (Timothy et al., 2016: 3) with the associated growth of specialist services such as foreign exchange offices to cater to the needs of border tourists. Informality is observed as a striking feature of entrepreneurship as a whole in many borderland spaces, including for informal tourism retailers (Xheneti et al., 2012; Koff, 2015a, 2015b). It is observed that cross-border shopping is significant in many parts of the world primarily because of the different array of products available and often lower prices and taxes on opposite sides of a border, a theme that has catalysed several research contributions on transfrontier retail operations particularly in Europe (Bar-Kolelis & Wiskulski, 2012; Sullivan et al., 2012; Makkonen, 2016; Studzienicki et al., 2016; Bar-Kolelis & Wendt, 2018; Studzinska et al., 2018; Szytniewski & Spierings, 2018). Cuevas et al. (2016) draw attention to the Pink Store as a unique shopping tourism enterprise at the border between the USA and Mexico.

In another early contribution to borderlands tourism scholarship Timothy’s (1999) focus was directed at cross-border partnerships in tourism resource management using the example of international parks along the border between the United States and Canada (Timothy, 1999). During the past decades “border landscapes within European internal borders regions have gradually been transformed into open landscapes, both physically and symbolically, and some have been turned into arenas for co-operative tourism planning” (Prokkola, 2010: 224). For recent research on cross-border tourism particularly in Europe key focus issues have included cross-border tourism governance and destination management (Blasco et al., 2014b; Bujdoso et al., 2015; Stoffelen et al., 2017; Stoffelen & Vanneste, 2017, 2018). Collaborative cross-border projects for tourism development have been explored particularly in the context of peripheral regions in Nordic countries (Ioannides et al., 2006; Prokkola, 2007). In other parts of Europe the potential for cross-border tourism development also has been investigated (Vujko & Plavska, 2013; Bujdoso et al., 2015). In certain regions the expansion of cross-border tourism requires enhanced transport infrastructure as shown for the Polish-Slovak borderland (Michniak et al., 2015). Between Belgium, Germany and Luxembourg Stoffelen (2018) evaluates the potential for leveraging cycling trails as an element in borderlands development. Kozoviy (2018) points to the potential of ‘sentimental tourism’ in terms of cross-border flows of tourists between Poland and Ukraine. Tourism development in the borderlands of Poland is scrutinised by Wieckowski (2010). As is shown by the example of Romania the differential ‘permeability’ of borders can impact on the volume of cross-border tourism traffic (Ilieş et al., 2011).

The above discussion confirms that the largest proportion of existing borderlands tourism research has been pursued in the context of the global North. Indeed, the dominance of research about the global North is confirmed in the examination of the issues around tourism and international borders within two recent edited collections of research papers by Wachowiak (2016) and by Paasi et al. (2019). Arguably, for the global South the issue of informality looms large in borderlands and is exemplified best by the growth of informal cross-border trading in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa (Timothy & Teye, 2005). In South Africa only minimal attention has been given by tourism scholars to questions surrounding borderlands and tourism. The most important research focus has been upon transfrontier game parks, their impacts, conservation and governance issues (Ramutsindela, 2004; Ferreira, 2006; Büscher, 2013). For Ferreira (2004) the establishment of what others have called ‘peace parks’ straddling the borders of several countries in Southern Africa has come to be viewed as a critical base for leveraging the benefits of nature-based tourism for local communities resident in borderlands.

According to Sinthumule (2016) the formation of transfrontier conservation areas, the anchor for borderlands tourism development, is the 21<sup>st</sup> century approach to the management of protected areas in Southern Africa. In an important contribution Spenceley (2006, 2008) examines the growth, local tourism impacts and prospects for sustainable tourism in one such peace park, the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park that straddles the borders of South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Chiutsi and Saarinen (2017) interrogate the impacts and prospects for sustainable tourism of this park in the south-eastern Lowveld of Zimbabwe. In the same area Chirozva (2015) explores how local communities are engaging in ecotourism entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, the limits for tourism development linked to transfrontier conservation parks in Southern Africa because of government institutional obstacles are highlighted by Vrahimis & Visser (2006) using the example of the Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier park which crosses the international border between Lesotho and South Africa. More broadly, Van Amerom & Büscher (2005) critically dissect the multiple severe problems that limit the extent of local impacts from tourism in Southern Africa's marginalised border regions.

### **BORDERLANDS TOURISM IN SOUTH AFRICA**

A key reason behind the lack of prior research on the geographies of borderlands tourism in South Africa relates to data inadequacies. Below that of the country's nine provinces no official sub-national data exists for tourism in South Africa. In interpreting the details of the tourism space economy necessary recourse is made to the extensive data base which is available through the private sector consultancy IHS Global Insight. Indeed, because of the general weakness of official economic data at a subnational level in South Africa this database is used widely for purposes of local and regional development planning (IHS Global Insight, 2015). The tourism data base represents a subset of the IHS Global Insight Regional eXplorer, a consolidated platform of integrated data bases that, in the absence of official establishment and enterprise surveys, currently offers the most useful data at sub-national scale including at municipal administrative scale (IHS Global Insight, 2015). The data base uses the regular collation/triangulation of a suite of primary information which is secured from a wide range of official and non-government sources. This data is reworked to ensure consistency across variables as well as by applying national and sub-national verification tests to ensure that the modelled data is consistent for measuring economic activity (IHS Global Insight, 2015).

For South African researchers the local tourism data base of IHS Global Insight is valuable because it contains details which include the tourism performance of all municipal authorities in the country in respect, *inter alia*, of the number of tourism trips as differentiated by primary purpose of trip (leisure, business, visiting friends and relatives, and 'other'); tourism trips by origin of trip (domestic or international), bednights by origin of tourist (domestic or international); and calculation of tourism spend. From this national data base information for this research was extracted for the period 2001-2015 relating to tourism trips as differentiated for all the group of borderland district and metropolitan authorities across the country. More specifically, the data for 2001, 2006 and 2015 form the basis for this exploratory analysis of borderlands tourism in South Africa. Borderlands tourism in South Africa encompasses seven of the country's nine provinces, namely Eastern Cape, Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape and North West. Only South Africa's two most prosperous provinces, Gauteng and Western Cape, do not have an international border. Figure 1 shows that borderlands tourism impacts one metropolitan authority (Mangaung) as well as 20 district municipalities across the country. Of the group of 20 borderland district municipalities two are in Eastern Cape, three in Free State, five in KwaZulu-Natal, four in

Limpopo, two in Mpumalanga, two in Northern Cape and two in North West province.

Inevitably, definitional questions arise concerning what constitutes the scope of 'borderland' regions and the extent to which local economic life actually "is directly and significantly affected by proximity to an international border" (cf. Hansen, 1977). Here it is conceded that for certain municipalities the geographical territory under their administrative jurisdiction extends some distance away from the border, albeit in many of these cases such as for several municipalities in North West and Northern Cape provinces the extended areas are arid and sparsely populated. This limitation to the study is acknowledged but in the absence of more fine grained geographical data an administrative definition necessarily is applied. The focus is on those metropolitan or district municipalities that are adjacent to one of the following six countries, namely Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland or Zimbabwe.

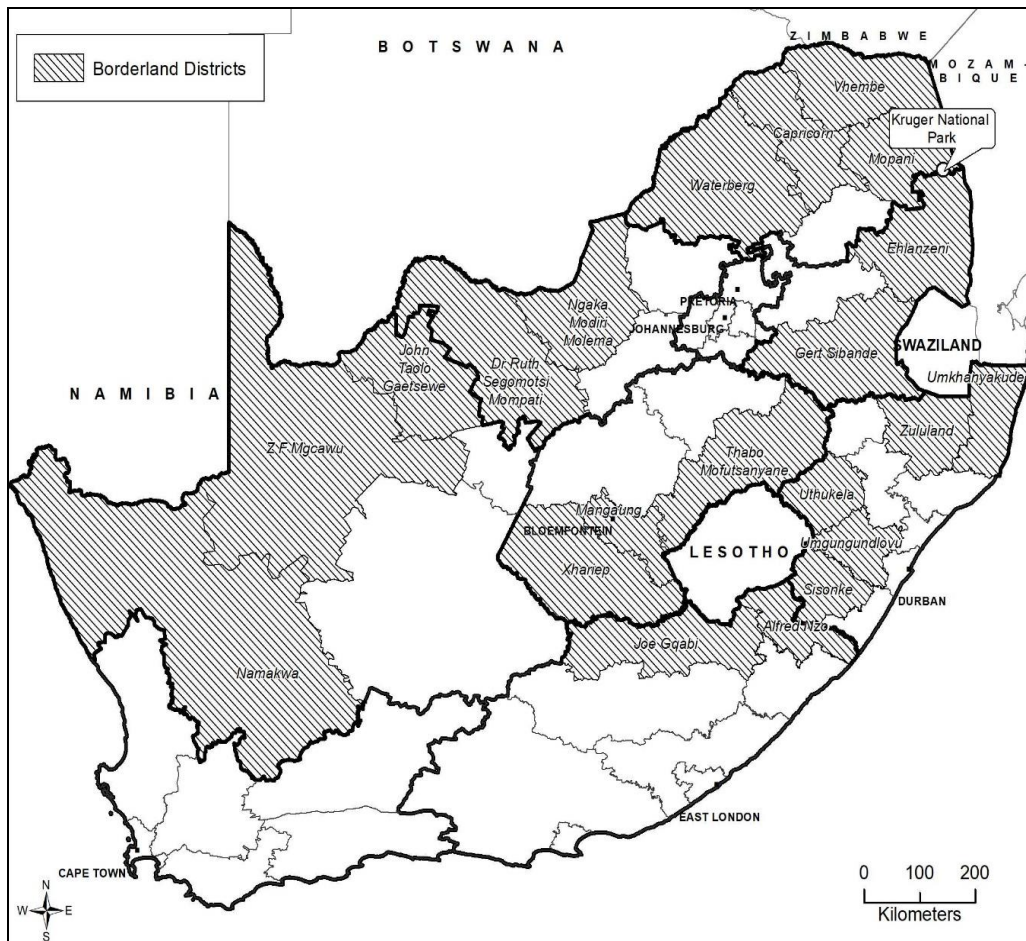


Figure 1. The Location of 21 Borderland Municipalities in South Africa.

## RESULTS

The analysis in this subsection represents an exploration of the geography of borderlands tourism for the 21 metropolitan and district municipalities in South Africa which adjoin and in some way are impacted by a frontier with surrounding countries in



the sub-region of Southern Africa. Using the data for the years 2001, 2006 and 2015 Table 1 provides an initial broad profile of the state of borderlands tourism in South Africa. It discloses the size and share of borderlands tourism in the national tourism economy across 11 varying indicators. These relate to total tourism spend; total trips and differentiated both by purpose and origin; and, for total bednights and differentiated by origin.

**Table 1.** Borderland Tourism in South Africa: Indicators of Size 2001, 2006, and 2015  
(Data source: Authors Based on IHS Global Data)

Indicator	2001	%National	2006	%National	2015	%National
Total Spend	R17.48 billion	23.7	R29.07 billion	22.9	R59.17 billion	25.0
Total Trips	8.02 million	34.1	11.00 million	33.2	14.7 million	36.2
Leisure	1.34 million	26.3	1.39 million	23.7	2.24 million	29.9
Business	0.57 million	24.3	0.77 million	23.2	1.36 million	29.4
VFR	4.62 Million	36.4	7.72 million	37.0	9.78 million	39.2
Other	1.48 million	44.7	1.11 million	36.4	1.31 million	36.5
Domestic	7.05 million	34.8	9.59 million	34.8	12.06 million	37.4
International	0.97 million	24.7	1.41 million	25.1	2.64 million	31.3
Total Bednights	37.28 million	28.9	52.39 million	28.2	51.82 million	30.3
Domestic	29.64 million	31.8	43.88 million	31.0	36.50 million	34.3
International	7.64 million	21.2	8.51 million	19.1	15.32 million	23.8

As a whole the best indicators of the volume and impact of local tourism are provided by a review of total trip and tourism spend data (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2019). Table 1 shows that by 2015 borderlands tourism totalled 14.7 million trips which generated a total tourism spend of R59.17 billion (current prices). In terms of national share it is observed that borderlands represent 36.2 percent of total trips but only 25.0 total spend which points to a lower value of trip spend to borderlands than to other regions of South Africa. It is revealed, however, that between 2001-2015 net growth is recorded for both indicators of total trips and spend. Growth in the total numbers of trips is shown for the three major purposes of travel, namely the segments of leisure, business and visiting friends and relatives (VFR) tourism (Table 1).

Only in the residual category of 'other' travel (mainly health and religious travel) is a net decrease recorded in borderland trips between 2001 and 2015. In addition to the absolute growth in importance of borderlands tourism as indexed by total trips and total spend indicators, in relative terms the significance of borderland areas in the national tourism economy is on the rise. This trend is indicated by the growth in the national share for the major segments of leisure, business and VFR travel (Table 1). The highest contribution of the borderlands occurs in the category of VFR travel which in South Africa is dominated by the movements of low-income black travellers between split 'homes' situated in urban and rural areas (Rogerson, 2015a, 2015b, 2017c). Many of South Africa's remote borderland regions in KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Limpopo contain extensive spaces that formerly represented the 'Homelands' created under apartheid as segregated regions for exclusive residence of Black households. These segregated spaces are the rural residences of multi-locational households and so function as a major driver for VFR travel to the borderlands at certain periods of the year (Rogerson, 2017c).

The 36.5 percent share of national 'other' travel accounted for by the borderlands requires brief elaboration as this is considerably higher than the national share of 15.2 % for such travel purposes. The much higher proportion of 'other' travel in borderlands is explained mainly by the substantial flows of religious travellers to several pilgrimage sites of a number of large African independent churches. The most significant are Moria village (Limpopo), site of the Zion Christian Church, and a number of sacred places in rural

KwaZulu-Natal of the Nazareth Baptist Church (Rogerson, 2014b; Nyakana, 2017). At various periods of the year these (and other pilgrimage) sites attract large gatherings of church followers with Zion City, the most important, attracting an estimated one and a half million church members for several days during the Easter pilgrimage. The largest share of these religious tourists are domestic visitors drawn from residents of urban townships in Gauteng, South Africa's economic heartland who incorporate often a component of visits to friends and relatives as well as the religious event (Saayman et al., 2014). International flows of religious tourists from surrounding countries are also in evidence. Overall, in terms of origin of visits it is noted that the borderlands have expanded both their absolute numbers and relative share of domestic and international trips as well as of bednights across the period 2001-2015. The caveat must be added, however, that the category of 'bednights' includes both paid and unpaid accommodation. As is shown elsewhere, in South Africa a substantial proportion of domestic bednights is linked to VFR travel which is mostly taken in unpaid accommodation staying at the homes of friends or, more commonly, with relatives (Rogerson, 2018). This is especially so in the former rural Homelands which make-up a swathe of borderland spaces especially for Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal provinces as well as parts of North West and Free State province.

**Table 2.** Structure of Borderlands Tourism in South Africa 2001-2015  
(Data source: Authors Based on IHS Global Data)

	2001 %	2015 %
Purpose of Trip	VFR 57.6	VFR 66.5
	Other 18.5	Leisure 15.2
	Leisure 16.7	Business 9.3
	Business 7.1	Other 8.9
Origin of Trip	Domestic 87.9	Domestic 82.0
	International 12.1	International 18.0
Bednights by Origin	Domestic 79.5	Domestic 70.4
	International 20.5	International 29.6

Table 2 provides further insight into the changing complexion and components of the borderlands tourism economy by comparing data for 2001 and 2015. In parallel with the national situation VFR travel is the largest element of tourism flows to South Africa's borderland regions (Rogerson, 2015b). It is evidenced, however, from Table 2 that the relative share of VFR in total trips is on the increase as is demonstrated by a comparison of 2001 and 2015 results. Of note is that whilst leisure is now the second most significant purpose of travel in borderlands its actual share of overall trips is in relative decline. By contrast, business travel records a small increase in its relative importance in the borderlands. The most notable shift is the decline recorded in the performance of the volatile 'other' category which is largely determined by the fluctuations in the annual numbers of religious tourists. In respect of travel source, a marked growth in relative terms is apparent in the significance of international as opposed to domestic trips to the borderlands (Table 2).

In accounting for this shift three points must be noted. First, is that during the study period, there occurred a mass influx of Zimbabweans into South Africa as a consequence of the country's economic meltdown in the wake of former President Mugabe's disastrous land grab programme and mismanagement of the economy. It has been recorded in another investigation of Limpopo tourism that several of the district municipalities (Vhembe, Mopani and Capricorn) are growing destinations for considerable flows of cross-border Zimbabwean visitors (Tsoanamatsie, 2014). Second,

one further consequence of the economic collapse and hyperinflation in Zimbabwe has been a spiralling in informal cross-border trading from Zimbabwe into South Africa (Chiliya et al., 2012; Chikanda & Tawodzera, 2017). Although most of this informal business trade concentrates around Johannesburg, in recent years there has emerged also a notable smaller flow of cross-border shoppers to Musina, the northernmost town in South Africa located 27 kms from the Zimbabwe border. This new appearance of shopping tourism at Musina is linked to commercial shopping mall developments built in the town and the relocation there of a number of Chinese traders from businesses in Johannesburg (Chikanda & Tawodzera, 2017). Smaller cross-border shopping flows have been observed from Lesotho into the border towns in South Africa's Free State province and even as far as Bloemfontein, the major centre of the Mangaung metropolitan area. Three, in terms of the relative strength of international tourism, it must be understood that there are close ethnic ties between communities across the borders of South Africa and its neighbours, especially Lesotho and Swaziland, which is another factor boosting international VFR travel to the borderlands as a whole (Rogerson, 2017c).

**Table 3.** Key Indicators of Total Trips (million) and Total Spend (ZAR R billion) for Borderlands, 2001–2015 Source: Authors Based on IHS Global Data

Municipality (Province)	Trips 2001	Spend 2001	%TS 2001	Trips 2006	Spend 2006	%TS 2006	Trips 2015	Spend 2015	%TS 2015
EC Alfred Nzo	0.35	0.37	<b>2.1</b>	0.50	0.72	<b>2.5</b>	0.33	0.79	<b>1.3</b>
EC Joe Qwabi Coast	0.06	0.10	<b>0.6</b>	0.15	0.25	<b>0.9</b>	0.14	0.37	<b>0.6</b>
NC Namakwa	0.07	0.17	<b>1.0</b>	0.09	0.24	<b>0.8</b>	0.11	0.45	<b>0.8</b>
NC ZF Mgcawu	0.15	0.32	<b>1.8</b>	0.18	0.47	<b>1.6</b>	0.19	0.77	<b>1.3</b>
NC John Taolo Gaetsewe	0.06	0.18	<b>1.0</b>	0.13	0.38	<b>1.3</b>	0.20	0.75	<b>1.3</b>
FS Xhariep	0.06	0.20	<b>1.1</b>	0.11	0.40	<b>1.4</b>	0.14	0.98	<b>1.7</b>
FS Thabo Mofutsanyane	0.44	0.78	<b>4.5</b>	0.57	1.21	<b>4.2</b>	0.53	2.11	<b>3.6</b>
FS Mangaung	0.53	1.22	<b>7.0</b>	0.72	2.10	<b>7.2</b>	0.81	4.36	<b>7.4</b>
KZN Uthukela	0.49	1.26	<b>7.2</b>	0.62	2.14	<b>7.4</b>	0.46	2.54	<b>4.3</b>
KZN Zululand	0.40	1.01	<b>5.8</b>	0.56	1.63	<b>5.6</b>	0.47	1.42	<b>2.4</b>
KZN Sisonke	0.10	0.18	<b>1.0</b>	0.25	0.42	<b>1.5</b>	0.28	0.69	<b>1.2</b>
KZN Umkhanyakude	0.29	0.73	<b>4.2</b>	0.44	1.28	<b>4.4</b>	0.39	1.60	<b>2.7</b>
KZN uMgungundlovu	0.50	1.01	<b>5.8</b>	0.75	1.87	<b>6.4</b>	0.71	2.65	<b>4.4</b>
NW Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati	0.28	0.28	<b>1.6</b>	0.34	0.41	<b>1.4</b>	0.31	0.56	<b>0.9</b>
NW Ngaka Modiri Molema	0.52	1.49	<b>8.5</b>	0.57	2.19	<b>7.5</b>	0.45	2.13	<b>3.6</b>
MP Gert Sibande	0.33	0.73	<b>4.2</b>	0.55	1.28	<b>4.4</b>	1.06	3.12	<b>5.3</b>
MP Ehlanzeni	1.22	4.00	<b>22.9</b>	1.40	5.69	<b>19.6</b>	1.98	12.35	<b>20.9</b>
LIM Mopani	0.79	1.45	<b>8.3</b>	0.92	2.23	<b>7.7</b>	1.43	6.13	<b>10.4</b>
LIM Vhembe	0.24	0.30	<b>1.7</b>	0.52	0.78	<b>2.7</b>	1.24	3.38	<b>5.7</b>
LIM Capricorn	0.80	0.91	<b>5.2</b>	1.11	1.71	<b>5.9</b>	2.20	5.52	<b>9.3</b>
LIM Waterberg	0.29	0.78	<b>4.5</b>	0.51	1.64	<b>5.7</b>	1.21	6.48	<b>11.0</b>

Table 3 shows the spatial distribution of borderland tourism in South Africa. For the 21 borderland municipalities it indicates total trips and total spend for the years 2001, 2006 and 2015 as well as the share of each municipality in total spend of borderland tourism for these three respective years. Several points are of note. First, as indexed by tourism spend, at the provincial level by 2015 borderlands tourism concentrates mostly in Limpopo (36.1. %), Mpumalanga (26.2%) and KwaZulu-Natal (15.0%) provinces.

These together account for 77.3 percent of the total spend and are followed by smaller contributions from Free State (12.7%), North West (4.5%), Northern Cape (3.4%) and Eastern Cape (1.9%). Second, is that borderlands tourism in South Africa is both an

urban as well as a rural phenomenon. The urban component is accounted for most importantly by Mangaung, Ehlanzeni and the four borderland district municipalities of Limpopo (Table 3). All of these six districts contain sizeable urban settlements as well as extensive rural spaces. Several of the remainder are remote districts which are mainly with small towns and extensive rural areas. Three, the most significant individual area is Ehlanzeni district municipality, the gateway to Kruger National Park, South Africa's iconic destination for viewing 'big 5' wildlife. Kruger National Park is the catalyst for substantial domestic and international visitor flows to the Ehlanzeni district.

The second most important locality is Waterberg. This is a region with a biosphere reserve that is an emerging destination for wildlife viewing (Lyon et al., 2017). It is also increasingly functioning as a 'leisure periphery' for wealthy residents from Gauteng's major cities. The third most significant district is Mopani, which is again a beneficiary of nature-based tourism including from the northern parts of Kruger National Park.

**Table 4.** Leading Geographical Areas (Municipality) by Purpose of Travel (% Trips)  
Data source: Authors based on IHS Global Insight data

Purpose	2001 %	2006 %	2015 %
Leisure	25.2 Ehlanzeni 10.6 Mopani 7.8 Mangaung	24.6 Ehlanzeni 8.7 Mopani 8.1 Mangaung	22.0 Ehlanzeni 15.5 Waterberg 12.3 Mopani
Business	22.6 Ehlanzeni 11.8 Mangaung 8.7 Gert Sibande	18.5 Ehlanzeni 11.5 Mangaung 7.7 Gert Sibande	18.1 Ehlanzeni 15.8 Capricorn 10.8 Mangaung
VFR	12.9 Ehlanzeni 9.5 Mopani 7.7 Ngaka Molema	10.6 Ehlanzeni 8.8 Mopani 8.6 Capricorn	13.5 Capricorn 11.6 Ehlanzeni 10.2 Mopani
Other	28.9 Capricorn 11.7 Mopani 10.9 Ehlanzeni	29.5 Capricorn 8.6 Ehlanzeni 6.4 Mangaung	38.9 Capricorn 7.9 Ehlanzeni 5.4 Mangaung

**Table 5.** Leading Geographical Areas (Municipality) by Origin of Travel (%)  
Data source: Authors Based on IHS Global Data

Origin	2001	2006	2015
Domestic Trips	13.6 Ehlanzeni 11.0 Capricorn 10.6 Mopani	11.0 Ehlanzeni 10.9 Capricorn 8.6 Mopani	16.6 Capricorn 12.0 Ehlanzeni 9.5 Mopani
International Trips	27.7 Ehlanzeni 11.7 Mangaung 9.4 Uthukela	24.2 Ehlanzeni 10.6 Mangaung 9.9 Uthukela	20.4 Ehlanzeni 10.6 Mangaung 9.9 Uthukela
Domestic Bednights	11.7 Ehlanzeni 9.8 Capricorn 9.4 Mopani	10.1 Ehlanzeni 10.0 Capricorn 7.9 Mopani	14.7 Capricorn 11.6 Ehlanzeni 8.4 Mopani
International Bednights	22.9 Ehlanzeni 14.1 Thabo Mofutsanyane 10.1 Mangaung	20.8 Ehlanzeni 10.1 Thabo Mofutsanyane 9.1 Mangaung	24.9 Ehlanzeni 16.2 Mangaung 10.5 Thabo Mofutsanyane

Overall, it is apparent that the largest flows of non-VFR travel to South Africa's borderlands are driven by local nature-based assets. On Tables 4 and 5 are recorded the three leading municipalities for each purpose of travel (Table 4) and origin of travel (Table 5). It is significant that the three leading district municipalities for total tourism spend are also the same three ranked destinations for leisure travel. For business, VFR

and especially the exceptional case of other travel the Capricorn district is strongly represented. With an urban centre that functions as a business node as well as an extensive rural space (including former Homelands) both the Ehlanzeni and Capricorn districts perform well also in terms of business and VFR travel. In relation to origin of travel Capricorn, Ehlanzeni and Mopani respectively are the leading destinations for domestic tourists. Significantly, for the category of international tourism Ehlanzeni is dominant and is followed by Mangaung which attracts substantial flows of international visitors from Lesotho. In addition, the mobilities of cross-border travellers from Lesotho are responsible for the ranking of Thabo Mofutsanyane district as another of the leading foci for international borderlands tourism in South Africa.

## CONCLUSION

In recent years it is evident there has been an expansion of international debates about the relationship between borders and tourism (Timothy et al., 2016). Arguably, the relationships between tourism and borderland regions are complex and can vary geographically (Prokkola, 2010; Makkonen, 2016; Paasi et al., 2019). The existing literature on borderlands tourism was shown to encompass a number of different themes of debate most of which are interrogated in the environments of the global North. Based in the context of the global South the core task in this study was to apply a spatial perspective to interpret the broad development and complexification of borderlands tourism in South Africa. For this exploratory investigation the geography of borderlands tourism was mapped out. It reveals that borderland spaces are a growing component of South Africa's tourism economy. In addition, it shows the spatial unevenness of borderlands tourism. The major anchors for borderlands tourism in South Africa are disclosed as those of VFR travel, nature-based leisure tourism founded on iconic wildlife assets, and religious tourism. Although short-distance cross-border shopping tourism is in evidence it is far less significant than is recorded for studies conducted of borderland tourism in both North America and Europe. This analysis opens up further research questions about tourism in South Africa's borderlands particularly concerning the varying structure of tourism in specific spaces and of the geographies of different forms of borderlands tourism. In future research local level investigations are required to expand the agenda and debates about borderlands tourism in South Africa.

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## **PROMOTING WILDLIFE TOURISM ON GEOTOURISM LANDSCAPE: A STUDY IN MANAS AND KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARKS OF ASSAM, INDIA**

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**Abstract:** National Parks worldwide are natural heritages visited by millions of tourists with varying length of stay depending on the level of uniqueness in terms of scientific, historical, aesthetic, economic, recreational or educational values. Manas and Kaziranga are two ecotourism destinations of India located in the state of Assam, widely acknowledged for their universal values by UNESCO as world heritage sites. This paper is an attempt to make a comparison between the status of tourism in these two protected areas from the stand point of visitor satisfaction and overall sustainability aspects. A symbiosis between geotourism and wildlife tourism is the central goal. The study evaluates the exemplarity of the landforms with a focus on the paradigm shift in tourism planning and management of national parks.

**Keywords:** Heritage, geotourism, ecotourism, satisfaction, sustainability

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Promoting tourism in Protected Areas (PAs) is a key global strategy to draw public funding in natural heritage management. From theoretical standpoint, the nature comprises both abiotic and biotic elements and when taken together, a holistic approach on conservation arises from such linkage (Grey, 2004). The holistic appreciation of a PA is only possible when geology as the abiotic component could be combined with the biotic i.e. fauna and flora elements in marketing of natural heritages. When a PA is attractive for

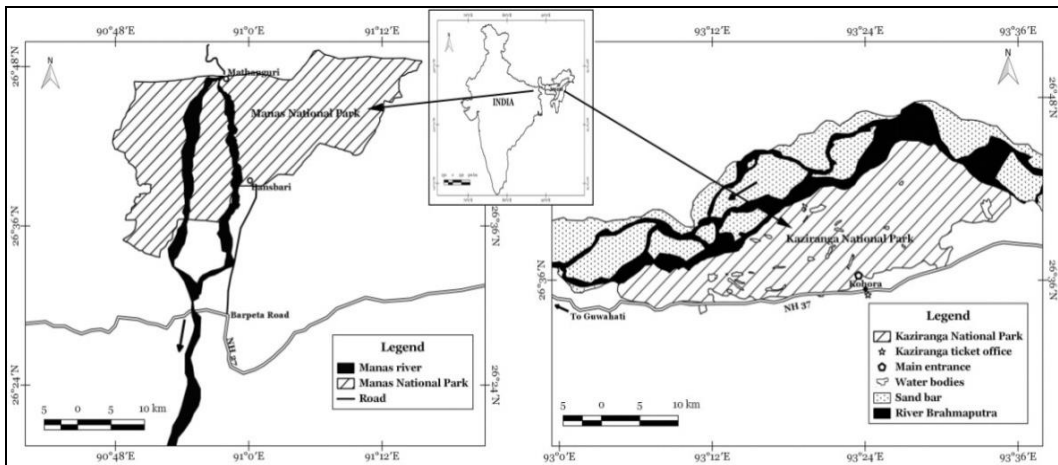
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its natural heritages, it can provide income and livelihood opportunities (Hussain et al., 2010). The National Park (NP) branding of such PAs not only boost the economy of its buffer zone but also involve the local community to protect and conserve unique ecology, so that it could be experienced and enjoyed by future generation as well (Stemberk et al., 2018). Being considered to be one of the basic institutions of great socio-economic impact, the National Parks promote recreation blended with environmental education for millions of visitors belonging to different age groups since responsible tourism fits the scope of its activity (Szczęsna & Wojtanowicz, 2014). It is a journey towards sustainable development with an equitable share of the local community in the economic opportunities that arises from convergence of wildlife tourism and geotourism in spatial context. Sustainable spatial development achieved from utilization of geosites usually represents strong regional identities (Lazzari & Aloia, 2014). A geopark is a natural park of such geosites (terrestrial, aquatic and/or underground) in which plant and animal species may generate a significant value for tourism (Kubalíková & Kirchner, 2015).

In many countries, geoheritages have been put into the service of geotourism with the establishment of geoparks and nature parks (Yıldırım & Koçan, 2008). In many circumstances, the other natural resources like wildlife is the primary attraction for drawing the tourists and geotourism is developing simultaneously as educative tourism. One who travel a national park for wildlife watching become a geotourist while appreciating the geosites of the National Parks.

Under an ideal circumstance, tourism and associated infrastructure operate within natural capacities for regeneration and future productivity of natural resources (Eber, 1992). If the equilibrium is not maintained by allowing somewhat selective forms of tourism, a tourist-park conflict may arise, which would be an additional burden for park management, already busy in resolving the people-park conflict. Recognition like World Heritage Site status from UNESCO, as in case of Manas and Kaziranga NP of Assam (Figure 1), draws millions of tourists every year with varying length of stay.



**Figure 1.** Location map of the study area

Both the NPs have been studied from various angles as revealed from available literature reviews but a research gap remains on relative assessment of their performances in promoting sustainable tourism. The followings are the objectives of the present study:

1. To compare the overall tourism scenario of Manas and Kaziranga National Park.

2. To assess visitor satisfaction status of Manas and Kaziranga National Park based on different motivational values assigned by the tourists.

3. To identify immediate necessities for Manas and Kaziranga from natural heritage management perspective.

National Parks are known more for ecotourism rather than geotourism. It is because the term ecotourism, which is popularly defined as a visit to natural areas for experiencing the elements of natural and ecological resources, is more appealing to the globalized tourism market. Geotourism is unseparable from ecotourism in real sense for the geological diversities that have profound impacts on ecological resources. Use of geosites for ecotourism (Table 1) reveals the scope of research on interconnectivities between ecotourism and geotourism. Generally, tourists visit the national parks to feel the calmness, wilderness of nature and to watch different kind of birds and wild animals.

**Table 1.** Geosites of Manas and Kaziranga National Parks serving wildlife tourism  
(Data source: Field assessment of geosites in terms of their attractiveness and spatial distribution, 2018)

Geosites	Spatiality and integrity aspects
Majestic riverine sites	The Brahmaputra river flowing along the northern boundary of Kaziranga National park exhibits braided drainage pattern with numerous river islands, providing shelter to birds and wildlife; thereby recognized as ecotourism paradise (Figure 2). Mathanguri is a hillock on the bank of river Manas, a vantage point for wildlife watching particularly in evening and morning when the animals come to the river for drinking water. This river serves as the boundary between India and Bhutan. The animals from Royal Manas National park of Bhutan and Manas National Park of India travel to this place from opposite sides (Figure 3).
Wetlands	Swampy and marshy tracts of Kaziranga are favourite habitat of the Great Indian One-Horned Rhino and wild buffalo. Relicts of older channels have been evolved as shallow oxbow lakes, locally known as 'beels'. There are at least nine such beels of 50-150 ha within the boundary of the Kaziranga National Park (Figure 4). The wetlands of Manas are also the habitat of a great variety of fauna, for which it has been recognized as wetland of international importance (Scott, 1989).
Wet Alluvial grassland	Grasslands cover almost two thirds of the Kaziranga National Park characterized with the species called <i>tall elephant grasses</i> on the relatively higher elevations and short grasses on the lower grounds. These grasslands are also found on the sandy riverine tract of the mighty Brahmaputra, serving as niche of a variety of wild life. In case of Manas, about half of its total geographical area enjoys the cover of such flat and well-drained alluvial grasslands (Champion and Seth, 1968), considered as the safe heaven for wildlife (Figure 5).
Himalayan foothills	Karbi Anglong hills are located in the southern boundary of Kaziranga National Park, which is the source of a number of Many small streams. It is also shelter place for the migrant animals when annual flooding takes place. The deposits of Manas river including enormous quantities of boulders, stones, sand, silt and other debris that are carried down contributing to unique geotourism landscapes amidst of surrounding hills as a nature tourism paradise (Figure 6).

National parks give an opportunity to the visitors to relax their body, refresh their mind and enjoy the virginity of nature ensuring biodiversity. On one hand, national parks worldwide protect and conserve the valuable and endangered natural resources, while on the other they make a great contribution to the local and national economy by developing tourism within their territorial limits and work towards the benefits of local community (Kafle, 2014). Eco-Development (ED) model was originally advanced by UNEP involving participatory management of resources in NPs and became very much successful in Indian National Parks like Kanha in the context of ecotourism management (Chakrabarty, 2012).



**Figure 2.** Island as geosite supporting wildlife



**Figure 3.** Wildlife watching point, a geotourism landscape of Manas National Park



**Figure 4.** Wetland of Kaziranga supporting the Great Indian One-Horned Rhino



**Figure 5.** Water Buffalo amidst of wet alluvial grassland



**Figure 6.** Himalayan foothills on which Mathanguri rest house is situated

IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) has categorized “National Park” as its Category II type of protected area. Geosites of such areas constitute the abiotic environment to support the organisms, which are the essential elements of ecotourism.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The purpose of this study is to compare how ecotourism advances hand in hand with geotourism in such PAs, designated as World Heritage Sites. For evaluation purpose, the abundance of geosites is combined with the richness of wildlife in order to realize the expectations and potentialities of natural parks that are situated within the terrestrial limits of national parks. Identification, characterization and assessment of the geosites are followed by their description in terms of attractiveness and spatial distribution. Primary data collected during the field survey from community and visitors have been analysed applying a number of quantitative techniques.

The respondents (80% Indian and 20% Foreign) interviewed during their stay at Manas and Kaziranga constitute the base of ethnographic discussions. Questionnaire surveys have also been conducted during the study camping at both of the National Parks on several occasions. In order to analyse the attitudes of visitors on various attributes, a multi-attribute approach (Chaudhary, 2000) on valuation is adopted for the present study. The scientific and educational aspects, aesthetic and recreational aspects, ecological and geotourism aspects have been subsequently taken into consideration with an assessment of the marketing value in respect of blending ecotourism and geotourism opportunities.

Following the procedure of Importance-Performance Analysis (Johann, 2014), the tourists responses have been obtained in Likert-scale. A five point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) has been utilized. The mean value of the tourists' response has been used for Manas and Kaziranga to conduct pairwise t-test for the purpose of comparison. This test is applied to determine attribute wise significance of differences (Maghsoodi Tilaki, 2017) in order to interpret the keys responsible for varying status of two neighbouring NPs. Further, a Visitor Satisfaction Index (VSI) has been attempted for comparing of the overall tourism status of Manas and Kaziranga National Parks before making the planning recommendations. The SPSS software is used for statistical analysis, while QGIS software has been used for digital cartography.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Geotourism can occur in a range of environment from natural to constructed and planned aiming to preserve both abiotic and biotic environment (Dowling & Ólafsdóttir, 2013). Besides contributing to biodiversity conservation, there are various functions like scientific, educational, recreational, cultural etc that require an integrated approach for a sustainable future (Pletsch et al., 2014). In India, there are 37 sites obtained the status of UNESCO World Heritage Sites (WHSS) for Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) among which seven are National Parks (UNESCO-WHC, 2019).

They are Kaziranga National Park (Assam), Manas National Park (Assam), Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan), Sundarbans National Park (West Bengal), Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Park (Uttarakhand), Great Himalayan National Park (Himachal Pradesh), Khangchendzonga National Park (Sikkim).

Among these National Parks, Manas and Kaziranga are situated almost in same latitude at a distance about 300 km by road in the same state but in terms of the promotion of sustainable tourism, the status of these two neighbouring NPs is different. Because of latitudinal location of the parks, they enjoy subtropical monsoon climate.

Though the average rainfall recorded in Manas is more than that of Kaziranga, Kaziranga is much more affected by seasonal flood. The area under water bodies is about 7% in Kaziranga while in case of Manas, it is less than 1%.

Located at the foothills of Bhutan Himalaya, the Manas National park (26° 35' N - 26° 50' N and 90° 45' E- 91° 15' E) is an important conservation region constituted by the old alluvium locally called Bhabhar and flood plain ecosystem (Sarma et al., 2008). Located in the Bodo tribe dominated Baksa and Chirang districts of Assam, this is a natural heritage site consisting of three ranges namely - the Western Range with its headquarters at Panbari, the Central Range with Bansbari as its headquarters near Barpeta Road, and the Eastern Range with Bhuyapara near Pathsala as its headquarters (Baro & Borthakur, 2017). Manas is the river from whom the name of NP is derived, which is a tributary of mighty Brahmaputra originated in Tibet. It is flowing along the northern boundary of Kaziranga National Park (26° 35' N -26° 45' N and 93° 05' E to 93° 40' E), which is administratively situated in Golaghat and Nagaon districts of Assam. Being another NP of the state declared as world heritage site, Kaziranga is divided into four ranges, namely, the Western Range (Baguri), the Central Range (Kohora), the Eastern Range (Agaratoli) and the Burapahar Range at Ghorakati (Barua and Sharma, 1999). It was in the year 1985, both Manas and Kaziranga had been designated as a world heritage sites by UNESCO covering 519 sq. km and 430sq.km areas respectively.

Both of the parks are however situated on the floodplains and accommodate a wide variety of rare and endangered species offering the scope of geotourism and wildlife tourism marketing together. Rhino is the keystone species in case of Kaziranga while the wild water buffalo is the attraction of Manas followed by the one-horned Indian rhino, golden langur and a wide variety of birds. Anthropogenic pressure, especially from activities of buffer zone population is a serious threat for the protection of both the natural heritage sites. In this context, tourism has evolved as a weapon to provide alternative livelihood for indigeneous communities who were engaged in illegal livestock grazing, fodder and fuel wood collection, tree-felling and hunting activities. Strategically, communities living within or near forest have to be treated as one of the essential components for conservation (Schwartzman et al., 2000). This approach was discovered very much successful in case of Manas National Park, where world heritage site status was likely to be withdrawn because of severe lapses in protected area management during the dark period of ethno-political disturbance that persisted about two decades back, when the population of Indian Rhinoceros was almost poached out (Lahkar et al., 2018).

However, with successful community involvement, the vulnerability has been addressed and there is subsequent increase of the arrival of tourists while Kaziranga is recipient of a steady flow of visitors since the 1970s and apparently occupy a better status in tourism market in comparison with Manas National Park. Visitors' feedbacks are very important for future planning on experimentation with a combined ecotourism – geotourism package. Such feedbacks provide an opportunity to analyze the expectations and satisfaction level of the visitors (Okello & Yerian, 2009). In view of increasing pressure to become self-sufficient due to restrictions on government funding usually arising from economic crisis and recession, utilization of aesthetic and recreational values of the National Parks for responsible tourism may be a sustainable option (Castley, 2012). Tourism in National Parks not only promotes protection and conservation of biodiversity but also provides alternative sustainable livelihoods for local people (Rugendyke & Son, 2005). To investigate further, visitors' responses in Manas and Kaziranga have been quantified using five point Likert scale and analyzed accordingly on value centric comparison of these two NPs as follows:

### **Scientific and Educational value**

Appreciation and learning of a landscape is one of the motivational aspects of geotourists (Allan et al., 2015). The national parks are assessed based on the geoheritage resources which have scientific values and make people understand the geologic process and the evolution of earth (Singtuen & Won-in, 2018). The scientific and educational value of a national park could be measured through enumerating its uniqueness in terms of both geologic and ecological diversities. While comparing the overall scientific and educational value, it is found that Manas and Kaziranga National Parks are in neck to neck situation. It is admissible that in case of literature availability and quality of guiding, tourists have given more credit to the administration of Kaziranga National Park in management context. In respect of quality of guiding, the score obtained is somewhat less for Manas (average 2.72) in comparison with Kaziranga National Park (average 2.79). In spite of such, the geotourism conducive environment of Manas has raised its overall score more than Kaziranga, which is perceived as much more organized for years.

### **Aesthetic and Recreational value**

To judge the aesthetic and recreational values, various indicators have been taken into account such as quality of landscaping, facilities offered to the tourists like elephant riding, jeep safari, restricted trekking, eco-friendly accommodation etc. Recreational assessment of the landscapes has been carried out worldwide on the basis of the developed system of criteria and their properties (Mazhitova et al., 2018). As the quality of utilization of geotourism resources in both of the parks are very poor in comparison to popular NPs worldwide, the respondents gave low score (below average 3) from their awareness level. Elephant riding is prime attraction of Kaziranga and visitors gave it high satisfaction score (average 4.54). Jeep safari in both of the parks is another popular activity, which is opted by the visitors. From the standpoint of virginity and natural beauty, Manas National Park is identified as better than Kaziranga by respondents visiting both of the parks. Natural beauty of Mathanguri forest bungalow at India-Bhutan border on the bank of river Manas is very charming. In the morning and evening, it is a site for animal watching as many wild animals gather to quench their thirst. Regarding the opportunity of water point view, Kaziranga achieved a good score (average 4.14) on account of its hydro-geomorphological conditions. But because of the ecotourism merit of Mathanguri, Manas achieved a better score (average 4.4) in this context from recreational angle. While enumerating the average cumulative score of all the value indicators of aesthetic and recreational sector, the position of Manas is found somewhat better from the score obtained (3.70) than that of Kaziranga (3.33).

### **Ecological and Geotourism value**

Ecological value of a NP depends on its biodiversity value (Reynard et al., 2007). Both the Manas and Kaziranga are given credit by UNESCO for in-situ conservation of biological diversity and designated as world renowned ecotourism destinations. Manas National Park has two major biomes: grassland and forest may be further classified into wet alluvial grassland, moist deciduous and semi-evergreen forests (Champion & Seth, 1968). The grasslands that cover almost half of the park are Terai and Bhabar type accommodating wildlife which draws visitors from various parts of the country and abroad (Choudhury, 2016). The landscapes of geotourism being added with wildlife value generate immense attractions towards both of the parks that have been acknowledged with recognition as World Heritage Sites. Geotourism has already been documented as one of the important strategies to support biodiversity conservation (Hakim & Soemarno, 2017). For planning effective wildlife conservation strategies, reliable data on the spatial distribution of species within a region is crucial (Tobler et al., 2008).

Manas National Park has 60 mammal species of which 22 are considered threatened (including the endangered Asian Elephants) along with 42 reptile species, 7 amphibians, 372 species of birds, 54 species of fish and over 100 species of insects (District Statistical Hand Book, Baksa, 2010). Being the Eastern Himalaya Biodiversity Hotspot, Manas also sustains a large tiger population along with others carnivores (Goswami & Ganesh, 2011). Declared as a Tiger Reserve, Manas is the home of diverse carnivores, particularly because of its unique regional ecological settings (Borah et al., 2012). It is found that respondents gave high score to Manas for rare and endangered species availability (average 4.54) and on account of its protection status (average 4.07).

Kaziranga National Park is also well endowed with a variety of flora and fauna drawing ecotourists. It is a region of tall elephant grass, marshland, and dense tropical moist broadleaf forests. The park is known for the highest density of tigers among protected areas in the world. It is the home of the world's largest population of the Greater One-Horned Rhinoceros, Water Wild Buffalo, Eastern Swamp deer, Asiatic Elephants and Sambar (Sharma, 2018). These five animals are collectively known as 'Big Five' of Kaziranga. In spite of such species diversity, the score of Kaziranga on rare and endangered species availability (average 3.79) is low followed by the score of protection status (average 3.3). Overflow consequences of the river Brahmaputra may be one of the reasons behind less valuation by the visitors on Kaziranga. Every year, during the monsoon period, flood occurs and inundates almost half area of the NP affecting a large number of wildlife. Climate-induced hydrological hazard of Kaziranga killing a large number of animals every year is the challenge to the capability of PA management to maintain its ecotourism value over time. At the beginning of monsoon, the animals use to migrate from low lying areas to the high altitude areas of Karbi Anglong hills. When animal passing the populated villages and across the highway, they are often subjected to poaching or road accidents (Bonai & Chowdhury, 2004).

### Marketing value

The economy is very much related to the potential use of the protected area especially for the purpose of ecotourism. In Manas National Park, some ecotourism societies have been organized by the local people with the help of a few NGO. They made various types of local food, handicraft and also performed their traditional dance and music to entertain the visitors accommodated at the buffer zone. In case of souvenir production, Kaziranga is scoring far better than Manas. In Kaziranga, local artisans known for their masterwork in carving wood are making models of popular animals like one-horned rhinoceros, crane, tiger, elephant, deer etc very much appreciated by the visitors (Gurung & Goswami, 2015). There is still no such provision at the entry points in case of Manas because wildlife tourism in the park is still in the juvenile phase. From the stand point of economics of facilities and amenities, particularly accommodation and transport availabilities, the score of Kaziranga is far better than Manas. Cumulating the values obtained on different heads (Table 2), a comparison is attempted between Manas and Kaziranga where both geotourism and ecotourism could be advanced together assuring the issues concerning sustainabilities.

**Table 2.** Comparison of score achieved by Manas and Kaziranga from tourists' response  
(Data source: Field data obtained from ethnographic surveys, 2018)

Valuation from Respondents	Manas	Kaziranga
1. Scientific and Educational value	3.34	3.27
2. Aesthetic and Recreational value	3.70	3.33
3. Ecological and Geotourism value	4.31	3.55
4. Marketing value of Ecotourism - Geotourism combination	3.21	3.54



A paired t-test has been attempted to examine whether there is statistically significant difference between the score achieved by Manas and Kaziranga from tourists' response. Four pairs have been formed (Table 3) and positive correlations between them have been derived. A very high value on ecological and geotourism context is representative of significance difference arising from quality of resources available for visitors' satisfaction. It is evident that from the standpoint of scientific and educational context, the performance of both the park are more or less similar, while Manas is far better in aesthetic and recreational aspects. The weakness of Manas lies in tourism marketing as revealed from the negative t value showing significant difference from Kaziranga, which is marketing wildlife tourism successfully in the background of its geotourism landscape.

**Table 3:** Paired t-test on values obtained by Manas and Kaziranga  
(Data source: Calculated by authors using SPSS 15.0)

Pairs	Paired Differences						Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	t value	Confidence Interval (Alpha .05)		df	
				Lower	Upper		
1. Scientific and Educational value for Manas - Scientific and Educational value for Kaziranga	.06452	.52375	1.534	-.01859	.14762	154	.127
2. Aesthetic and Recreational value for Manas - Aesthetic and Recreational for value Kaziranga	.36903	.41974	10.946	.30243	.43563	154	.000
3. Ecological and Geotourism value for Manas - Ecological and Geotourism value for Kaziranga	.75484	.52337	17.956	.67179	.83789	154	.000
4. Marketing value for Manas - Marketing value for Kaziranga	-.33118	.35329	-11.671	-.38724	-.27512	154	.000

Visitor satisfaction is one of the most crucial issues of any tourist place. This is why Tourist satisfaction has been one of the key areas of tourism research for more than four decades (Shavanddasht et al., 2017). Satisfaction level of a visitor in any tourist place depends on expectation level of the individual in view of supply against demand, thereby plays significant role in marketing tourism products and services (Egresi & Polta, 2016). Satisfaction depends on one's own value judgment and feeling. Visitor satisfaction Index (VSI) is attempted to compare the satisfaction level of the visitors in Manas and Kaziranga applying the following formula:

$$VSI = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n VI}{n}$$

Where,

VI = Valuation Index (Actual Value – Min. Value/Max. Value – Min. Value)

n = Number of value dimension

**Table 4.** VSI values

NPs	VSI
Manas	0.64
Kaziranga	0.60

The result of VSI has shown in the table 4. VSI shows encouraging result for both of the National Parks, which is relatively higher in case of Manas National Park, where

tourism is not fully developed yet. Under such circumstance, Kaziranga should be much more aware on satisfying the visitors in view of a healthy competition with Manas in near future. Further a scheme for sustainable planning should address the following issues:

a) Enumeration of the carrying capacities to determine the threshold limit of daily visitors' entry in peak season with special emphasis on protection of bio-geologically diverse areas to promote bio-geodiversity tours.

b) Community involvement for defending wildlife from poachers and valuable trees from loggers.

c) Human resource development for managing PAs involving the community to look after the activities of visitors from conservation standpoint.

d) Raising geoconservational awareness of visitors mandatorily before entering the park with the application of multi-media devices at the entry points of both the parks.

e) Ensuring maximum benefits from tourist accommodation by promoting the local players in order to prevent leakages because dominance of entrepreneurs from outside means profit from business will not percolate in the host economy.

The success in pro-poor geotourism depends on quality of biodiversity and integrity of the environment (Hakim & Soemarno, 2017). Nature heritage sites like Manas and Kaziranga can contribute to poverty reduction by involving the community in various tourism oriented services ranging from guiding to making of tourist souvenirs. Tourism has a number of functional mechanisms for improving the livelihoods of local people in destinations (Monterrubio & Espinosa, 2013). Local handicrafts created by the community are collected as souvenirs by the visitors as symbol of their travel experience (Litirell et al., 1994). The accommodation industry of both of the parks could be encouraged to promote the local handicrafts for sale in their premises with provision of the scope of interacting with the artisans who demonstrate their skills in the presence of the visitors. Ethnic groups like Bodo, Garo, Rabha have their indigenous craft making skills, which may be promoted as future heritage tourism resource especially for Manas, where souvenir industry is not developed yet in comparison with Kaziranga. The aim of sustainable tourism planning for both of the parks is to prevent the outside operators from reaping most of the profits from tourist arrival and divert the earnings for the benefit of local communities.

## CONCLUSIONS

Sustainability is the central goal for which careful planning and management is necessary. Community participation in this context is fundamental in protecting the rarity, integrity and representativeness of both ecological and geological tourism resources. Manas and Kaziranga may provide a variety of services so that recreation and knowledge seeking visitors together can enjoy the flavour of geotourism while travelling in the area for wildlife appreciation. Both of the National Parks have been designated as heavenly places by the visitors from geotourism perspective during the process of their value assignments, based on which the comparison between the parks has been made.

Though Kaziranga is more advertised and easily accessible, the study reveals that ecotourism potential in Manas is much more because of the support of its geotourism resources. Proper promotional measure including dissemination of information on its Outstanding Universal Values (OUVs) in tourism market is very much essential to utilize such opportunities. It is to be noted that at present tourism infrastructure of Manas is at juvenile stage, while Kaziranga in this context has already reached the stage of maturity.

In spite of availability of better infrastructure in Kaziranga, the performance score of Manas is slightly better. Implementation of a community oriented responsible tourism planning for this National Park may be a strategic initiative to address

poaching and habitat destruction in future. This is vital since the park is situated at a dormant seat of ethno-political conflict, which may arise again. It is noteworthy to mention that World Heritage Site designation was threatened due to untoward happenings in Manas between the late 1980s and the late 1990s. Promotion of sustainable tourism convincing the people about their economic benefits is now adopted as a policy by the administration to avoid repetition of such calamities that affect the natural heritages. Making a linkage between the process conservation and educational motives of geotourism combined with wildlife tourism, a balance between tourist needs, ecological requirement and expectations of local community could be achieved.

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## **DESTINATION SOUTH AFRICA: ANALYSIS OF DESTINATION AWARENESS AND IMAGE BY INTERNATIONAL VISITORS**

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**Abstract:** International tourism is vital to South Africa's economy and tourism industry. It accounts for 48% of the country's tourism volume and 3% of GDP. It is important to establish the image that international visitors have of South Africa to safeguard the performance efficacy of the country's tourism industry. This study shows the efforts that South Africa have made to build a Nation Brand and describes the impact it's had on the perceptions of international visitors. The study population was international visitors to South Africa. Questionnaires were used to interview departing passengers at OR Tambo International Airport. Results indicated that the overall attractiveness of South Africa was positive. A majority indicated that they will return to South Africa.

**Key words:** branding, image, international tourism, international visitors

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Tourism is a global phenomenon. It is the world's largest and fastest-growing industry and is a major economic, environmental and sociocultural dynamic force. In South Africa, tourism is vitally important and a key driver of the economy. During 2016, tourism contributed 9.3% to the South African gross domestic product (GDP) and supported approximately 1.5 million jobs. Tourism contributed US\$4.74 billion of total investment and generated US\$8.81 billion in visitor exports in 2016 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2017). This makes the South African tourism industry a larger contributor to the economy than agriculture (Statistics South Africa, 2018). International tourism is important to the South African tourism industry as it accounts for 48% of the

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country's total tourism volume; 87% of total tourism expenditure and about 3% of GDP (South African Tourism, 2017). During this period, international visitors spent approximately R20.0 billion on leisure, accommodation and food and mostly originated from Africa and Europe. Given the importance of the international market to the South African tourism industry, it is important to establish the image that South Africa depicts to international visitors. This is necessary to ensure the effective performance of the tourism industry in South Africa. Before this can be established, it is important to know how destination image is formed and the factors that influence image formation.

### **Destination image, branding and positioning**

Destination image is defined as a tourist's mental picture of an offering while associating symbolic meanings with certain features of the destination. A clear and powerful image enables a destination to position itself in such a way that it will appeal to the needs and wants of its identified tourist market (Manhas et al., 2016). Destination image is formed by attribute-based and holistic components. Both contain functional and psychological dimensions (Schmallegger & Carson, 2009). Functional attributes include characteristics of the destination such as climate, scenery and attractions. Psychological attributes depict the tourist's interpretation and appraisal of the destination characteristics such as the friendliness of locals and quality of products and services. Holistic components include the mental images that visitors have of the physical characteristics of the destination and the mood and atmosphere that they create (Schmallegger & Carson, 2009). Factors that influence the formation of destination image comes from primary and secondary information sources and personal factors related to the tourist. Primary information sources are derived from information that visitors gain from a destination due to previous visits and the intensity of their visit. Secondary information is gained from organic, induced and autonomous sources. These are acquired before experiencing the destination (Beerli & Martin, 2004). Organic information is gained from friends and family that have visited the destination previously. Induced information is required from advertising in the mass media.

Autonomous information comes from sources such as documentaries, films or television programs about the destination (Gartner, 1994). Personal factors, also called internal factors, are formed by the projected image of the destination and the tourist's own needs, motivation, prior knowledge and preferences. Visitors' create their own mental picture of the destination that will then produce their personal perceived images (Bramwell & Rawding, 1996). Destination image is a multi-dimensional concept that is influenced by cognitive, distinctive and emotional images. Together these influence the behaviour of visitors (Maumbe & Van Wyk, 2012). Destination image is very closely intertwined with destination positioning and destination branding. The interaction between these concepts are known as the positioning – image – branding (PIB) approach (Morrison, 2013). Destination positioning is the way a destination makes itself different from competing destinations and destination branding is the identity that is given to a destination. A destination's brand can also be referred to as its competitive identity (Morrison, 2013). Destination branding is a marketing strategy that support, identify, differentiate and communicate the unique features of a destination and aims to strengthen the emotional connection that visitors have with that destination. This is done to create and sustain a positive destination image amongst visitors. It also impacts on decisions for future destination positioning (Martins, 2015). In general, destination branding creates a series of quality images of a destination that visitors should desire before consumption resulting in positive word-of-mouth after consumption (Manhas et al., 2016).

An aspect of destination image and branding where there seem to be a scarcity in research involves the relationship between destination development and its brand image.

A definition that best describe destination development refers to “the systematic use of scientific and technical knowledge to meet specific objectives or requirements.” (Business Dictionary, 2018). This refers to the three-step system that may be used to develop a destination: firstly, establish the tourism resources available at the destination; secondly, identify the type of visitors to attract; and thirdly, find ways to reach these visitors to meet specific requirements (Clarke & Godfrey, 2000). Developers and marketers should ensure that destination brand image is well-thought-out during these three steps. During step one destination image should be determined followed by the identification of a destination brand image that will match the type of tourist that the destination wishes to attract. Finally, step three involves finding the best way to use destination brand image to satisfy visitors whilst generating positive word-of-mouth and revisits (Manhas et al., 2016). Furthermore, to develop a successful destination image brand, the destination’s infrastructure and tourism facilities should be developed and improved. Moreover, investment and workforce development, crucial for destination development, further supports destination image. Therefore, marketers and developers should promote their destinations to create an image that attracts visitors. When a variety of information sources are used to advertise a destination it ultimately leads to a positively shaped destination image (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

### **Destination South Africa**

This theoretical foundation of destination image, branding and positioning provides the perfect backdrop for examining the image that destination South Africa is striving towards as well as its main international source markets and competitors. This type of information could enlighten destination marketing organisations (DMOs), such as South African Tourism (SAT), and provide them with reasons why international visitors have a certain image of South Africa and how the potential gaps between established and perceived image of South Africa can be overcome. The public entity, Brand South Africa, is commissioned by the South African government to project a positive image of the country both continentally and internationally. Their main purpose is to encourage local and foreign investment, tourism and trade through the promotion of Brand South Africa (Brand South Africa Trust, 2018). Their idea of “Nation Brand” is based on the concept that the reputation of a nation is constructed on six elements – investment, governance, people, culture, tourism and exports. This is known as the Nation Brand Hexagon (Brand South Africa Trust, 2018). They have developed the catchphrase ‘South Africa, Inspiring New Ways’ that refers to the people of South Africa and how citizens, businesses, universities, civil society and government institutions can improve the country’s global attractiveness and competitiveness (Brand South Africa Trust, 2018). Hence, the reasoning behind their brand strategy for South Africa that destination branding is a collective national effort that will make South Africa globally admired.

South African Tourism (SAT), the tourism marketing division of the South African government, has the task to promote South Africa both domestically and internationally. Their marketing strategy is to promote South Africa as a year-round tourist destination. Like Brand South Africa, they aim to establish an image of the country that signifies the people of South Africa when stating: ‘. . . . you will not only visit the country but meet her people and her places’ (South African Tourism, 2018). Their focus is to move away from South Africa’s traditional set of attributes (wildlife, heritage, culture and adventure) towards creating an emotional connection with visitors by showcasing our nation’s way of life where visitors can engage with South Africans on a personal level (South African Tourism, 2018). Looking from an international perspective, three of South Africa’s major tourist destinations include Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg. Each of these cities have successfully established their own unique brand image.

Cape Town is known for its scenic beauty, celebrity beaches, Table Mountain, whale-watching, world-class shopping, nightlife, food, wine as well as its laid-back atmosphere. Durban positions itself as a world city and caters for those with fun and sun on their minds. Its known as South Africa's sunshine city that has something for the entire family including golden beaches and some of the best surfing spots in the world. Johannesburg is branded as the 'City of Gold' and it is said that South Africa's 'pulsating heartbeat' can be felt in Johannesburg. It is known as a city with endless opportunities for shopping, entertainment, freedom tours and dining out (South Africa, 2018). These cities play a critical role in shaping the fate of the South Africa and the Nation Brand. There is a dynamic interrelationship between the global image, brand and positioning of a city and that of Nation Brand. The global image, brand and positioning of the South African Nation Brand is directly influenced by the dynamics of Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg (All Africa, 2018). Research done by Brand South Africa found that the reputation, visibility and successes of Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg directly impacts on the profile and reputation of the South African Nation Brand (All Africa, 2018).

### **South Africa's main source markets**

An important aspect in the formation of a country's image and brand is to know where the greater part of its international market comes from as well as its competing markets. South Africa receives international visitor arrivals from all regions in the world but have managed to identify source markets in some of these regions. Visitor arrivals from Asia is predominantly driven by China despite for their arrivals that declined by 16.3%. The top three markets from Africa includes Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Mozambique. The main purpose for their visit were to visit friends and relatives (VFR) or to shop. Their visits had large economic impact on road transport and the retail sector. Unfortunately not much was spend in the traditional tourism sectors (South African Tourism, 2018).

Central and South America continues to grow with increased interest from Argentina and Brazil (South African Tourism, 2018). Visitors from Brazil perceive South Africa as an attractive leisure destination. Their visits increased from 71% in 2014 to 78% in 2017 (South African Tourism, 2018). Looking at the overall number of inbound visitors per region, 2017 statistics show that the majority originated from Africa (74.8%) followed by Europe (13.8%), North America (4.6%) and Asia (3.3%) (South African Market Insights, 2017). The nature of the visits from Africa are to visit friends and relatives (VFR). Europe, North America and Asia predominantly visit South Africa for holiday and leisure purposes (South African Tourism, 2018). Most of their money is spend on shopping, food and drinks (South African Tourism, 2018). A majority of this income is generated by Europe (R8.5 billion) followed by Africa (R8.1 billion). Activities that these visitors partake in whilst in South Africa range from shopping (Africa), eating out (Europe, Asia and North America). During the third quarter of 2017, Gauteng, Limpopo and Mpumalanga were the top three provincial destinations among international visitors. The main source markets for these provinces included the USA, UK and Germany (South African Tourism, 2017). In terms of South Africa's main source markets, Brazil, India and China show the biggest increase in arrivals.

### **South Africa's competitive markets**

Visitors are attracted to many places in the world, and many countries compete with South Africa as they offer similar experiences such as beach, nature, wildlife, history, culture and adventure (Came, 2015). The impact of globalisation on tourism resulted in visitors being more knowledgeable having a better awareness of destinations around the world. The competition to attract visitors have become severe considering the number of places on hand for travel. African countries in direct competition with South Africa include Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda (East Africa). They are growing at a



fast rate and are becoming attractive tourist destinations (Schoeman, 2016). On an international front, South Africa benchmarks its tourism performance against Australia and Thailand (South African Tourism, 2017). It is essential that South Africa becomes more competitive. Competitiveness is important because of three main reasons: visitors are becoming more educated and informed; visitor needs, and trends are changing; and more destinations compete for the same markets (Saayman, 2015). Although factors such as proximity and price affect which destinations visitors visit, competitors are mainly determined by what experiences are on offer.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The population of this study was international visitors to South Africa that have completed their journey. The questionnaires were completed in the departure terminal of Johannesburg's Oliver Tambo International Airport. Different time slots and different days of the week were used for completion of the questionnaires. Departing passengers were selected randomly in the international departure lounge. The respondents are all international visitors who have already used South Africa's tourism products and were able to base their answers, responses and perceptions on their recent visit to South Africa.

The respondents were chosen randomly, giving each member of the population an equal chance of being chosen, in the international departure terminal of Oliver Tambo International Airport. Only foreigners, not permanently residing in South Africa, were questioned by means of a personal interview. The questionnaire covered a wide range of variables and contained both open-ended and closed-ended questions that were mainly divided into the following categories: the profile of the visitor, air transportation, accommodation, attractions and overall perception of South Africa. The questionnaire's validity, consistency and clarity of questions were tested by providing a sample questionnaire to a reputable local travel management company for their inputs and recommendations after which the necessary changes were made to eliminate possible problem areas and any ambiguity in the questionnaire. A total of 305 usable questionnaires were completed. Data was cleaned, captured and analysed using Microsoft Excel and R. Relationships between categorical variables are explored using chi-square analysis.

## **RESULTS DISCUSSIONS**

Of the 305 questionnaires completed, 279 respondents indicated their gender, with 65.4% being male. The median age of the respondent was 35. When asked to indicate whether they had visited SA before, only a small minority (n=27, 8.9%) were visiting South Africa for the first time, leaving n=277 who had visited South Africa before. It was thus evident that most respondents had visited SA before, and further that most were frequent previous visitors: Those who had visited South Africa six or more times constituted 40.3% of the entire sample. On the basis of this, the sample was split into three groups for certain later analyses, viz. those who were entirely new to South Africa (those who had never been to SA before), those who had been introduced to South Africa (those who had been to SA one to five times previously), and those who were very familiar with South Africa (those who had been to SA six or more times previously). When asked to indicate their reasons for visiting South Africa, the respondents mostly indicated that they had come for business (n=135, 44.3%) or holidays (n=94, 30.8%), with a further 44 (14.4%) indicating that the purpose was to visit family and/or friends (Table 1). The 42 "other" responses were specified as shown in Table 2, where it was evident that educational reasons (school, university, other training) also presented as a common reason for visiting the country. Emerging markets such as medical tourism, wildlife tourism and religious tourism were also indicated (Table 2).

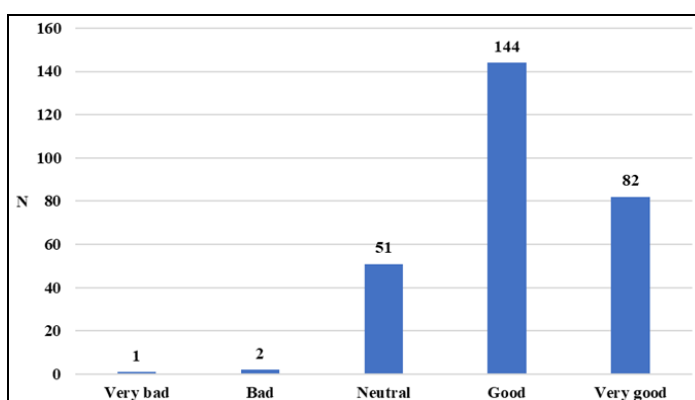
**Table 1.** Reasons for visiting South Africa

Reason for visiting SA	N	%
Business	135	44.26%
Holiday	94	30.82%
Visit	44	14.43%
Complimentary	1	0.33%
Sport	4	1.31%
Other	42	13.77%

**Table 2.** Other reasons for visiting South Africa

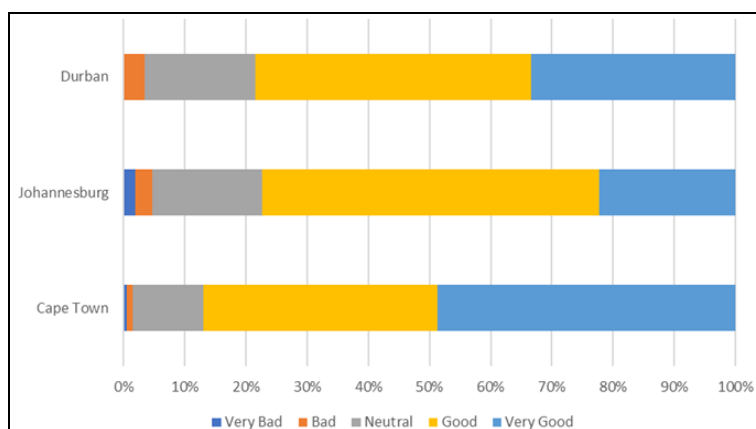
Other reason for visiting SA	N	%
Education & Training	17	40.48%
Conferences & Workshops	7	16.67%
Transit	4	9.52%
Work related	3	7.14%
Church	2	4.76%
Bird watching	2	4.76%
Overnight stay	1	2.38%
Official missions	1	2.38%
DJ/Entertainment	1	2.38%
Medical	1	2.38%
<i>Unspecified</i>	3	7.14%

In order to understand whether these reasons for visiting SA had any bearing on the image and/or perception of SA as a tourist destination, these various motives were grouped as being either formal (e.g., business, education), recreational (e.g., holiday, visit), or mixed (both formal and informal—since sport was not clear as being an athlete or a spectator, it was also included in mixed). When asked to summarise their feelings about South Africa as a tourist venue by giving a rating of the overall attractiveness of South Africa, the rating was again overwhelmingly positive, with four fifths (80.7%) giving a positive rating, and almost a fifth (18.2%) giving a neutral rating (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Attribute rating: Overall attractiveness

The respondents were also asked to rate three of South Africa's major tourist destinations namely Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Durban. These are the three cities in South Africa which draw the largest number of international visitors annually. Between April 2017 and March 2018, the following international passenger arrival statistics were recorded at OR Tambo, King Shaka and Cape Town International Airports: 4 578 180 at OR Tambo; 1 110 454 at Cape Town International; and 167 514 at King Shaka (Airports Company South Africa, 2018). A comparison of the three cities reveals that Cape Town has by far the best perception amongst the respondents, Durban in KwaZulu-Natal, also a seaside city was rated second best whilst Johannesburg in Gauteng received the lowest rating. Cape Town is one of the top destinations in the world and has received various awards over the last few years. The most recent include Cape Town being named one of the top 10 surf cities in the world by Surfer as well as the number one city in Africa for business tourism events by the International Congress and Convention Association (Cape Town

Tourism, 2018). It should be kept in mind, though, that the overall rating for each city was overwhelmingly positive which also correlates with the results in figure 1 where the destination overall received a favourable rating. Cape Town received very positive ratings, with 86.9% of the respondents giving it a positive rating. By contrast, Johannesburg was rated less favourably, although most of its ratings were still positive, with 77.4%, more than three quarters of the respondents, giving it a positive rating, and only 4.8% of the respondents giving it a negative rating. Durban had very similar ratings to Johannesburg, with 78.5% of respondents giving it a positive rating, and 3.5% a negative rating, although the proportion of “Very good” responses was considerably higher for Durban (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** City ratings and tourist venues

The research furthermore aimed to determine the price sensitivity of respondents and whether the weaker Rand, which in general makes South Africa a more affordable destination to most visitors, had any direct influence on the respondent’s choice to visit SA. Respondents were thus asked to indicate whether price was a main consideration in choosing South Africa as a destination. Results reflect that a third (n =100; 33.9%) of respondents indicated that price was the main consideration for visiting SA. All respondents were then asked to indicate whether they had considered an alternative destination for their visit to SA. Only 233 respondents answered this question, but of those, almost two thirds (64.8%, but only 49.5% of the total sample) indicated that they had not considered an alternative destination. It is thus clear that South Africa should guard against becoming an expensive destination as the cost of air transportation, in many instances the largest expense to the visitor, is already contributing towards the travel budget of the visitor. Those respondents who did indicate that they had considered an alternative destination were then asked to identify the destinations which they had considered as alternatives to South Africa. These could, thus, in a sense be “competitors” to SA in the tourist market. The list of alternative destinations from all over the world were quite eclectic but from the results it was clear that the alternative destinations that were considered that received the highest score were mostly located in and/or around South Africa such as Dubai (9.3%), Mauritius (5.4%), Namibia (4.7%), and Zimbabwe (3.9%).

Despite many respondents having considered alternative destinations to South Africa, the encouraging news is that when asked whether they would visit SA again results indicated an overwhelming positive response where only seven respondents said no, and one respondent said maybe. Some of the reasons listed for not visiting South Africa again by the 7 respondents were:

- I prefer to get to know other places

- One trip only
- The embassy official is so unfriendly in giving visas
- Three times enough
- Unsafe, corrupt and extremely crime prone
- Unsafe, no law and order, theft & corruption is rampant

Sadly, three of the reasons listed above could be considered “preventable” in that they were extrinsic motivators related to the country. Crime and corruption was mentioned by two of these respondents, which is disheartening. The response about the embassy officials especially should be concerning. It may be reasoned that only one respondent out of 305 put off by unfriendly staff is a very small percentage, until one remembers that firstly, these were embassy staff, precisely the people who meant to be ambassadors for the country (and who can thus be expected to be held to a higher standard than others). Also, it should be remembered that unhappy customers tell more people about their negative experiences than happy customers. This could be referred to as negative word-of-mouth (NWOM). It is defined as interactive communication between customers whereby they depreciate a certain product, service or organisation (Richins, 1984). This is a well-researched occurrence that has been the focus of various studies across the globe. The American Express Survey reported that a person tells nine people about good experiences, but 16 people about poor experiences (American Express, 2012). According to the Sydney Entrepreneur Centre, an unhappy customer tells 11 others about their negative experiences (Customer Thermometer, 2017). The White House Office of Consumer Affairs found that a dissatisfied customer would tell between 9 – 15 people about their experience. Moreover, 13% of disgruntled customers will tell more than 20 people (Customer Thermometer, 2017). Thus, the impact of this handful of unhappy visitors, then, should not be discounted. Word-of-mouth recommendations are a primary source in forming destination image which further emphasises the importance of offering visitors with satisfying experiences (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

Those who indicated that they would be willing to visit SA again were asked to indicate what the main reason would be for visiting the country once more, choosing from business, holiday, or visiting family and friends. Of those, 206 chose only one of the three options, 45 chose any two, and 11 chose all three. From this it can be seen that SA remains popular as a tourist destination, with more than half (51.5%) of the respondents choosing this as at least one of their main reasons for visiting SA again (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Main reasons for visiting South Africa again

<b>Reason</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Business	110	36.1%
Holiday	157	51.5%
Family & Friends	62	20.3%

Thirty-seven of the respondents who indicated that they would visit SA again also specified the reason why they would return in an open-ended response. Some listed multiple reasons, so that a total of forty-four responses were captured. Education was a major reason, together with those already listed—the importance of the education sector, not only for building up South African society through the upskilling of its populace, but also as a means of bringing in revenue from foreign students, should not be underestimated. During the period January to March 2018 approximately 5% of international visitors entering South Africa come here for education, training and study purposes. The bulk of these visitors either travel to the Free State (9.3%), KwaZulu-Natal (7.8%) or Western Cape (5.9%) South African Tourism, 2018).

These students spend about US\$6 000 on tuition and contribute large amounts to the South African economy as they eat out more often than South African students and travels extensively within South Africa (Cassidy, 2017). They mainly come from the United States, Norway, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark and the Netherlands (Cassidy, 2017). An estimated AU\$32 billion was generated by foreign students to the Australian economy in 2017. Globally, the United States the majority (19%) of foreign students followed by the United Kingdom (10%), Australia and France (6%), Germany (5%) and Russia, Canada and Japan (3%) (University World News, 2018) (Table 4).

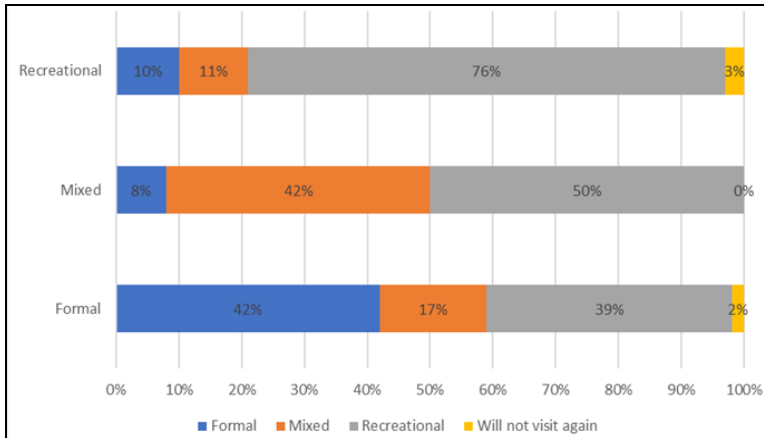
**Table 4.** Written reasons for visiting South Africa again

<b>Reason to visit again</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Education	15	34.1%
Friendly people	3	6.8%
Proximity to neighbouring countries	3	6.8%
Shopping	3	6.8%
Wonderful cultural experience	3	6.8%
Business	2	4.5%
Church	2	4.5%
Medical	2	4.5%
Natural beauty	2	4.5%
Am African Blood	1	2.3%
As consultant	1	2.3%
Bird watching	1	2.3%
Conference	1	2.3%
Fun	1	2.3%
Holiday	1	2.3%
Nice place, beautiful country	1	2.3%
Regional meetings	1	2.3%
Who knows	1	2.3%

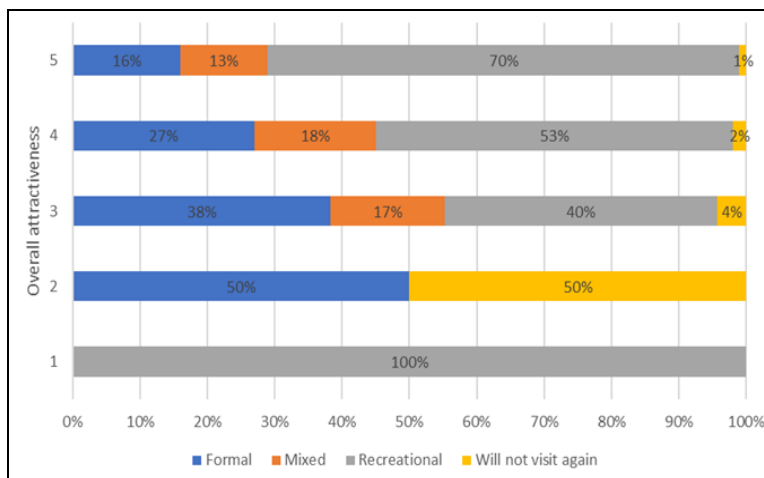
Again, the reasons for a return visit were grouped as either formal, recreational, or mixed. Figure 3 shows that there were definite differences in the respondents' willingness to visit SA again ( $\chi^2=46.38$ ,  $df=6$ ,  $p<0.0001$ ). Interestingly, almost two fifths of respondents who indicated that they had come to SA on this trip for formal reasons (such as business), indicated that they would visit SA again for recreational reasons. This clearly indicates that SA had made a positive impression on them and that they would like to explore the country recreationally (Figure 3). It was also evident that respondent's rating of the overall attractiveness of SA as a tourist destination influenced their willingness to visit SA again ( $\chi^2=35.55$ ,  $df=12$ ,  $p=0.0004$ ), with generally those giving the country a better overall rating, being more willing to visit it as a recreational destination in the future (Figure 4).

## CONCLUSION

Given the fact that it is predicted that growth in emerging market and developing economies is projected to plateau in 2018 the economic impact of tourism becomes even more important to a destination such as South Africa (The World Bank, 2018). From the results it is clear that visitors to SA return to visit the destination again. Reasons listed to visit SA again varied from business, formal, recreation and a combination thereof. Some visitors even returned more than five times and still gives the destination as positive rating for its unique attractiveness, especially Cape Town. Fortunately, other cities such as Durban and Johannesburg were included to rate the overall attractiveness of SA as positive with a large majority indicating that they will visit South Africa again.



**Figure 3.** Reason for visit compared to willingness to visit again



**Figure 4.** Reason for visit compared to willingness to visit again

Those respondents who visited South Africa for business was the largest majority that furthermore indicated that they would visit SA again for recreational reasons. This clearly indicates that SA had made a positive impression on them and that they would like to explore the country recreationally. Visiting SA for educational reasons was indicated to be important as well as a return visit for recreational purposes. It is suggested that the main tourist cities in SA namely Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban enhance the marketing of their products offered as a drawcards to SA. To satisfy off the beaten track visitors, emerging markets within SA such as medical tourism, wildlife tourism and religious tourism could also be further investigated to establish the sustainability thereof as a market segment. It is also suggested that the custom tourism products be developed for international visitors entering South Africa to come here for education, training and study purposes as this market may further enhance the growth of the local tourism market in SA. Lastle, SA should ultimately stive the ensure customer satisfaction in a safe and secure environment for visitors to enjoy the best that the destination can offer.

Considering the overall positive rating the SA received as a destination, the marketing slogan ‘Alive with possibility’ seems to be exactly right, even today.

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## **CAPITALIZING OF THE GEOTOURISM POTENTIAL AND ITS IMPACT ON RELIEF. CASE STUDY: COZIA MASSIF, ROMANIA**

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**Abstract:** In the mountain area, the relief is the element of the geographical environment with the highest degree of tourist attractiveness, due to the variety and spectacularity of its forms and processes. The geotourism potential of the Cozia Massif is due to the evolution of the relief, conditioned by lithology, tectonics and climate. The cumulative action of these factors has led to the development of distinct landforms with a high favorability for geotourism activity: sharp edges and picks, impressive slopes, arcades, towers. In order to ensure the access of the tourists to the main areas of interest, a network of marked and unmarked tourist routes and trails has been identified, along with the forest roads. The present study has as main objective the analysis of the geotourism potential and infrastructure as well as highlighting the impact of tourism activities on the present-day morphodynamics. In this respect, the geotourism map of the Cozia Massif was drawn-up, representative profiles were made for each touristic route in order to characterize them in detail and to quantify the quantity of eroded material within the tourist routes, the hydric erosion being the main geomorphologic process intensified by the tourism activity. The results of the study showed that the Cozia Massif has a high geotourism potential and the accessibility to the main geomorphosites is appropriate, being represented by a network of roads and paths with a total length of 162 km. The tourist activities involve the increase of the anthropic pressure on the environment and the land

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degradation by increasing the erosion. The erosion processes are accelerated on the tourist trails along the slope, in the case of forest roads and exploitation roads affected in particular by logging, with a value of 41.15 t/ha/year.

**Key words:** geotourism, geotourism map, geomorphosites, tourist trails, degradation, erosion, Cozia Massif, Southern Carpathians, Romania

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## INTRODUCTION

The mountain regions have become increasingly vulnerable to changes imposed by human activities (Kucsicsa, 2013). Although the anthropic influence on the environment has been felt since ancient times, the man's morphogenetic role has been emphasized since the 20th century (Comănescu & Nedelea 2010), including in the mountain area.

This paper aims to evaluate the impact of tourism activities on the mountain environment, especially on the relief. Tourism can have positive effects for local communities, but at the same time it can be a stress factor for the environment (Kucsicsa, 2013) when the activities carried out are not efficiently and correctly managed. This context justifies the necessity of controlling the tourism exploitation of natural resources and the implementation of durable forms of tourism that minimize the human pressure on the mountain environment (Neches & Erdeli, 2015). Concerns about this issue are numerous, with extensive literature that deals both theoretically and practically with the impact of tourism activities on the environment. Meinecke (1928) and Bates (1935) carried out the first studies about the ecological impact of mountain trips, following which, after 1960, an increased interest in this research direction would be given (Cole, 2004).

In the beginning of the 1970s, the concept of recreational ecology was implemented within a project of the Recreation Ecology Research Group (Gheorghe, 2009). Bayfield (1971, 1973, 1979) analyzes the effect of tourist activities on mountain regions in England and Scotland, applying the first methods of monitoring and restoring degraded spaces. A significant contribution in the field of ecological tourism, Liddle M. had through both individual (1997) and collaborative studies (Liddle & Grieg-Smith, 1975; Liddle & Kay, 1987). Frissell and Duncan (1965), emphasizes the idea that any type of tourism activity has negative effects on the natural space in which it is taking place. Ecology studies have also expanded spatially and temporarily, addressing new methods of analysis (Cole, 1978; Marion, Cole, 1996) and modeling of impact factors (Cole 1987, 1992), as well as new monitoring and management strategies (Cole, 1987, 1989, 2002; Hammitt & Cole, 1998; Leung & Marion, 2000; Marion & Leung, 2001; Cater & Cater, 2015; Cobbinah, 2015; Cobbinah et al., 2017; Khoshtaria & Chachava, 2017). In Romania, the impact of tourism activities on the environment has not been the subject of numerous studies, being briefly dealt with in larger works. Most researches focused on ecological tourism in protected areas, such as Rodnei Mountains National Park, Retezat National Park, Bucegi Natural Park, and the areas in Făgăraș and Trascău Mountains (Gheorghe, 2009; Cocean, 2011; Kucsicsa, 2013).

Unlike ecological tourism that is exclusively carried out in protected natural areas (IUCN, 1996) and which can be defined as a “sustainable form of tourism that promotes conservation, has a low environmental impact and benefits local communities” (Fennel, 2003), the geotourism takes into consideration the landforms and the geological structures of a territory and can be practiced even in anthropically modified areas (Newsome & Dowling, 2010). The term “geotourism” is relatively new, representing a form of sustainable tourism, based on the exploitation of the geological and

geomorphological elements of an area (Stoffelen & Vanneste, 2015). The first definition was given by Hose 1995, which considers geotourism to be a “way of promoting, preserving and understanding the geological heritage, the tourist going beyond the simple aesthetic appreciation of the landscape”. Stueve et al. 2002 states that geotourism aims to “strengthen the distinctive geographic character of a place”, along with “preserving its natural and cultural heritage while also bringing benefits to the local population.” Geotourism is a type of balanced tourism that aims at promoting geodiversity and preserving it by educating the tourist in the sense of awareness and appreciation of the geoheritage (Punmanee, 2008; Newsome & Dowling, 2010; Dowling, 2013).

Therefore, geotourism exploits geosites and geomorphosites without creating imbalances in their level, aiming at preserving and protecting the environmental elements. On the other hand, the geotourism is also carried out for educational purposes, supporting the tourists' understanding of the functioning mechanism of the geographic environment and the awareness of the need to mitigate the human pressure put on it (Comănescu & Nedelea, 2010; Yolal, 2012; Dowling, 2015; Necheş & Erdeli, 2015).

For the practice of geotourism, the ways of transmitting geological and geomorphologic information to tourists is very important, in this regard the geotourism products, including the geotourism map, are essential. The geotourism map comprises the relief processes and forms, the geomorphological landscape, as well as the links established between the relief and the tourism activities (Comănescu et al., 2013). The purpose of this map is to promote the geoheritage of a territory, and to ensure the understanding of the scientific information and the tourists' awareness of the complexity of the landscape (Carton et al., 2005; Castaldini et al., 2005; Piacentini et al., 2011; Miccadei et al., 2013). Therefore, the geotourism map is an essential method of tourist information, presenting the main geosites and geomorphosites, the belvedere points, the tourist infrastructure, as well as an educational one, offering the possibility for the tourists to understand the processes and forms related to geology and relief, to be aware that the landscape is in a constant evolution, being the result of a set of internal and external factors (Bissig, 2008). The objective of the map is to highlight the value of the natural elements, their vulnerability, and the need to adopt conservation and protection measures (Miccadei et al., 2013). The first geotourism maps were made by researchers at the University of Modena for two complex geological and geomorphological regions of Italy (Abruzzo and Emilia Romagna) (Castaldini et al., 2008; 2009; 2011). In Romania, the specialists from the University of Oradea, who analyzed different spa resorts in Bihor County, showed interest in carrying out geotourism studies (Ilieş et al., 2011). At the University of Bucharest there have been developed studies that deal with mountain areas with high tourist potential, such as the Bucegi Mountains (Comănescu & Nedelea 2012; Comănescu et al., 2013; Comănescu & Nedelea, 2015).

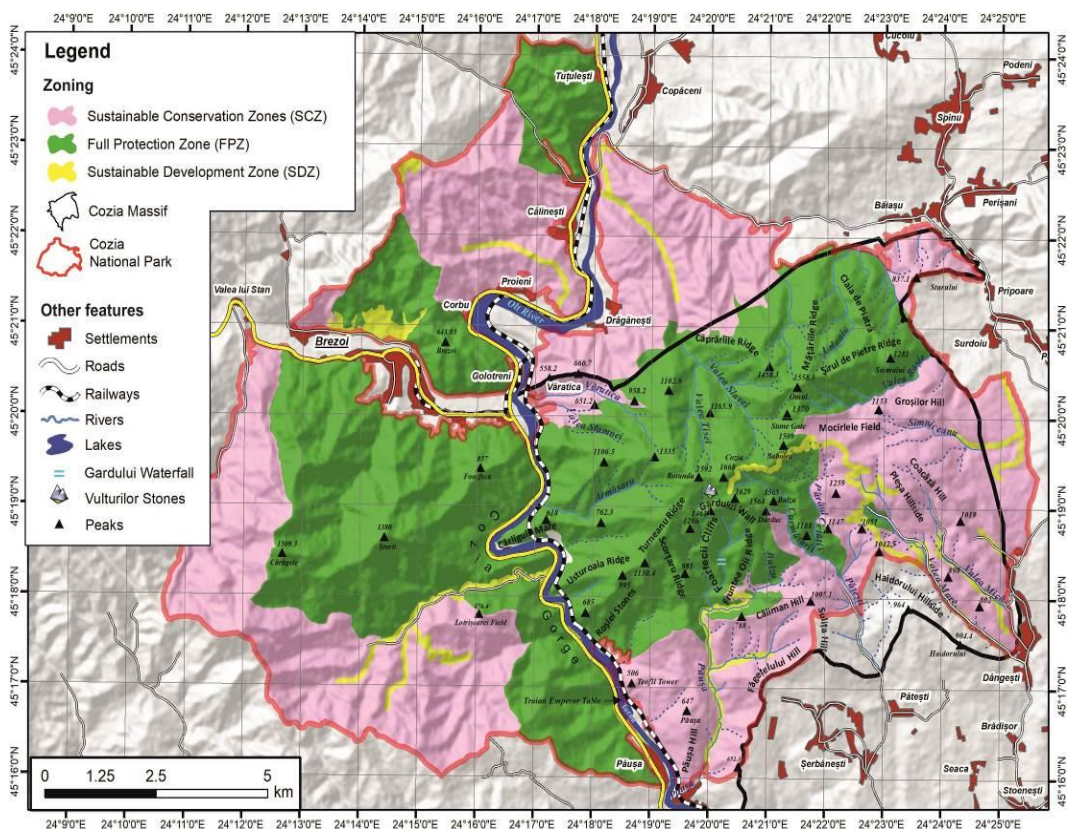
The study area is a protected area in the II IUCN category- National Park and has a rich geomorphological heritage. In this context, the project aims to promote valuable geosites and geomorphosites with high tourist potential, as well to demonstrate the need to implement sustainable forms of tourism – geotourism.

## **STUDY AREA**

The Cozia Massif is part of the Southern Carpathians, being a south-western subdivision of the Făgăraş Mountains. The Cozia National Park comprises almost the entire massif, but also the eastern part of the Căpăţâni Mountains and the Doabra-Călineşti sector of the Lotrului Mountains. Its purpose is to „protect the floral, faunistic, hydrological, geological, geomorphological, palaeontological, speologic, pedological or other elements which are representative of the Carpathian area, while offering the

possibility to make visits for scientific, educational, recreational and tourist purposes” (according to the Government Emergency Ordinance No. 57/2007 approved with amendments and completions by Law No. 49/2011, as subsequently amended and supplemented). The Cozia Massif is also included in two sites of community and avifaunistic importance, ROSC10046 Cozia and ROSPA0025 Cozia-Buila Vânturarița, which are part of the Natura 2000 network. The internal zoning of PN Cozia highlights three categories of areas: the full protection area- FPZ, the sustainable conservation area - SCZ and the sustainable development area - SDZ (PN Cozia Management Plan, 2015).

The full protection area covers approximately half of the Cozia massif area (49.4%) and contains the most valuable elements of the natural heritage. In this area can be identified the main geomorphosites: Cozia or Ciuha Mare Peak (1668 m), Stone Gate Archway, Bulzu Peak (1665 m), Durduc Peak or Crucea Ciobanului Peak (1568 m), Gardului Precipitous, Foarfecii Edge, Fruntea Oii Edge, Gardului Waterfall, Roșiei Stones, Șoimului Peak (1281 m), Vulturilor Stones. The durable conservation area is a buffer area located outside the full protection area. It occupies 34.73% of the study area and includes the geomorphosite Teofil's Tower. The Geomorphosites Traian's Table and Cozia Gorges are included in the sustainable development area, which is 6.34% of the massif (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Zoning of National Cozia Park and 2000 Natura sites: ROSC10046 Cozia and ROSPA0025 Cozia – Buila – Vânturarița

From the geological point of view, the Cozia Massif presents two main units: the central-northern one represented by the crystalline horst made up of gneiss (known as

“Cozia gneiss”) and paragneiss, and the southern one made up of the cretaceous and paleogenic sediment (sandstones, conglomerates, breccia, marl, sands) (Popescu & Călin, 1987; Hann, 1990). The relief forms with the highest degree of tourist attractiveness are in the crystalline unity of Cozia, being the result of intense disaggregation, which was favored by the mineralogical composition of the augen gneiss, by the presence of the highly tectonized and cracked rocks and by the changing of climate over time. Thus, the tectonic, structural and climatic features have shaped the ruinous relief of the massif, where sharp peaks and sharp edges, slopes made of rocks, towers, stone gates, arches and caves can be identified. All of these, by their scientific value, are geomorphosites and have high tourist potential.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to highlight the geotourism potential and the infrastructure in the Cozia Massif, a geotourism map was made, profiles were made along the tourist routes in order to characterize them in detail and the geodiversity index of the massif was calculated.

The geotourism map includes scientific information (geological and geomorphological), but especially tourist information (transport infrastructure, accommodation, belvedere points etc.). A first step in drawing-up the map is to create a database of information derived from different cartographic materials. Relief-related aspects (elevations, level curves, processes and relief forms, etc.) were obtained using the topographic map at 1: 25,000 scale and 1: 5,000 topographic plans. The lithological and tectonic elements were extracted from the geological map of Romania at a scale of 1: 50,000 and the land coverage data were obtained from the orthophotoplans in 2012.

The tourist information were obtained both from the topographic and orthophotoplans materials, as well as from databases such as OSM (Open Street Map) and Google Maps. These data are also updated and supplemented with field information. The geomorphological and geological informations included in the geotourism map are presented in a simple and educational manner, being accessible to all categories of tourists and providing a good understanding of the landscape features. The tourist interest data refers to the total number of tourist routes and roads of different types that provide access to the tourist attractions, the places that are starting points for hiking, accommodation and shelter places (chalets and refuges), camps and stops, belvedere and tourist information points.

For the analysis of the infrastructure, the method of the profiles made along the tourist routes was used, with the purpose of highlighting the characteristics and the degree of their difficulty. The profiles provide information about morphometry (segment declivity, mean slope, level difference, total length of the route, total length of the climbing and descending sectors), land use, high risk sectors, total walking time and average time, link points with other routes and the belvedere points. Therefore, the profiles contain a large amount of information and offer the possibility of their qualitative correlation, being an optimal way of highlighting the relations between relief and tourism.

For the realisation of the profiles, the Global Mapper software was used, which processed the data derived from the numerical model of terrains obtained by vectorizing the level curves from the topographic map 1: 25,000, as well as the data recorded by a GPS device (Garmin 64st) during field trip. Subsequently, the profile was completed and finished in the Corel Draw graphics program. The geodiversity index was calculated based on all abiotic elements in the massif area using the following formula (Melelli 2017 with adaptations):  $Gd = Dg + Dgm + Dh + Dp + TRI + TPI / S$ , where Gd = geodiversity, Dg= geological diversity, Dgm = geomorphological diversity, Dh = hydrological diversity, Dp = pedological diversity, TRI = land roughness index, TPI = the index of the relief forms generated in DEM, (Melelli 2017 with adaptations) and S =

area (Km<sup>2</sup>). The assessment of the geodiversity involves determining the number of different physical elements per unit area. Thus, the Dissolve operation was performed to merge the vector geometry with the same attribute, then the Intersect function was used to split the vectors by the grid divided into 1 km<sup>2</sup> areas. Subsequently, the centroid points were extracted for each element, using the Feature to Point function, and finally the sum of them was determined. To the total number of points in each km<sup>2</sup> was added the average roughness index (TRI) obtained for each square of the grid by applying the ArcGis Zonal Statistic function. The impact of tourism activities on current morphodynamics has been assessed by quantifying the volume of eroded material on the surface of the roads and tourist routes of the massif using the USLE calculation formula (Ovrei et al., 2018). In a first step, the amount of soil eroded in the whole area was estimated without taking into account the degree of compaction of the tourist paths favoring the occurrence of accelerated hydric erosion.

The USLE erosion pattern ( $A = R * K * LS * C * P$ ), where A is the yearly eroded soil average, it is expressed in t.ha/year and includes parameters in the analysis that are related to: relief – length and slope (LS factor), soil - soil erodibility (K factor) (table 1) obtained according to texture of the soil types, climate - rain erosivity (R factor) established according to Moțoc 1975, vegetation - land use (C factor) which recorded values depending on the classes of coverage, erosion control - measures to combat and limit soil degradation (P factor), which in the present study received the value 1.

**Table 1.** Soil erosion factor (K) and vegetation coverage (C) - value classes

<b>K FACTOR</b>	
Soil type	Score
Cambisols	0.8
Spodosols	0.9
Luvisols	0.9
Alluvisols	0.1
<b>C FACTOR</b>	
Coverage clases	Score
Forest	0.2
Meadow	0.3
Rockery	0.02

The second stage of the study determined the intensity of soil erosion along the tourist paths, taking into account the impact of mountain hiking on the soil cover, which differs according to the texture of the soil type. Soils with the silt texture have a low erosion potential compared to soils the texture of which is fine.

Therefore, the following erodibility classes have been established: clay-sandy cambisols - 0.9, clay-sandy clayey cambisoils -0.95, clay-argile cambisols- 1; clay-sandy spodosols - 1; clay-sandy luvisols - 1; alluvial soils - 0.2. Next step was to turn roads and paths into a polygon through the buffer operation, taking into account their importance. Subsequently, from the vector format, the transport infrastructure was converted into raster format, the pixel value ranging from 0.1 to 0.2 depending on the texture of the soil type. Pixels that do not correspond to roads and paths received the value 0. Finally, the computation between the transport infrastructure and the erosion was achieved, resulting the soil erosion at the massif level, taking into account the impact of tourism activities. This result was intersected with the polyline transport network to calculate the length of the route segments with different erosion intensities.

The synthesis of the methodological approach includes information about the data sources needed for the study and presents the main data processing functions (Figure 2).

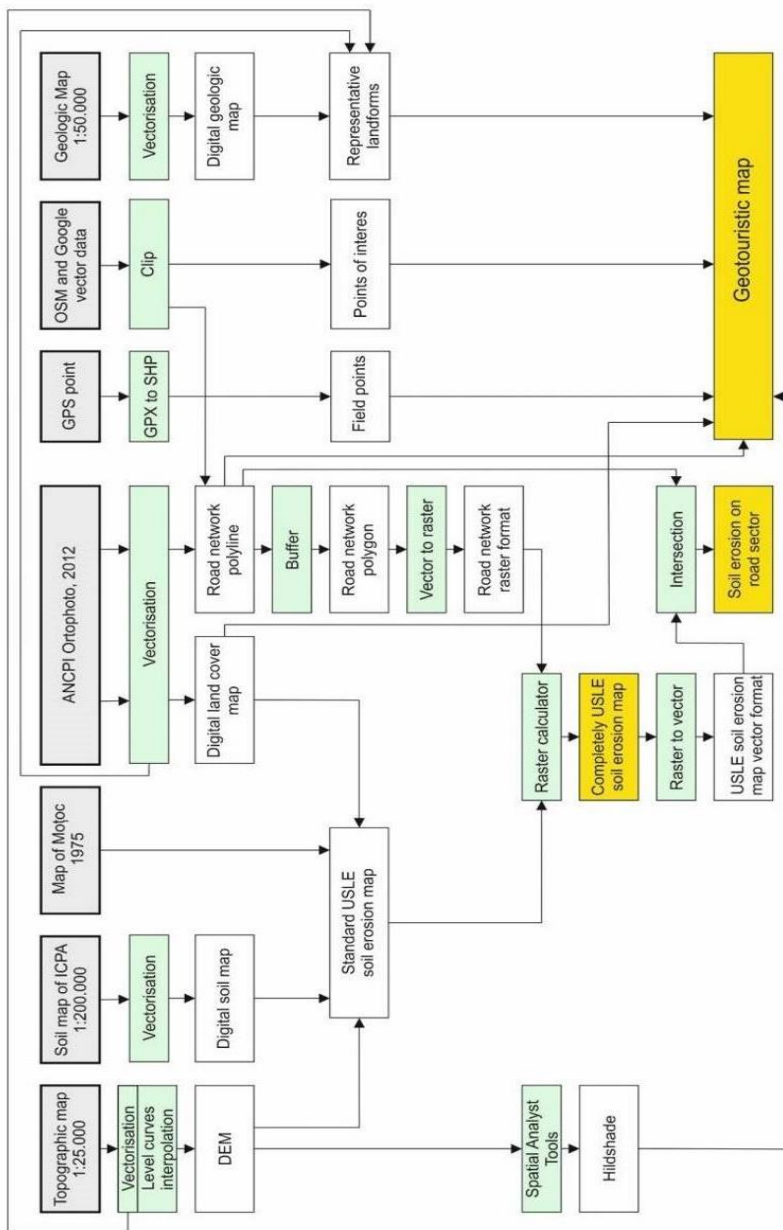













Figure 2. The methodological approach

## RESULTS

The geotourism map of the massif (Figure 3) highlights the most attractive landforms from the tourist point of view, as well as the infrastructure that ensures their touristic capitalisation. The most important geomorphosites of the Cozia Massif are the ruinous relief forms, which were born due to intense disintegration of the augen gneiss and differential erosion. The presence of numerous faults and cracks in the Cozia crystalline “horst”, as well as climatic conditions manifested in time, contributed to their

shaping, giving them the appearance of towers, chimneys, arches, ledges, gutters, sharp edges, slopes made of rocks. The structure and tectonics of the massif also influenced the characteristics of the valleys, which have stepped profiles with thresholds on which waterfalls are formed. Thus, the main geomorphosites in the massif are: Stone Gate Archway, Foarfecii Cracks, Teofil's Tower, Vulturilor Stones, Roşiei Stones, Bulzului Cleft Rock, Gardului Precipitous, Fruntea Oii Edge, Cozia Peak, Durduc Peak, Traian's Table, Gardului Waterfall to which is added Cozia Gorges (Table 2, Figure 3).

**Table 2.** The marked tourist routes and acces roads of the Cozia Massif

Route	Mark	Departure point	Arrival point	Intermediate points	Level difference (m)	Length (km)	Walking time	Linked routes
1		Păușa Village	Cozia Chalet	Poiana Stânişoarei	1273	9,33	6h	2, 3, 4, 9, 10
2		Turnu Railway Station	Cozia Chalet	Turneanu Sheepfold	1263	7,54	5h 30'	1, 3, 5, 7
3		Căciulata Village	Poiana Stânişoarei	Saddle La Troiță	420	3,86	2h 30'	1, 2, 9, 10, 11
4		Jiblea Village	Cozia Chalet	Făgeţelului Interfluves, Vlădeşei Edge	1293	10,36	7h	1
5		Lotru –Vărătica Railway station	Cozia Peak – Cozia Chalet	Urzicii Edge	1368	8	5h 30'	2, 7
6		Pripoare Village	Cozia Chalet	Omul Peak	1053	9,51	5h	8
7		Turnu Railway Station	Cozia Chalet	Roşiei Stones	1263	6	4h 30'	2, 5
8		Cozia Chalet	Stone Gate Archway	Saddle Mocirlele	150		2h	6
9		Poiana Stânişoarei	Sălbaticul Mountains	-	50	0,85	1h	1, 3, 13
10		Poiana Stânişoarei	Gardului Waterfall	Gardului Valley	200	0,53	1h	1, 3, 13
11		Poiana Bivolari	Turnu Railway Station	Teofil's Tower	190	1,72	1h 30'	3, 2
12	Unmarked path	Surdoiu Village	Şoimului Precipitous	Roşiei Gorges	100	1,5	1h	6 (Pripoare Village)
13	Unmarked forest road	Păușa Village	Poiana Stânişoarei	Păușa Valley	420	7	3h	1, 3, 9, 10 (Poiana Stânişoarei)
14	County Road 703N	Dângeşti Village	Cozia Chalet	Plaiul Mocirlele	1073	14	accessible to cars	6, 8
15	Unmarked forest road	Păteşti Village	Lacului Stones	Păteşti Valley	240	2,5	1h 30'	4



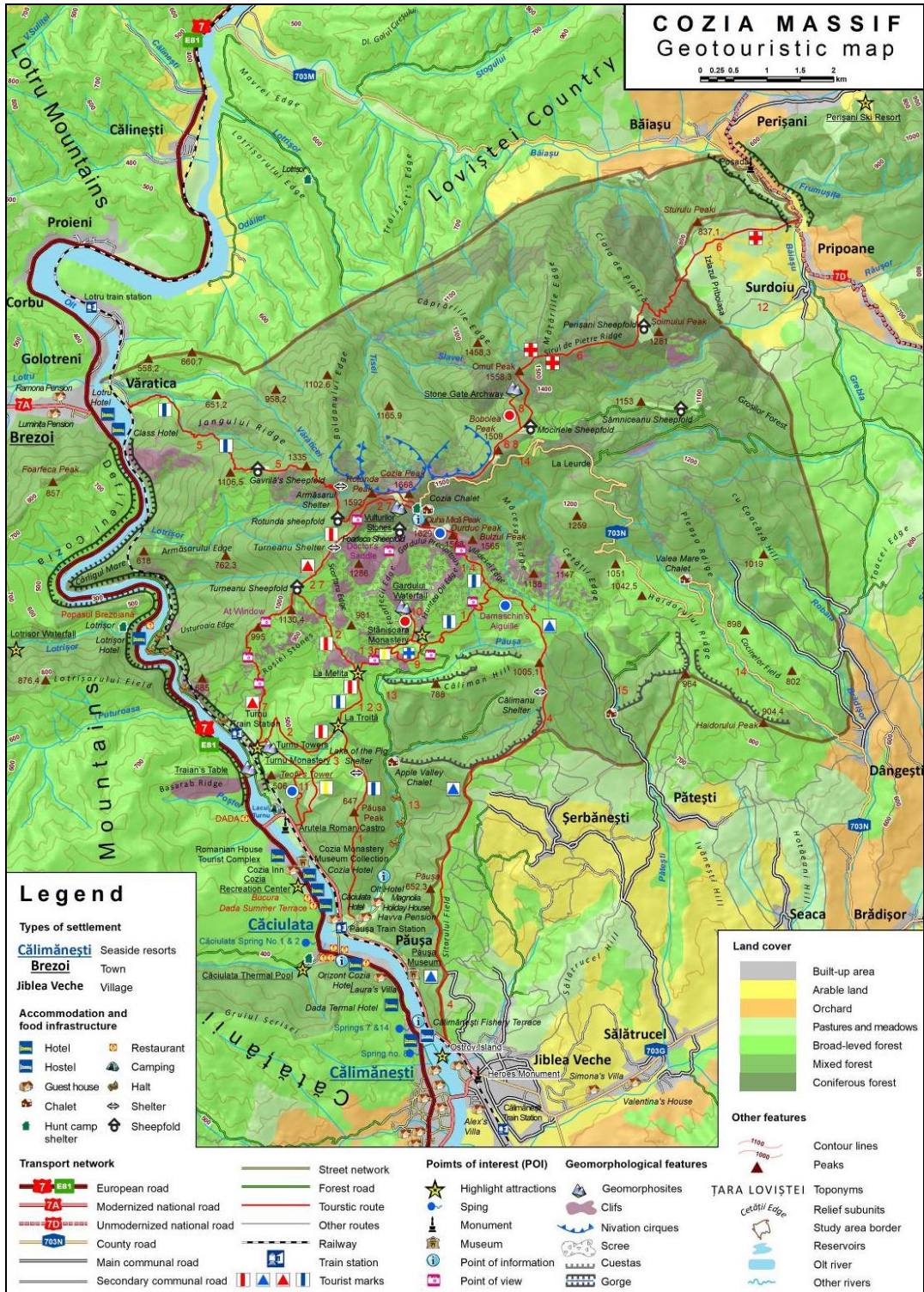


Figure 3. The geotourism map of Cozia Massif



The Cozia or Ciuha Mare Peak has the highest altitude of the massif (1668 m) and represents the point from which the main peaks (Turneanu Edge, Vlădesei Edge, Rotunda Edge, Mocirlele Interfluves) are radially spread. This is the most important belvedere point, giving the possibility to observe, to the north, the slopes that delineate the valley of Tisa, further the crest of the Făgăraș Mountains, to the south, the Jiblea - Călimănești Depression and the Olt Valley, to the south-west, the impressive steep from the source of Seci Valley, to the west, the Cozia Gorges and the Buila - Vânturarița Massif, and to the east, the Frunți, Ghițu, Iezer - Păpușa massifs. The Durduc Peak, also called the Crucea Ciobanului, is a “rocky platform” situated at an altitude of 1568 m and is part of the southern steep of Cozia. It is an important belvedere point, offering a wide opening to the source of Bulzului Valley and the Bulzu Peak (E), Scocul Ursului (S), Gardului Valley and Foarfecii Edge (V), Oltului Gorges and the Năruțu Mountain (SV). The Teofil’s Tower is an erosion outlier at an altitude of 519 m, situated in the west of the massif, near the anthropic lake of Turnu. It marks the boundary of Cozia Gorges, forming along with Mount Năruțu a tectonic alignment that makes the transition to the Subcarpathian region. Traian’s Table is an extension of Teofil Edge in the Olt river bed, being individualized as a small island in the north of the Turnu lake. It presents important historical valences, being considered the stopping place of Emperor Traian’s troops on their way to conquering Dacia. Foarfecii Edge are a sharp, rock-like, steep ridge that separates Seacă Valley from Gardului Valley. It is located in the central part of the massif, at an altitude of 1461m, and forms, along with the Durduc Peak, Bulzu Peak and Gardului Precipitous, the impressive southern steep of Cozia. Vulturilor Stones are located in the central part of the massif, near the Cozia Peak and represent a rocky steep in the form of “buttresses” which descends from Turneanu Edge and descends south-west to Seacă Valley. They are crossed by three tourist routes, the route 5 in the upper part and the routes 2 and 7 that overlap in the lower half of them and constitute a major belvedere point towards the Oltului Gorges. Roșiei Stones are peaks of rocks, abruptly located on the southern slope of Roșiei Edge. Gardului Precipitous are located in the central part of the massif, at the source of Gardului Valley, and represent a steep of about 500 m, which together with Fruntea Oii Edge and Colții Foarfecii form the “Cozia stone fortress”.

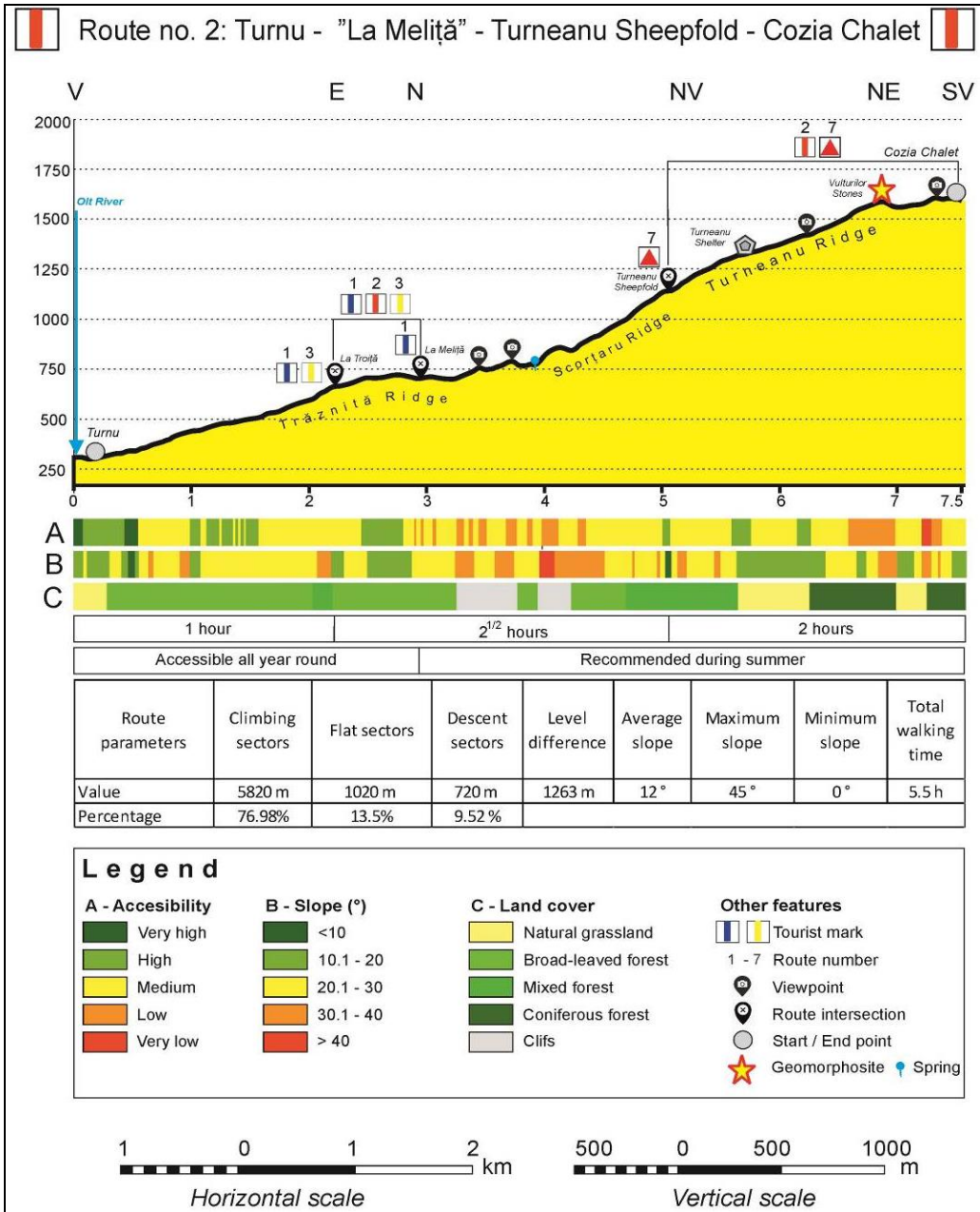
Fruntea Oii Edge is a sharp crest lying at an altitude of 1312 m, with steep and rocky slopes descending to the Gardului Valley. Stone Gate Archway is about 1370m, on a narrow edge that heads westward from the Poarta de Piatră peak (1483 m). It looks like a gneiss arcade similar to the shape of taffons or as an open portal in the rock wall. Bulzului Cleft Rock is located in the central part of the massif, at an altitude of 1560m, in the north of Vlădesei edge, delimiting the springs of the Curmăturii Valley and the Bulz. It is a tower-like peak with steep slopes, on which the disintegration of the gneiss has formed true “stone faces”. Together with Ciuha Mare, Ciuha Mică and Durduc Peak forms the central crest of Cozia. Gardului Waterfall is located on the river of the same name, at an altitude of 745m. It has developed on a 20-meter high threshold, which marks the maximum narrowing point of the Gardului Valley, and presents vertical slopes made of rock, that belong to the edges of Foarfecii Edge and Fruntea Oii Edge.

Cozia Gorges is a narrow valley, with steep slopes, situated between the Căpățâni Mountains to the east and the Cozia Massif to the west, over a 16 km length. The anthropic interventions for the development of the transport infrastructure have caused the instability of the slopes, which are strongly affected by rock-fall, but also the design and implementation of specific structural works (the location of protection nets, concrete and stone walls, gabions). The tourist infrastructure is presented on the geotourism map (Figure 3) includes the transport routes that provide the access of the tourists inside the massif, the accommodation units and the shelters. The Cozia Massif benefits from a transport network with a length of approximately 200 km, of which 55.8 km are the

surrounding roads and railways that provide access for tourists to the localities at the base of the massif. Thus, we can exemplify the European road E81, which connects, through Olt Gorges, between the Extra-Carpathian and Intra-Carpathian regions and the national road 7A, which is the belt road of Călimănești, both crossing the western side of the massif. These are added the 703M county road that enters along the Băiașu valley in the north of the study area, the non-modernized road 7D from the NE to the massif connecting the villages Perișani - Pripoare - Surdoiu, county roads 703G and 703N connecting the localities Jiblea Veche and Dângești, in the south of the massif and the forest road between the localities Surdoiu and Dângești, on its eastern side, which closes the ring road network surrounding the Cozia Massif. The railway transport is represented by the 201 highway which follows the western slope of Cozia and connects with the main tourist routes of the massif (routes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 11) (Table 2).

The transport infrastructure inside the massif is represented by marked and unmarked forest roads and tourist paths, which presents a concentric unfolding, starting from the access points situated at the base of the massif towards the central part of it, where Cozia Chalet is located (1573 m). The most important access route for tourists to the altitude of 1600m is the county road 703N (route 14), which was initially arranged as a forest road. It starts from Dângești, along the Valea Mare River, it is accessible all year round and connects with routes 6 and 8. Other forest roads that allow access by car to certain tourist attractions or which connect with important tourist routes are: the forest road on the Păușa Valley (route 13) which reaches the Stânișoara Monastery, and from here you can go on hiking routes 1 and 4 towards the chalet and the Cozia Peak, on route 9 to the Singuraticul Peak or Route 10 to the Gardului Waterfall; the forest road on the Sâmniceanu valley crossing the Cozia road (the county road 703N) near Plaiul Mocirlele, at the point called "La Leurde". This forest road, although impractical for cars, provides a relatively easy accessibility to the center of the massif. The most used hiking trails are the marked tourist trails, which are found along the main valleys or the interfluvial peaks, most of them starting from Olt Gorges, on the western side of the massif. An exception is the route 6 which has the starting point near the village of Pripoare, located at the NE of the massif. The marked paths are the most frequented because they allow access to the main geomorphosites, which justifies the need to inform the tourists about their degree of difficulty, but also about other elements of interest.

The Government Decision no. 77/2003 includes the tourist routes that require a walking time of 4-8 hours and a sustained physical effort on certain sectors in the category of medium difficulty routes, and those with a difference in the level between 500 - 1500 m are included in the high difficulty category. Therefore, the difficulty of the tourist trails should be determined on the basis of all route parameters and not only from the topographic parameters. In this regard, two representative routes were chosen for analysis, the route 2 departing from the Turnu Monastery (most frequented by tourists) and the route 5 starting from Văratica, both going towards Cozia Chalet and Cozia Peak (Table 2, Figure 3). The touristic route number 2 (Figure 4) is marked with red lane and runs predominantly on the western slope of the Cozia Massif, along Trăznita Edge, then crosses the cliffs of Scorțaru Edge, and finally follows Turneanu Edge to the Cozia Chalet. This itinerary presents many elements of geotourism interest: the rocky scraps of Scorțaru Edge and the Vulturilor Stones Geomorphosite; the relief forms shaped in cretaceous sandstone and the contact between the sedimentary rocks and the Cozia gneiss which can be seen on the right side of the route immediately after "La Meliță" Saddle, areas covered by scree detached from the steep slopes of Muchia Scorțaru; the springs at the origin of the Turnu River that are necessary for the water supply of the tourists; the protected endemic species, such as the Cozia rosehip; the belvedere points and the connection with other tourist routes.



**Figure 4.** The profile of touristic route 2 (Turnu Monastery – Cozia Chalet)

A first belvedere point is situated in the proximity of “La Meliță” Saddle, where the Păușa Valley and the Foarfecii Edge, the Ciuha Mică, Durduc and Bulzu peaks can be observed. Scortaru Edge offers the opportunity to observe the Olt Gorges, the slopes and the rock peaks of Roșiei Edge and the “Rocky battresses of Roșii Stones” (Popescu & Călin, 1987). Turneanu Edge is an important point of view to the slopes of Scortaru Edge from the Turnu Valley, to the Olt Gorges, but it offers the possibility of observing the

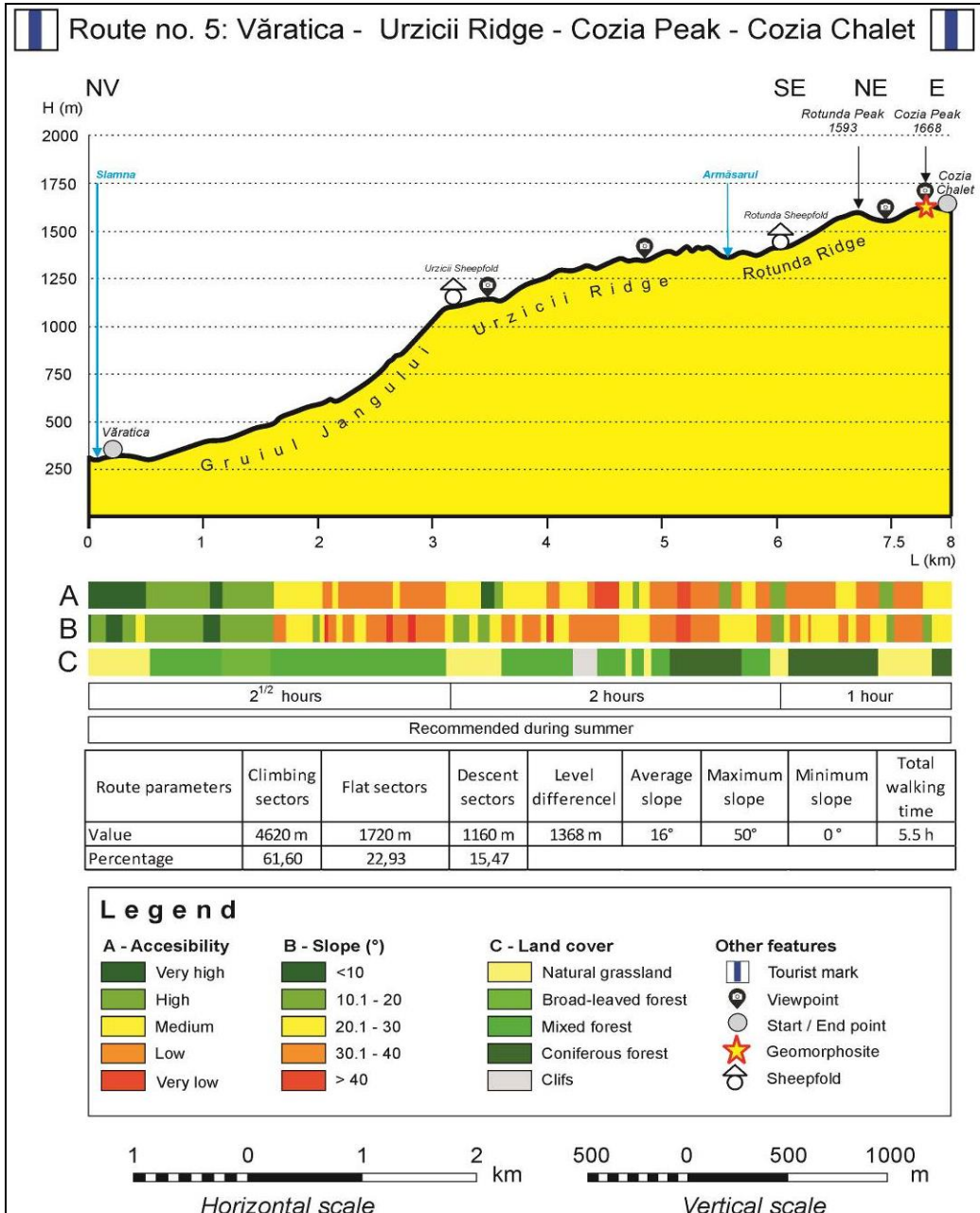
Cozia massif as a whole. Therefore, it is possible to highlight the “Cozia rock fortress” consisting of the Durduc, slopes, the Vulturilor Stones, the Foarfecii Edge, the Ciuha Mică Peak and the steep slopes of Valea Seacă. Also, from this point we can see the the Cozia Peak. An interesting perspective on the massif and the surrounding area also is also offered by the belvedere point situated in the proximity of the chalet, from where you can see Poiana Stânișoara, Paușa Valley, the Olt Gorges, Jiblea-Călimănești Depression and Buila-Vânturarița Massif. From the point of view of the topographic accessibility, the touristic route 2 presents medium accessibility on 57.08% of the length and reduced accessibility on 17.52% of the length. The sectors with high and very high accessibility represent 15.60% and 8.33% respectively of the total length. Very low accessibility was recorded for 1.47% of the route. Hardly accessible sectors overlap with the high slopes areas, rocks and scree of the Trăsnită Edge, Scorțaru Edge and Vulturilor Stones. The sector with the highest degree of accessibility difficulty is located in the last part of the route, where the trail crosses more rocky slopes and rocks and a narrow opening of a “horn” on the left side of the route. According to the topographic accessibility, route 2 presents a medium level of difficulty, but also taking into account the Government Decision no. 77/2003, it can be said that it presents a medium to high degree of difficulty.

The touristic route number 5 (Figure 5) is marked with blue strip and first follows the left slope of the Slamnei valley, parallel to Gruiu Jangului Edge, then climbs along the Urzicii Edge, crosses the Rotunda Hill and continues towards the Cozia peak (1668 m). This route impresses by the rocks sector of the Urzica Edge called “țurțudane” (Popescu & Călin, 1987). These are isolated peaks that rise above the sharp Urzica Edge. The route also allows for the observation of the rocky slopes of the Jang, the rocky slopes of the Slamna Valley, the gnais slopes at the origin of the Armăsarul Valley, the slopes of the Slamna Valley detached from the Jang precipitous, and the slopes of the most important geomorphosite of the massif, the Cozia peak. The itinerary offers numerous points of view on the main forms of relief of the massif, as well as interesting perspectives on the neighbouring geographic area. The belvedere point near Urzica Sheepfold makes it possible to observe the Armăsarul hill that descends to the Olt’s Big Meander, the Olt Gorges, the Lotru Mountains and the western hills of the Făgăraș Mountains. The narrow edge of Urzica, with many sharp peaks, offers great landscapes towards the heights of the Buila-Vânturarița, Căpățâni and Lotru Mountains, but also to the Claia cu Brazi peak (1525 m). In the valley between the Rotunda (1593 m) and Cozia (1668 m) peaks there is a a rock peak which is a belvedere point towards the Tisa River and the Lovișteea Depression (in the northern part), but also to the central part of the massif, where we have the landscape of Foarfecii Edge (towards the south).

The steep and deforested slope of the Cozia Peak is the most important point of the massif, which offers large perspectives on the mountainous area. Route 5 shows a medium accessibility on 42.18% of the total length, high accessibility and very high accessibility on 30.76% and on 10.01% respectively, and low accessibility and very low on 16.58% and 0.47% respectively. A first sector that requires sustained physical effort and presents a high level of difficulty in terms of topographical accessibility is the left slope of the Slamnei Valley, running parallel to Gruiu Jangului Edge, where the tourist trail crosses a narrow interfluvial space, with rocks and then it climbs the very steep north-eastern slope of the massif, detached from Depresiunea Lovișteea through the Brezoi Fault. Portions of the route with very low accessibility have been identified on the sharp slope of Urzica in the space of the (“țurțudanele Urzicii”) steep and rocky peaks.

Also, sectors crossing structural thresholds of the rock edges have a very high degree of difficulty, making it advisable to bypass them at the base of the slopes when weather conditions are not favourable. These areas can be identified in the upper basin of

the Armăsarul Valley, on the slopes of Rotundă Edge, which climbs to the tip of the same name, on the heavily inclined slopes of the Cozia Peak. According to the topographic accessibility and the time required for the route, it falls within the category of medium-difficulty touristic routes. However, the high level difference and the sectors with very high risk of injury (structural thresholds, sharp edges, rocky slopes), which require adequate training and equipment, determine its inclusion in the high-difficulty routes class.



**Figure 5.** The profile of touristic route 5 (Văratica – Cozia Chalet)



Another aspect that came to our attention was the identification of the most accessible areas of the massif, based on the density of the roads and paths. The highest values of the transport infrastructure density ( $>5 \text{ km/km}^2$ ) were recorded for 5.51% of the area and include the eastern part of the massif. This area presents topographical conditions which are favourable to the access ways (hilly relief with low slopes, low energy and fragmentation), where the county road 704N, the Sâmniceanu forest road and a large number of unmarked paths can be identified. Areas with high density values (4 - 5  $\text{km/km}^2$ , namely 3.68%) can also be seen in the western part of the massif, the Olt Valley being the starting point for most of the tourist trails (2, 7 – the Turnu depressionary basin; 3-11 – Poiana Bivolari to the south of Teofil’s Tower), to which are added the national road 7A, the thoroughfare 201 and the Turnu - Cârlișul Mare forest road. At the opposite end, there is the northern, very steep and hardly accessible slope of the Cozia Massif, which has density values below 1  $\text{km/km}^2$  (33.71%). The central high part of the massif is the point of convergence of the tourist trails, but due to the very high relief and rock steepness, the density of the trails is reduced, ranging from 1-2  $\text{km/km}^2$  (29.15%) (Figure 6).

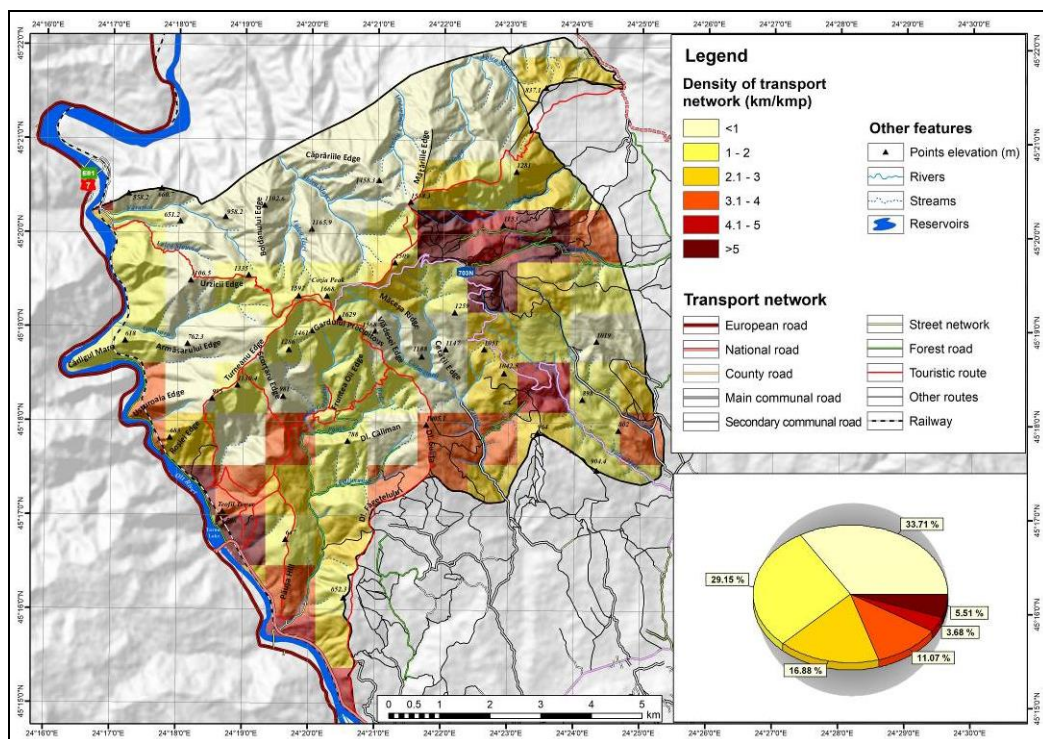


Figure 6. The density of transport network

The accommodation infrastructure is very developed in the resorts at the base of the massif (Călimănești, Căciulata), where tourists benefit from accommodation in hotels, hostels, campsites and food and recreational facilities. In the central part of the massif there is only one chalet (the Cozia chalet), which is also the intersection point of most tourist routes (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 14). It is situated at 1573 m altitude, in the extended valley between the Cozia (1668 m) and Ciuha Mică (1629 m) peaks. In the proximity, there is the Cozia forest canton. The chalet can be reached in maximum 6 hours on all the above-mentioned tourist routes, but also on the county road 703N which allows access by car.

From here you can go for short hikes of about 2 hours, to the main geomorphosites of the massif: the Cozia Peak on route 5, the Durduc Peak and Bulzului Cleft Rock on route 1, Vulturilor Stones on route 2, Stone Gate Archway on routes 6 and 8, the Omu Peak on the route 6. Towards the the massif's outskirts there are the Valea Mărului chalets on Păușa Valley (trail 13) and Valea Mare (route 14). Also, the massif has other shelters such as: Turneanu Shelter and Sheepfold (trails 2, 7), Armăsarul Shelter, Gavrilă Sheepfold and Rotunda Sheepfold (trail 5), Lacul Porcului Shelter (trail 1), Călimanu Shelter (trail 4), Mocirlele and Perișani Sheepfold (trail 6).

The high geotourism potential of the Cozia Massif is highlighted by the value of the geodiversity index that records high values (30-35) for 30.27% of the massive area. The high geodiversity is predominantly located in the central sector of the studied area with a varied relief with specific landforms. Very high values (35.01 - 40) of the geodiversity were obtained for only 2.55% of the area and characterize the sectors with varied lithological composition (5-7 different types of rocks), intensely strongly fissured (2.80 km/km<sup>2</sup> and 1.61 km/km<sup>2</sup> respectively), with complex geomorphology (7-8 different types of relief and geomorphological processes), highly fragmented (6.14 km/km<sup>2</sup> and 5.34 km/km<sup>2</sup> respectively) with varied pedology (3 different soil types) and high TRI (4.16) and TPI (8-10) indices (Figure 7).

In this context, the suitable management of the tourism activities in order to limit the anthropic pressure on the environment and the degradation of the land by surface erosion processes has become a necessity. Soil compaction due to tourism activities reduces its capacity to allow infiltration and storage of precipitation water, creating conditions which are favourable to the emergence of the accelerated water erosion. The results of the USLE analysis show the increase in the amount of eroded soil in accordance with the development of tourism activities. Although the differences are insignificant at the level of the entire study area (Figure 8), for the tourist trails the quantity of materials removed exceed the soil recovery rate, thus showing an intense erosion and a strong degradation of the tourist trails. Of the total of 2119.07 t/ha/yr, 41.15 t/ha/year are eroded from the transport infrastructure of the massif. Intensive erosion processes occupy 0.91% of the total surface of the roads and trails, namely 1.69 ha, removing 1.01 tonnes of material annually (Table 3, 4).

## DISCUSSION

The north-central part of the Cozia Massif has the highest geotourism potential due to the ruinous relief imposing the landscape and which impresses with massive and high-energy relief. This sector is located at an altitude of over 1,000 meters and overlaps with the Cozia augen gneiss, which, through disaggregation, gave rise to specific forms of relief, such as rock, horns, arches, edges and sharp rocky edges. The radial orientation of the interfluves and valleys has also imposed the direction of the tourist trails, which converge to the central part of the massif, where the Cozia peak and the Cozia Chalet are located. For example: Turneanu Edge (trail 7), Trăznită Edge-Școțaru Edge (trail 2), Vlădesei Edge - Sitarului Interfluves (trail 4), Gruiful Jangului - Urzica Edge (trail 5), Șirul de Pietre Interfluves- Mocirlele Interfluves (trail 6). The massif can be crossed in the SV-NE direction, combining routes 1, 2, 4 or 7 with route number 6, but also in the general N-S direction following trail 5, then trail 4. This type of hiking requires a stop at Cozia Chalet. Therefore, we cannot talk about a main ridge route, and it's necessary to achieve an itinerary that includes the main geomorphosites in the high sector of Cozia. We propose a route that includes the Cozia Peaks, Vulturilor Stones, Gardului Precipitous, Durduc Peak, Bulzului Rock Cleft, which offer numerous belvedere points to Foarfecii Edge, Fruntea Oii Edge and Cozia Gorges. This trail can be

dedicated to tourists who once arrived at the Cozia Chalet by car, they want to take a short 1-2 hour hike to the most important objectives of the massif. New tourist trails can also be opened in less accessible areas (Foarfecii Edge, Seacă Valley, Bulzului Valley and the origin of the Tisa River) for tourists who do not have a special training.

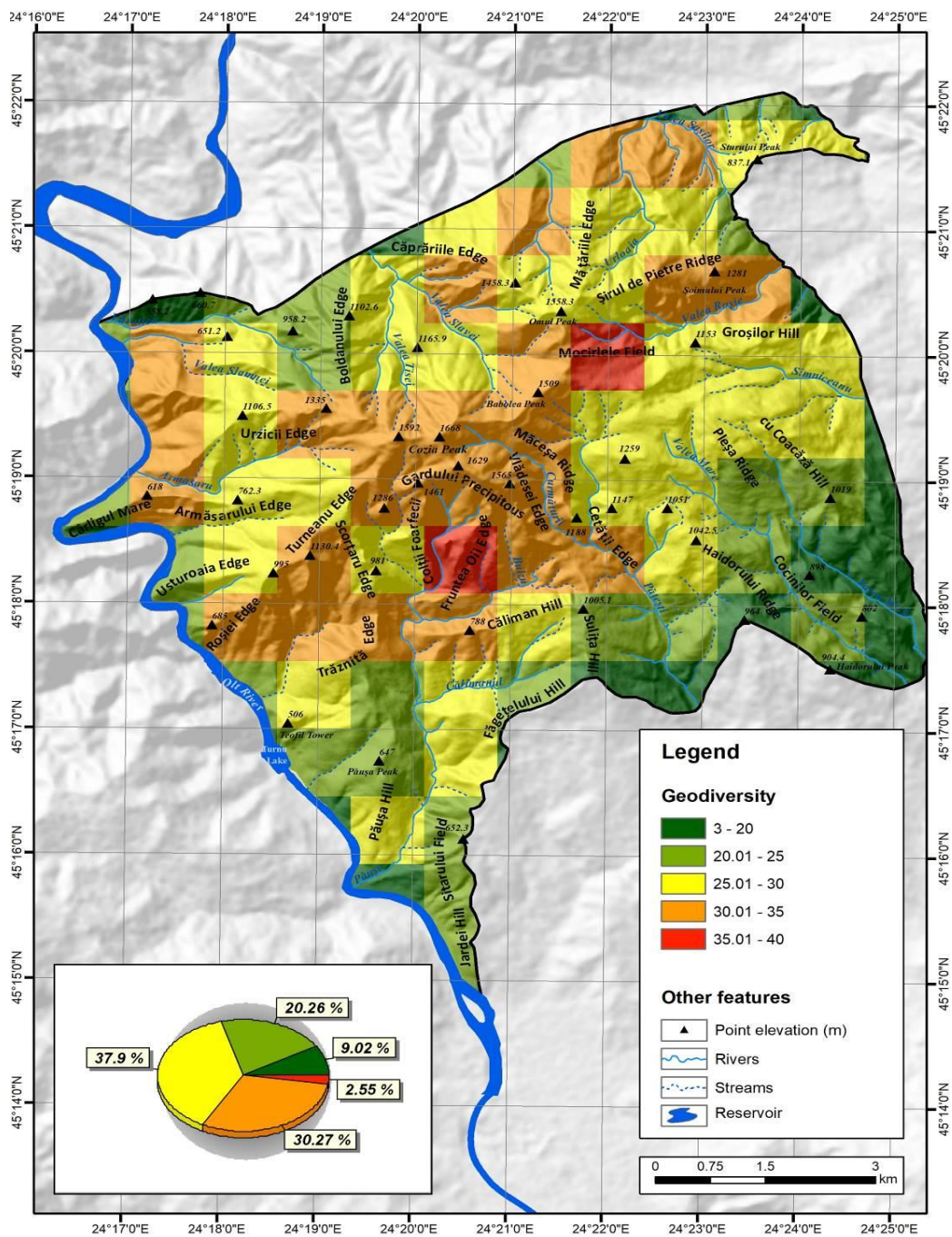


Figure 7. The geodiversity index

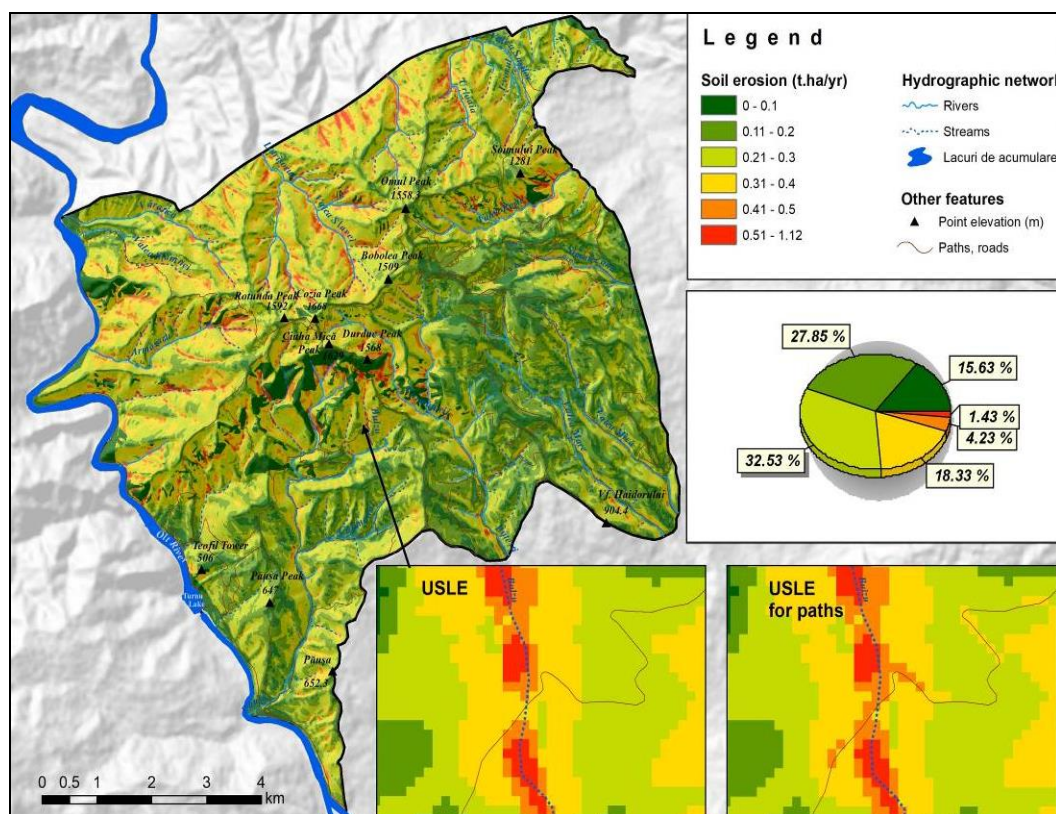


**Table 2.** The total yearly amount of eroded soil using USLE (Cozia Massif)

USLE (t.ha/yr)	Surface (ha)	Total (t/yr)	Percentage
< 0.1	1217.38	121.74	15.63
0.1 - 0.2	2169.52	433.90	27.85
0.2 - 0.3	2534.77	760.43	32.53
0.3 - 0.4	1428.27	571.31	18.33
0.4 - 0.5	329.46	164.73	4.23
0.5 - 1.1	111.61	66.97	1.43
Total	7791.01	2119.07	100

**Table 3.** The total yearly amount of eroded soil using USLE (roads and touristic routes)

USLE (t.ha/yr)	Surface (ha)	Total (t/yr)	Percentage
< 0.1	57.46	5.75	30.86
0.1 - 0.2	63.36	12.67	34.03
0.2 - 0.3	42.09	12.63	22.61
0.3 - 0.4	16.94	6.78	9.10
0.4 - 0.5	4.63	2.32	2.49
0.5 - 1.1	1.69	1.01	0.91
Total	186.17	41.15	100

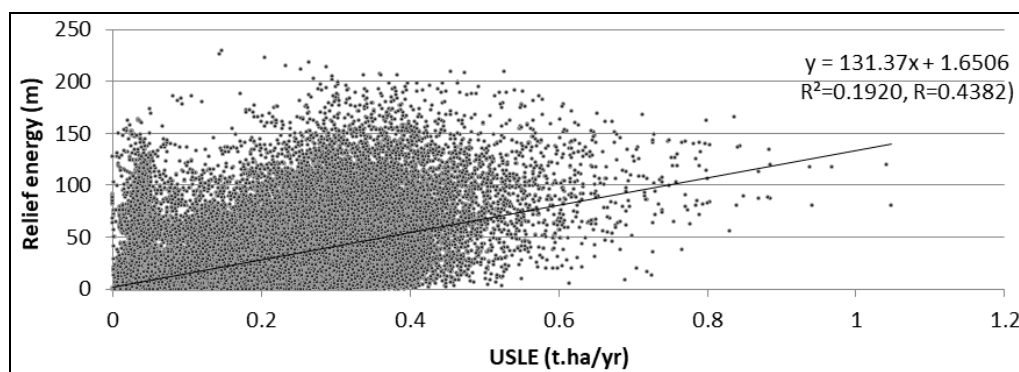


**Figure 8.** Soil erosion in Cozia Massif

The exploitation of the geotourism potential of the Cozia Massif must be carried out in accordance with the legal acts regarding the protected areas, in order to prevent

and limit the negative consequences on the environment. Practicing pedestrian or motorized tourism where the transport infrastructure allows access to cars, motorcycles or ATVs has negative effects on all the components of the environment, but especially on the soil and the vegetal cover. In some sectors, the impact of tourism activities is amplified by the transport of logs for the forest exploitation, which can destroy the paths or degrade the access roads. The tourist activities, regardless of their type, have a negative impact on the environment, and it is necessary to set acceptable impact thresholds. The intensity of the impact varies according to the type of use, the profile of the tourists, the characteristics of the environmental elements, the quality of the tourist facilities, the measures for prevention, control and improving the impact and depending on the season of use (Cole, 1981, 1987). The season in which the substrate is used for tourism purposes is an important factor because it can lead to a significant increase in the impact on the soil. In the rainy season or with moisture input from snow melting, it is over-saturated and becomes more vulnerable to degradation.

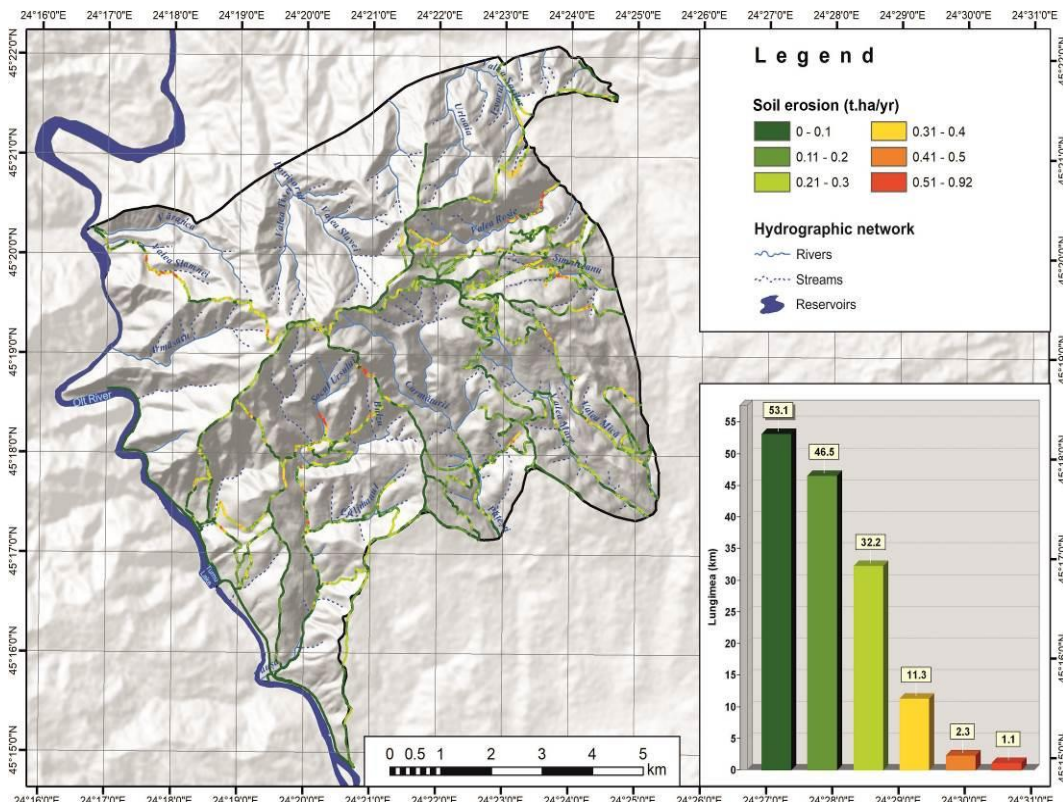
The topographic conditions in which the tourist routes are developed are important for the manifestation of the impact, so that the trails that are framed along the slope and not along the level curve favor the water channeling and the occurrence of accelerated erosion. In this context, the most affected are the fine-textured soils with low organic horizons and those that are poorly drained (Bayfield, 1973). The value of the correlation coefficient “R” (0.43) demonstrates the relationship established between the intensity of soil erosion and the relief energy (Figure 9).



**Figure 9.** The correlation between the intensity of soil erosion to the trails and relief energy

In figure 10 it can be observed that high erosion values are recorded on the trails crossing the central part of the massif, with high relief energy, but also the steep northern slope of Cozia. Large quantities of material are also eroded annually in the eastern part of the massif where there is a high density of forest and exploitation roads. The main tourist activity with consequences on the environment is the treading of the soil and vegetation by the tourists. This results in the uprooting and removal of the plants and hence the reduction of soil coverage with vegetation; the displacement of particles from the upper organic horizons of the soil; compaction and treading of the soil. Mountain pedestrian tourism degrades tourist paths by removing and transporting material particles from the soil's organic horizon protecting the lower horizons, or by reducing the resistance of the soil particles, making them easier to be detached and transported by erosive agents such as flowing water. The impact of hiking on the soil and vegetation can be major at local level (tourist trails, belvedere points, stopping spaces and camping sites) and reduced on a large scale (if we relate to the entire mountain massif). This is evidenced by the soil erosion

values obtained using the USLE formula, which demonstrates a higher erosion along the pathways, but an insignificant increase at the level of the whole study area (Figure 8).



**Figure 10.** The soil erosion calculated at the infrastructure level

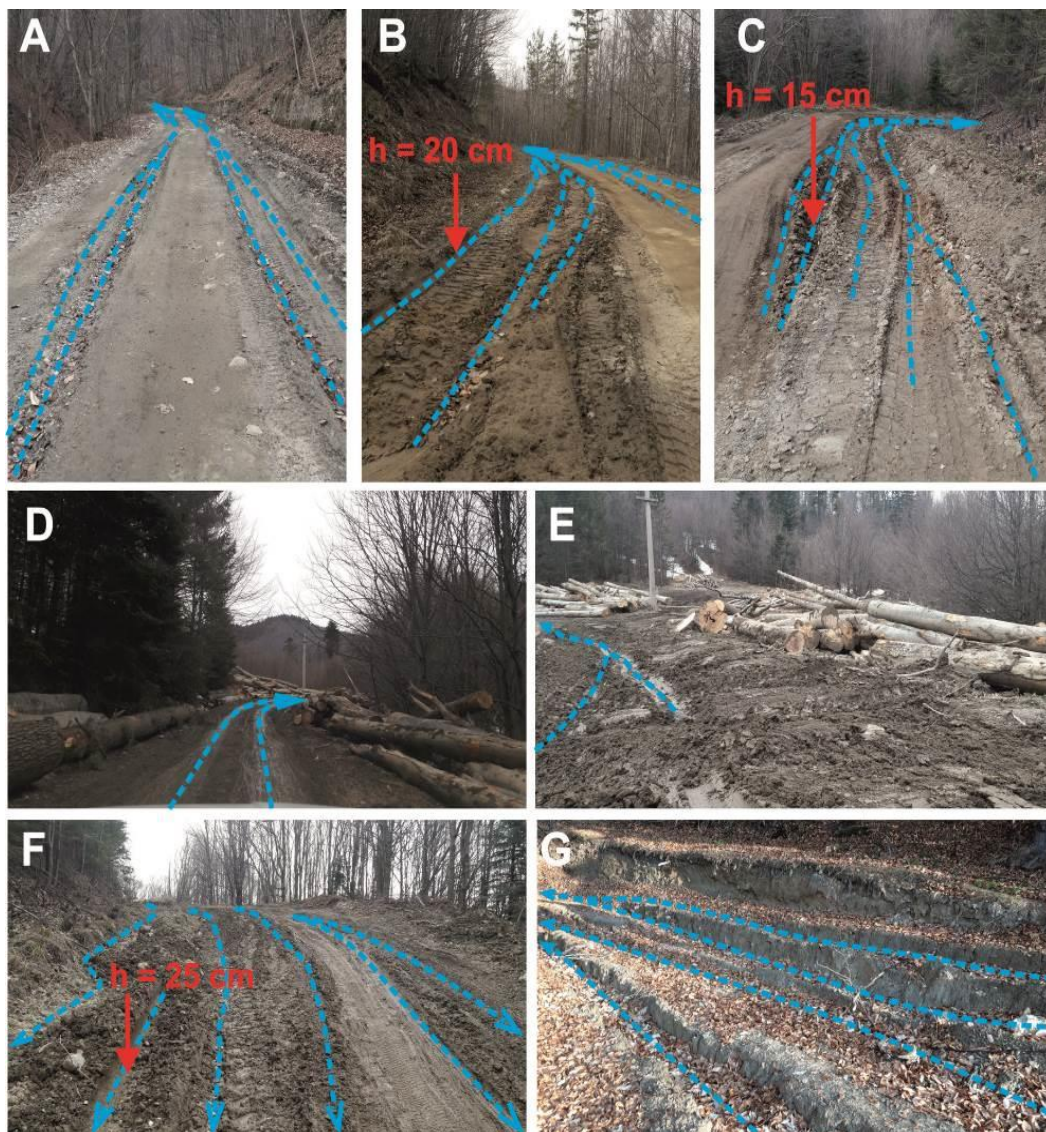
The effect of hiking on the level of tourist routes evolves rapidly, sectors that are poorly designed or maintained, and are substantially damaged (Fish et al., 1981; Cole, 1991). The accelerated hydric erosion along the tourist routes causes their degradation by the appearance of rills and ravines (Figure 11). As paths erode and become impracticable, secondary pathways develop, parallel to the initial route, which leads to the expansion of the soil degradation process by compaction (Figure 11). Practicing hiking outside the routes system increases their impact on soil and vegetation. For suitable management and monitoring of the impact of tourism activities on soil and relief, it is necessary to have an approach that takes into account that the degradation of the elements of the natural environment is the cumulative effect of several categories of factors and not just of the pedestrian tourism: pluvial erosion, the execution and maintenance of the routes (slopes cutting, the revealing the roots of the trees, the emergence of the drainage ditches), plus the hiking.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Cozia Massif has a rich and varied geoheritage that supports the implementation of geotourism activities. Promoting the geotourism potential is dependent on tourists' source of information on its value. Another objective of geotourism activities is to preserve and protect the elements of the geographic environment. The tourism activities carried out in the mountain area can have negative consequences on the relief by increasing the

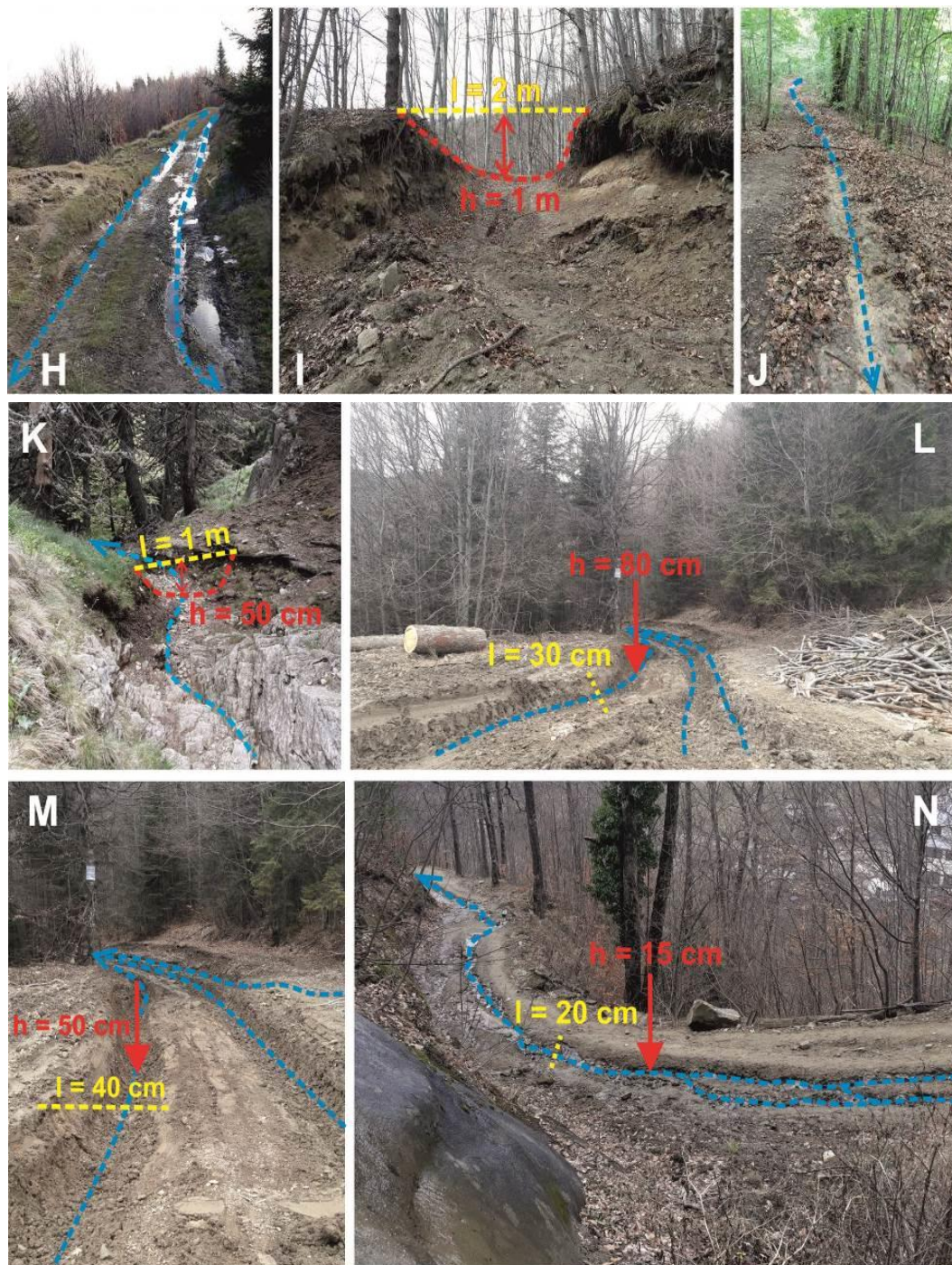


morphodynamic potential and activating present-day geomorphological processes, but also at the level of the soil, vegetation and fauna. The degradation of the tourist routes through accelerated erosion, as a result of rainwater sewage along the paths, is one of the most important problems faced by the Cozia Massif. In this context, it is necessary to develop sustainable paths that do not exceed the environmental support capacity and ensure minimal impact on it. Geotourism is also an important tool for a sustainable development and promotion of the environment, able to create opportunities to generate revenue for the community, thus contributing to the improvement of the local economy. Information and training of tourists in the sense of awareness regarding the importance and vulnerability of the environmental elements is another function of this type of tourism.



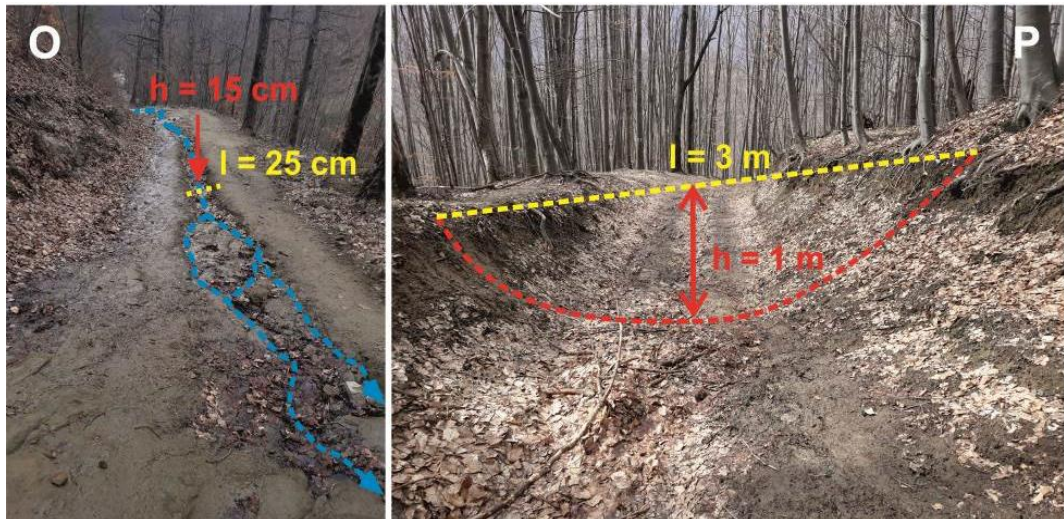
**Figure 11.** The degradation of the transport infrastructure through erosion processes: A, B, C, D, E, F - route 14 (703 N); G – logging route on Valea Mare (crosses route 14);





**Figure 11.** The degradation of the transport infrastructure through erosion processes:  
 H - tourist route 14 “Plaiul Mocirlele”; I – exploitation road on Păușa Valley  
 (crosses route 13); J - tourist route 7, K - tourist route 1, 4; L, M - logging route on  
 Mare Valley (crosses route 14); N - touristic route 2





**Figure 11.** The degradation of the transport infrastructure through erosion processes: O, P - touristic route 2

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- \*\* \*PN Cozia Management Plan, 2015.

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## **PROFILES AND MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRANT WORKERS IN THE LANGKAWI TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY**

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**Abstract:** A study was undertaken to understand the profiles of international migrant workers and factors which motivate them to work in the Langkawi tourism and hospitality industry. The findings highlighted that most of the respondents were male and had been working in the industry for almost 5 years. Majority were single and came from Indonesia. They had been working in the accommodation sector and majority of them hold post in the customer service sector. Additionally, their received income of lower than RM5,000. It was noted that most respondents had considered to work in Langkawi because they wanted to gain new experience. Surprisingly, high wages was considered by the respondents as the least motivational factor. The study concluded that it is essential to understand their profiles and factors motivating them as it could be used to plan for better policy and regulation regarding the recruitment of more migrant workers in the future.

**Key words:** International migrant worker, tourism and hospitality industry, profiles, motivational factors, Langkawi

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### **INTRODUCTION**

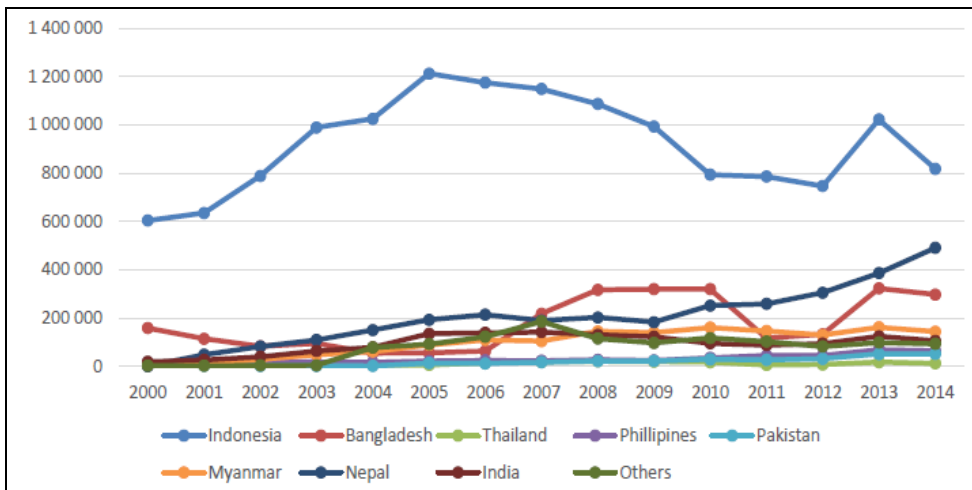
Nowadays, the tourism and hospitality industry is considered as one of the global economic sectors which significantly provide opportunities for employment (Baum, 2012). The tourism and hospitality employment is also believed to create several benefits such as information on regional synthesis, spatial analyses, and the human environment and can be extremely attractive to destination areas seeking economic development alternatives, when in a period of economic transition (Halseth, 1999).

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However, as the demand for workers in the industry is continuously growing quite rapidly in line with the growth of the industry itself, retaining the workers has becoming a barrier to the employers (Joppe, 2012). It is a fact that the tourism and hospitality industry plays essential role in increasing the growth of a country's economy. Hence, it is a challenge for the employers within the industry to employ international migrant workers (Janta et al., 2011). Previous studies also indicated that there is a relationships between tourism employment and migrant workers due to the labor shortages in the industry (Choi et al., 2000; William & Hall, 2000).

According to Wickramasekara (2002), Asia presents many facets of labour migration within the hotel industry and beyond. In Malaysia for instance, the Workforce Department (2004) reported that by March 2004, there was 1.2 million international migrant workers with 77,149 were working in the service sectors including tourism and hospitality. Further, there were about 2.07 million migrant workers working in Malaysia in 2014 (Department of Labor Peninsular Malaysia, 2014). Based on the current data for 2015, the international migrant workers in Malaysia from various country has developed more than the previous years. Moreover, it also stated that over half of regular migrant workers during the last 15 years come from neighbouring country Indonesia (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** International migrant workers in Malaysia (Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, 2015)

However, the tourism and hospitality industry is expected to have a difficult time attracting and keeping workers. According to Saunders (1981), the industry is considered unpopular as an employment choice due to its low status and large surplus of unskilled worker. In fact, as noted by the CTHRC (2003), there is also a concern that the industry will experience a shortage in the near future while the estimates of the number of jobs in tourism and hospitality continue to grow. Further studies also noted that the industry largely has an image of providing low skilled and low paying jobs, and attributes that are not likely to motivate mobility into the industry (Krakover, 2000; Hjalager & Andersen, 2001).

**The case study – Langkawi, Malaysia**

The development of Langkawi as tourism destination has begun with the conferring on the Duty Free Zone status in 1987, hence have led to a more systematic development of the island which eventually transformed it into the modern tourist destination. The number

of tourist arrivals in Langkawi has significantly increased for 2004 where it received 2.2 million tourist arrivals out of the 15.7 million received for Malaysia. Even though the number dropped slightly in 2005 to 1.8 million due to the post tsunami impact, Langkawi still remains as one of the top tourist destinations for Malaysia (Tourism Malaysia, 2016; LADA, 2016). The developments that are taking place in Langkawi have brought socio-economic changes to the island's population. Further, the government, private sectors and local communities have also experienced a considerable amount of economic development as a result of the booming tourism industry in Langkawi (Anand & Sen, 2000).

In 2012, Langkawi has received about RM 2.6 billion revenue from the approximately 3 million recorded tourist arrivals. The government has taken prompt action from these statistics by proposing a Blueprint Langkawi by the year 2015 to make Langkawi Island listed as 10 highest island visited by tourists as well as to make Langkawi as a luxury tourist destination. Added to this, the target in economics is to double tourism in Langkawi Gross National Income (GNI) of RM 0.8 billion in 2010 to RM 1.9 billion in 2015. Further, recipients are also expected to double from RM 1.9 billion tourists in 2010 to RM 3.8 billion in 2015 through the launching of marketing campaign based on customer needs. The major purpose of this marketing is to enhance the itinerary of foreign countries to Langkawi and product marketing in the luxury market and high spending tourists. At the same time, to create more job opportunities particularly in hotels and retail stores, more accommodations and commercial zones are expected to be developed.

#### **Problem Statement and Objective**

It is noticed that the issues of tourism worker shortages in some developed countries are due to the fact of low wages and social stigma (International Labour Office, 1989) thus it is difficult to design a suitable methodology to measure and analyse the data related to skills shortages. In addition, Cukier-Snow and Wall (1993) also emphasized that the tourism and hospitality as an industry with low-paying, low skill and even low value-added when it comes to worker management aspect. Similarly, Pantelidis and Wrobel (2008) in their study found that migrant employees is becoming increasingly important for the economic sustainability of the hospitality sector as the workers are considered as a cheap and accessible source of low-skilled labour.

To fulfill the vacancy of workers, Malaysia has practiced and accepted the foreign workers policy beginning 1990 for the recruitment of semi and unskilled workers in the industry. This scenario has significantly shown the needs of foreign workers to fulfill the workforce demand specifically in the tourism and hospitality industry (Ajis et al., 2014). In spite of the large number of international migrant workers and the problems associated with their presence, the Malaysian government is yet to come up with a comprehensive policy on the issue. Furthermore, previous studies did not focus on developing the international migrant workers pattern. Therefore, it is important to study and understand their profiles and factors motivating them to work in the industry.

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Based on a report from the World Tourism Organization (WTO, 1995), the tourism industry employs in excess of 11,194,418 people worldwide and represents approximately 5 per cent of the world's total travel and tourism workforce. Monterrubio and Espinosa (2013) significantly found in their study that the characteristics of tourism employment for instance occupation, skills and gender are varied among destinations. The World Bank Report (2013) highlighted that Malaysia's rapid economic growth accompanied with labour market shortages for unskilled workers continue to attract foreign workers from neighbouring countries. Harrison (1992) found that in Kenya, where despite the high

numbers of new jobs created by tourism, regional unemployment remained high because of the large numbers of migrants who sought work within the tourism sector. Further, according to Lee-Ross and Pryce (2010), the presence in large numbers of migrant workers in hospitality organizations is of consequence for tourism academics as it carries implications for both destination image and the tourist experience of the destination.

Migrant workers are believed to play an essential role in many sectors of the Malaysian economy, including manufacturing, for the foreseeable future (Robertson, 2008). Generally, Ali (2003) divided migrant workers in Malaysia into three categories. The first category consists of the non-citizens of Malaysia who have been staying in the country for a long time and are not allowed to work unless they have work permits produced by the Labour Ministry. This is followed by the second category consisted of migrant workers who are highly skilled and are professionals in the technical and administration field. Finally, the third group is migrant workers who are semi or unskill that enter the country illegally. Meanwhile, migrants have also been classified into various groups such as; temporary migrants, irregular migrants, refugees, forced migration, highly skilled and business migrants and family members (Castles, 2000).

In terms of wages and treatment in workplace, foreign workers should receive the equal treatment as local. According to Shuto (2006), besides being part of a social process, the foreign workers are further expected to be associated with issues like economic market, transnational offering of labour and the change of policies in importing. As for Malaysia, several factors determined the reason for migration such as major development, increment in the economy, lack of work force in the importing countries and change in process of goods (Ajis et al., 2014). In a previous study, Williams (2012) noted that several factors contributed to the employment of migrant workers in the tourism industry for instance low wages, the detachment of skills from productivity, weak internal labour markets, and the importance of non-material rewards. Similarly, other studies highlighted that migrant workers are seen as mobile international workforce which offers a solution to labour shortages where the local workforce is not willing to engage in low pay, low status and seasonal employment (Choi et al., 2000; Williams & Hall, 2000).

Etzo et al., (2014) in their study described the impact of migration on tourism as two-fold impact which is pulled by immigrants living in a country and the other one is pushed by the country citizens residing abroad. Previously, a study by Mohamed et al. (2012) on the impact of employment of foreign workers in Malaysia indicated that having foreign workers coming into Malaysia is vital particularly to the country's economy. Their study concluded that hiring foreign workers will bring benefits to the country and at the same time will also harm and threaten the country. In a recent study, Mohamed et al. (2016) believed that migration would become a foe of the tourism's image credibility. On the other hands, they also found that migrant workers would be helpful to the society even though there would be some who are irresponsible and contribute to the increasing number of crime.

There have been few studies on migrant workers in tourism and hospitality industry. Chartouni (2011) conducted a study in the UAE and found that the UAE labour market consists largely of expatriates rather than nationals, the vast majority of whom are employed in the private sector. It was concluded in the study that the UAE is almost exclusively confined to migrant workers. In a study by Nachmias (2015), it was indicated that the development of migrant employees may help enhance the hotel performance in the long-term. Hence, most hotels in Cyprus only provide operational, informal level training to all their migrant workers. The study also suggested that the Cypriot hotels need to focus their attention on their long-term strategic goals.

## METHODOLOGY

The target population of the study was the international migrant workers who are legally working in the tourism and hospitality industry in Langkawi. Since there is no exact number of the international migrant workers in the service sector specifically in Langkawi, the number of population was determined according to the general number of international migrant workers in the service sector in Malaysia as stated by the Department of Statistic Malaysia (2012). There was 291,997.44 number of international migrant workers in the service sector and using a table of sample size provided by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), 384 number of respondents was selected to represent the sample. To obtain a balance number of questionnaires distributed to the sectors, 400 respondents and 20 sectors were selected for the study. Hence, each sector was provided with 20 questionnaires to be filled up by the respondents. The sectors were selected at Pantai Cenang area due to the fact that it consisted of most tourism and hospitality sectors.

## FINDINGS

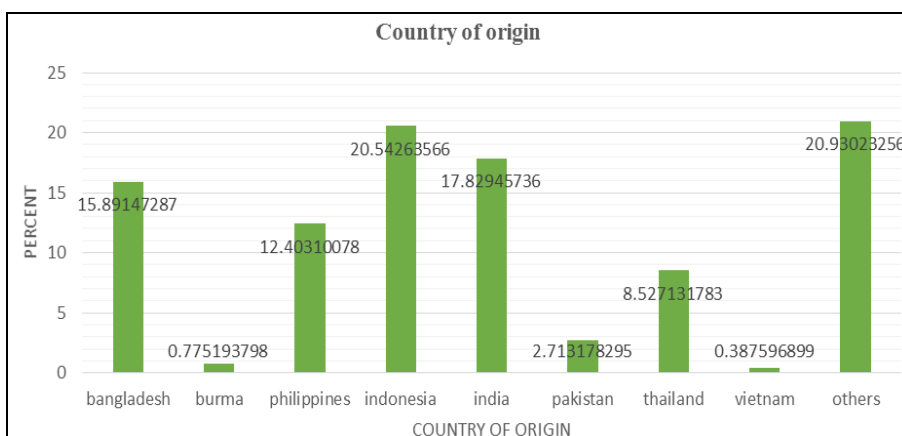
### International migrant workers profiles

As for their skills level, the findings indicated that majority of the respondents are semi-skilled labours (66.3%) while the rest is unskilled labours (33.7%).

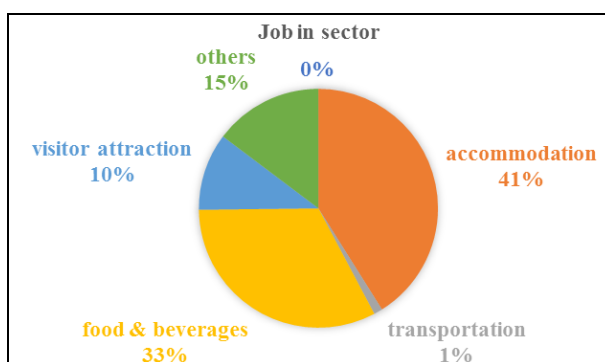
**Table 1.** The profiles of international migrant workers

Items	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Gender:</b>			
Male	182	70.5	70.5
Female	76	29.5	100.0
<b>Age:</b>			
Below 18 years old	7	2.7	2.7
18 – 30 years old	179	69.4	72.1
31 – 50 years old	70	27.1	99.2
Above 50 years old	2	0.8	100.0
<b>Marital status:</b>			
Single	134	51.9	51.9
Married	104	40.3	92.2
Divorced	11	4.3	96.5
Others	9	3.5	100.0
<b>Skills level:</b>			
Unskilled	87	33.7	33.7
Semi-skilled	171	66.3	100.0
<b>Proficiency in English:</b>			
Very little	44	17.1	17.1
Little	63	24.4	41.5
Good	93	36.0	77.5
Very good	58	22.5	100.0
<b>Number of years working in the sector:</b>			
Less than 1 year	63	24.4	24.4
1 – 5 years	159	61.6	86.0
6 – 10 years	31	12.0	98.1
More than 10 years	5	1.9	100.0
<b>Income per month:</b>			
Less than RM1,000	40	15.5	15.5
RM1,000 – RM4,999	215	83.3	98.8
RM5,000 – RM9,999	2	0.8	99.6
More than RM10,000	1	0.4	100.0

Additionally, majority of them also stated that they can speak good English (36.0%) and very good English (22.5%). The remaining stated as can speak little English (24.4%) and very little English (17.1%). As for the question on the number of years working in the sector, the findings highlighted that majority of the respondents have been working between 1 – 5 years (61.6%). This is followed by 24.4% of them have been working less than 1 year, 12.0% have been working between 6 – 10 years and the remaining 1.9% have been working for more than 10 years. Interestingly, most respondents received an income between RM1,000 – RM4,999 per month (83.3%), and only few received an income less than RM1,000 (15.5%) while the remaining received between RM5,000 and more than RM10,000 income per month. The respondents were further asked to state their country of origin (Figure 2). The findings of the survey indicated the highest percentage are from Indonesia (21.3%). The findings then revealed that 17.8% respondents are from India, followed by 15.9% respondents from Bangladesh, 12.4% from Philippines, 8.5% from Thailand, 2.7% from Pakistan and 0.4% from Vietnam. However, the findings also indicated that 20.9% respondents are from other countries such as Nepal, United Kingdom and few are from Maldives.



**Figure 2.** Country of origin



**Figure 3.** Job in the sector

Further, the respondents were asked to provide their working sector (Figure 3). It was noted that most of them are working in the accommodation sector (41.1%), followed by the food and beverages sector (32.6%), other tourism and hospitality related sectors (14.7%), the visitor attractions sector (10.5%) and the transportation sector (1.2%). The

survey question further asked the respondents to indicate their position in the sector (Figure 4). Majority of them involved in the customer service (75.6%), followed by other positions (12.4%), administration (6.2%) and only few in the security service (5.8%).

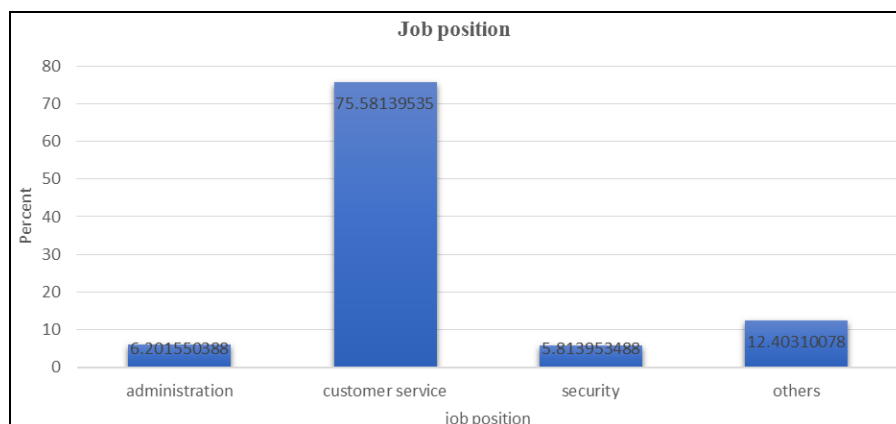


Figure 4. Job position

#### Factors motivate the international migrant workers to work in the industry

The respondents were then asked to indicate their agreement on the factors motivating them to work in the tourism and hospitality industry. Eight factors were identified and listed in the questionnaire survey namely, love meeting with people, easy to get jobs in the industry, to gain new experience, following their friends, following their families, high wages offered by the industry and also other motivational factors. The findings of the study indicated that majority of the respondents found that the major factor motivated them to work in the industry is to gain new experience (52.3%). The second factor which they noted is love meeting with people (28.3%), followed by the third factor, easy to get jobs (22.1%) and finally few of them stated that following friends as the one of the major factors motivating them. The findings however noted that other factors listed were not considered as major factors motivating the international migrant labours to work in the tourism and hospitality industry in Langkawi including the high wages (5.4%).

Table 2. Factors motivating

Items	Yes (%)	No (%)
To gain new experience	52.3	47.7
Love meeting with people	28.3	71.7
Easy to get jobs	22.1	77.9
Following friends	12.0	88.0
Easy to be promoted	7.8	99.2
Following families	7.4	92.6
Other factors	7.4	92.6
High wages	5.4	94.6

#### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the profiles of international migrant workers in the Langkawi tourism and hospitality industry is quite significance to the growth of the industry. It is noted in the study that majority of the international migrant workers in Langkawi was male within the ranged of age between 18 – 30 years

old. Additionally the international migrant workers dominant the category of single and married. The findings also noted that majority of the international migrant workers came from Indonesia, India and Bangladesh. Whilst only few of them came from other neighboring country such as Thailand and Vietnam. They eventually had good qualification and can performed their tasks in the customer service sector.

More, the accommodation sector is noted by the international migrant workers as the major sector they had chosen to work within the industry. The reasons are basically because they find it was easy to get job in the sector and further, they also believed that the accommodation sector offered attractive incentives for instance free meal, free accommodation and free medical/insurance compared to other sectors. Additionally, it is noted that there were several factors motivating the international migrant workers to work in the industry. Majority of them were working in the industry in order to gain new experience, besides they loved meeting with people. They had also chosen the industry to work because they wanted to follow their friends. Generally, the findings highlight the importance of having international migrant workers in the tourism and hospitality industry which is in line with other studies such as Robertson (2008), Chartouni (2011), Mohamed et al., (2012; 2016) and Nachmias (2015). Moreover, it is also consistent to what was suggested by Baum (2012) where the migrants are considered as a vital source of skills and labour for the hotel industry. Hence, the hotel industry would in turn, provides an important source for internal and international migrants seeking temporary or permanent employment opportunities away from their home communities.

The study however had involved the international migrant workers who were legally working in the tourism and hospitality sectors in Langkawi. More, the study had only focused on Langkawi since it is a world known tourist destination which composed of various hospitality sectors and eventually consisted of many international migrant workers. The respondents were also consisted of skilled and semi-skilled workers excluding the expatriates. Subsequently, the findings may only present those international migrant workers who majority were working at the lower managerial level. It is suggested that for future research, the international migrant workers would include all categories of workers in the tourism and hospitality sectors in Langkawi.

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## UNDERSTANDING THE BOOKING PATTERNS OF INDIAN OUTBOUND TRAVELLERS

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to make a sincere attempt to understand the booking patterns of the Indian outbound travellers. The Paper investigates the booking patterns of the Indian outbound travellers. Limited literatures are available on Indian outbound travellers and their buying pattern is least researched by the scholarly community. The study will try to fill the gap in the scholarly studies being undertaken and will help the policy makers to frame the policies pertaining to the buying patterns of the Indian outbound travellers which is growing by leaps and bound. This is a grey area especially from the Indian perspective as it is least researched. Primary research has been carried out on a sample worked upon through the Slovincs formula. The research findings will be of keen interest to both the academia and the industry actively involved in research pertaining to the booking patterns of the outbound travellers from India. The results arising from primary research indicate that social media plays a major role in influencing the holiday plans and booking patterns of Indian outbound travellers.

**Key Words:** Outbound travellers, India, Booking patterns

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### INTRODUCTION

Tourism in India has come a long way though India was very late in capitalizing the economic importance of Tourism. Tourism worldwide has been understood as a major tool for economic development, societal upliftment, poverty alleviation and a major tool for International understanding. After 1991 there has been unprecedented economic growth understandable from the point of view of growing economic levels and burgeoning business opportunities. The sudden increase in the economic levels and disposable incomes fielded the way for the growth of outbound Tourism in India. The growth has been phenomenal in terms of outbound Tourism in India. The outbound Tourism was 1.94 million (1991) and has increased to 21.87 million (2016) with a CAGR of 10.17%. The information regarding the destination which the Indian outbound travellers prefer while undertaking outbound Travel cannot be spoken in length because of the lack of the pertinent data and non-availability of the data from the Bureau of Immigration, Government of India. Therefore

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there is more reliance on the publication data of UNWTO. In 2015 the Indian outbound travellers travelled to Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, USA, Kuwait and Thailand. Three of the nations belong to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC Countries). As far as the departure ports in the last decade is concerned it is majorly concentrated across Mumbai, New Delhi, Kochi, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Calicut, Thiruvananthapuram, Kolkata, Ahmedabad.

**Table 1.** Number of Indian National's Departure from India (Source: Bureau of Immigration, India)

Year	Outbound Tourism from India	Annual Percentage Change
1991	1.94 million	-14.8%
1995	3.056 million	11.8%
2000	4.41 million	3.4%
2005	7.18 million	15.6%
2010	12.98 million	17.4%
2015	20.37 million	11.1%
2016	21.87 million	7.3%
2017	23.94 million	9.5%

It is also inferred that the share of the top ten ports in terms of India's outbound in the last decade has decreased from 91.6% (2009) to 88.2% (2016). During 2016 the top three departure airports were Mumbai (21.45%), New Delhi (20.46%), Kochi (10.02%) and accounted for almost 52% of the total departures. As far as means of transport used by India's outbound travellers is concerned the most preferred is by Air (98.5%), Land (1.3%), Sea (0.2%). Outbound tourism is on the rise from the Indian perspective .India will account for 50 million outbound tourists by 2020 (UNWTO). India' outbound market is expected to grow close to 45 billion USD by 2022 and this is a fantastic news for majority of the Asian counterparts as Indians have a knack of visiting majority of these destinations in proximity. The destinations preferred by the India's outbound community are short haul and budget destinations. Long distance destinations preferred by the Indian outbound travellers are destinations, USA, Australia and New Zealand to name a few.

In the past India was struggling to establish its status at the global arena and the era of 1991 was a turning point in India due to the liberalization, privatization and globalization initiatives taken by the Indian government. The outbound travel during that period was very minimal accounting to only 1.94 million (1991, BOI) and has swelled to 21.87 million (2016, BOI) thanks to the growing middle class in India which has a visible growth in terms of the disposable income. After discussing in length and breadth of the scenario of the Indian outbound Tourism and its growth in numerical sense and the departure gateways it is imperative now to understand the psyche of the Indian outbound Tourist which is growing by leaps and bounds. The study is an earnest attempt to link and fill the gap between the growing aspect of the Indian outbound Tourism and the booking patterns and the holiday plans of the burgeoning Indian outbound traveller. Since the research area is very vast, a sincere attempt has been made to investigate whether the social media influence the holiday plans of Indian outbound travelers.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

India's outbound Tourism research has caught the eye of the scholarly community because of the growing middle class. In spite of the global melt down India's outbound numbers are increasing and India is emerging as a major Tourism force of the World. The Indian outbound Travel should increase from around 15 Million to 50 Million by 2020 (Tourism Australia). India is the second fastest growing outbound market after China. In terms of numbers Indian outbound tourist spending is the highest in the United States of America as it is the most preferred destination for the Indians as they spend 30% of the total

spending as far as outbound Travel Spending is concerned. This desire of the Indians to travel is encouraged by more than 60 international nations which established tourism promotion offices in India. TTCI biennial Report published by the World Economic Forum takes into account the policies established by countries to develop their travel and tourism sector. According to its 2017 Travel and Tourism competitiveness index, India ranked 40 whereas India's rank in terms of TTCI in 2015 was 52. Tourism Industry will be majorly driven by the growing middle class. Consequently the prospective of Indian tourists is huge. The huge economic boom and further economic development will motivate the Indians to travel in huge numbers around the world. As a result a rising number of countries will compete for a larger share of the huge Indian market by reducing the prices. India is now accepted as a major emerging outbound tourism worldwide market (WTTC, 2006). A large proportion of Indians are able to afford to take foreign trips i.e. 12million in 2009 (Lander, 2010).

Selecting a destination is often a intricate and tough decision-making process as people have dissimilar destination inclinations and expectations whereas they have to pay in advance for it without a clue whether it will be a pleasant trip or not (Zhang, 2009). Approximately 9 million foreign trips were undertaken by Indians last year and this number is expected to grow to around 50 million by the year 2020 (Tourism Australia, 2012).

Review of literature indicates that in the framework of e-commerce there are many functional service qualities which are valued by customers during online purchase such as fast connectivity, security issues and user friendly network (Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000). Income and age group impacts the online purchase attitude of travellers (Datta et al., 2018a). Business travellers value confidentiality, security and product quality the most while choosing the Online Travel Portal to book their trip (Datta et al., 2018b). The growing role of social media in tourism has been increasingly an emerging research topic. Social media plays a significant role in many aspects of tourism, especially in information search and decision-making behaviour, tourism promotion and in focusing on best practices for interacting with consumers (Zen et al., 2014). The perceived quality of a product or service may influence the post-consumption behaviour of tourists (e.g. Chen & Tsai, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Zhang et al., 2014). Online searches can provide tourists with considerable information regarding destinations, more so than what can be obtained in travel brochures (Klahn, 2015). Tourist expectation has been defined as a preconceived perception of travel outcome (Wang et al., 2016). In the academic discipline of travel and tourism, past research findings have fixated attention on the socio-psychological facets of the use of social media.

Not unexpectedly, travel related virtual communities attracted the attention of tourism researchers (Kim et al., 2004; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2003; Wang et al., 2002). Search engines can be seen as an instruments of information in the cyber space where businesses in the tourism industry strive for attention of online travellers, because the representation of the domain is largely based upon the ranking and position of search results and will be influenced by dependent factors such as the presence of online advertisements (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2008; Pan et al., 2007a; Spink & Jansen, 2004). Consumers tend to buy familiar and well known products as they feel more confident with what they are actually buying (Chi et al., 2009). The average Indian traveller spends \$1,200 per trip as compared to Americans who spend about \$700, and British spend \$500. Indian outbound travellers come from Tier 1 cities such as New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Bangalore, but lately smaller cities like Jaipur, Ahmedabad and Amritsar are emerging as important source markets for outbound travel as well.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The researcher has utilized the quantitative approach for the study undertaken. The study instrument was a questionnaire with questions pertaining to booking patterns of

the Indian outbound travellers. The primary information is thus collected from the structured questionnaire designed for Indian outbound travellers. Four international airports were chosen for the survey i.e. Mumbai in the west, New Delhi in the North, Kolkata in the east and Chennai in the South. These four cities were chosen because they are the four metros of India and accounted for 56% of the Indian outbound departures (BOI, 2017). A questionnaire was designed for outbound Indian travellers. The first section contains the demography of the respondents. Section two uses items based on five point Likert Scale, ranging from Never (1) to Always (5). In total 400 valid questionnaires were collected. The respondent could select more than one option pertaining to information about the travel booking by Indian outbound Traveller. Questions were asked pertaining to frequency of outbound trips, facilities, service providers, information about the destination before considering it for outbound travel booking. Data was collected from the departure lounge of all the above mentioned four international airports. No gender bias was examined in the sample during the primary survey. 56% are male and 44% are females. All the variables mentioned in the questionnaire are inputted in the variable view. The Data was analyzed through the SPSS Software and the results are discussed. Slovins formula was used for sample size determination. The study will help us to understand whether the social media plays a role in influencing the decision making and deciding the holiday plans of the Indian outbound Traveller. The below mentioned research question will be answered after testing the hypothesis framed.

#### **SAMPLE SIZE DETERMINATION**

Determination of the Sample Size was done by using the Slovins (1960) formula which is as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N e^2}$$

Where n=Sample Size, N=Population Size, e=Margin of Error/Error margin

For the year 2017 the outbound Tourism of India=23940000

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N e^2}$$

$$23940000 / 1 + 23940000 \cdot (0.05)^2$$

$$= 23940000 / 1 + 59850$$

$$= 23940000 / 59851$$

$$= 399.99$$

$$= 400$$

The researcher managed to get 400 Questionnaires filled from the Indian outbound travellers from North, West, East, and South India.

#### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

RQ1: Do the Social media influence the holiday plans of Indian outbound travellers?

H1: The higher the perceived level of social media influence, the more likely changes would be made in holiday plans by Indian outbound travellers

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In today's context the freedom of choice for Indian outbound travellers is more apparent than ever before. An empirical study was carried out to understand the booking patterns of Indian outbound travellers who are growing by leaps and bounds. Primary research was carried out to understand the booking patterns of outbound travellers from India and to understand the impact of social media in influencing the booking plans of the outbound travellers of India. In the era of technology an earnest attempt has been made in understanding its impact on the booking patterns of the

travellers of India. The study was conducted in North, South, East and West India. Four international airports were chosen across the four geographical coordinates of India i.e. New Delhi to the north, Mumbai to the west, Kolkata to the east and Chennai to the south. These four cities were chosen as these are the four metropolitans of India. A sample of 400 respondents was selected and studied using convenience sampling technique. The primary data is procured using structured questionnaire with five point Likert scale.

Table 2 reveals that the respondents are getting information through Social Media (43.0 percent) followed by Internet Search (40.0 percent). The survey also reveals that social media is the most effective tool that impact the holiday plans of Indian outbound travellers. The respondents have the flexibility in selecting more than one answer pertaining to information about the travel booking by Indian outbound traveller.

**Table 2.** Information about the travel booking by Indian outbound Traveller (Source: Primary Research)

Sr. No.	Attributes	No's	%
1	Social Media	172	43%
2	Friends and acquaintances	04	1%
3	Advertisements	64	16%
4	Employer	0	0%
5	Internet Search	160	40%
6	Any others(Specify)	0	0%
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>

### HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Table 3 below reflects that the largest positive gap came from Social Media, Internet Search and Advertisement while friends and acquaintances, employers and others had a negative gap between the higher level of importance and lower levels of satisfaction. Therefore the higher the perceived level of social media influence, the more likely changes would be made in holiday plans by Indian outbound travellers.

Social media plays a major role in influencing the holiday plans and booking patterns of Indian outbound travellers.

**Table 3.** Paired t-test on outbound Indian travellers attributes and services (Source: Primary Data, Wixon and Todd Model, 2005)

Attributes	Expectations (pre-booking)	Experiences (post-booking)	Gap	t-value	p value
Social Media	<b>3.382</b>	<b>3.823</b>	<b>0.441</b>	<b>5.932</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Friends and acquaintances	<b>3.123</b>	<b>3.078</b>	<b>-0.045</b>	<b>-0.865</b>	<b>0.388</b>
Advertisements	<b>3.687</b>	<b>3.788</b>	<b>0.101</b>	<b>0.560</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Employers	<b>3.118</b>	<b>3.118</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>-3.089</b>	<b>0.115</b>
Internet Search	<b>3.032</b>	<b>3.431</b>	<b>0.399</b>	<b>5.132</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Any others(Specify)	<b>3.8118</b>	<b>3.8118</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>-0.776</b>	<b>0.416</b>

### CONCLUSION

It is quite evident from the literature review that this is the era of digitalization as it saves time, money and most importantly the waiting period. The World Wide Web has changed the business environment and competitive behavior in many industries because consumers now have more access to market information. The speed at which the Internet has revolutionized information availability and information sharing has taken managers by surprise. While many firms have failed in their effort to implement sound Internet strategies in an environment where consumers are better informed, other firms with creative strategies have succeeded. Since the Indian outbound travellers are a growing niche and contributing immensely in economic terms so their preferences and needs should be properly addressed and carefully examined by the service providers. Indian

outbound travellers value time and convenience as they are always on the move. They also require secure and safe payment gateway, varied options and user friendly services in the service provider. Indian outbound Tourism segment is growing at a rapid pace and needs a thorough attention by the scholarly community. Indian outbound data indicate that India will account for 50 million outbound tourists by 2020 (UNWTO). India's outbound market is expected to grow close to 45 billion USD by 2022. To understand the psyche of the Indian outbound Tourist the service providers have to be ready in all aspects as this is a major revenue generating segment and catering to this segment will reap fruits for them. The testing of hypothesis specifies that social media is the most effective tool that impact the holiday plans of Indian outbound travellers.

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## USING NON-MEGA EVENTS FOR DESTINATION BRANDING: A STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVE

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**Abstract:** Stakeholders of destinations play an important role in the development and function of destination brands. They have increasingly recognised the importance of sport for the development of destination brands. However, challenges in stakeholder coordination and collaboration in the utilisation of sport for brand-related benefits still persist. This study explores the destination brand of South Africa and determines the strategic stakeholder relationships in the utilisation of non-mega events for destination brand development. A qualitative design featuring semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face interviews was conducted with definitive sport, tourism and destination-brand stakeholders. A thematic analysis of results clearly revealed the role of stakeholders in sport and tourism relations in the promotion of the South African brand through sport event hosting. The results further show that key challenges exist in the objectives of stakeholders in public and private entities that appear to stifle effective partnering and that, essentially, further impede effective collaboration in sport event leveraging. The paper adds value particularly to the stakeholders of a developing destination brand context towards informing and guiding them on views and perceptions in relation to strategies for effective stakeholder relations when utilising non-mega events for effective destination branding.

**Key words:** Destination branding, non-mega sport event, tourism, stakeholder perceptions, South Africa

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### INTRODUCTION

The use of events, especially sport tourism events, for the purpose of destination branding has been of increasing interest among academics and practitioners. According to Getz and Page (2016), events are not only animators of the destination's attractiveness, but, more fundamentally, are key marketing propositions in the promotion of places,

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especially given the increase in globalisation to attract global tourism and to increase visitor spending. Todd et al. (2017) note that hallmark events, in particular, have been recognised as valuable assets for destinations that manage event portfolios, as they make a significant contribution to the tangible and intangible aspects of event tourism. Thus, in terms of the current scene of sport event tourism, the development of destination brands has become a strategic tool, as a result of the increasing competition and the augmented brand-related benefits for destinations (Garcia et al., 2012). For instance, Australia strategically utilised the 2000 Olympic Games to position itself as a global destination for events. More critically, through the effective leveraging of the Games, various groups of stakeholders expediently planned for sustainable economic benefits through regular tourism, long after the hosting phase (Chalip, 2004). Indeed, O'Brien and Chalip (2008) note that, since the Australian case, it has become common for stakeholders to accompany mega-events with strategic leveraging programmes. For example, at the 2002, 2006 and 2010 Commonwealth Games, held in Manchester, Melbourne and New Delhi, respectively, as well as at the 2003 Brisbane Rugby World Cup, and at every Olympic Games since Sydney 2000, each host nation involved has employed the leveraging of programmes to enhance the host destination brand, and to foster tourism and business development.

Against such a backdrop in event leveraging, the significant role of stakeholders in destination branding practices through sport events is highlighted. However, as destination branding involves a multiple group of stakeholders (Fan, 2010; Hankinson, 2010), likewise does the sport event industry encompass a range of stakeholders who might have dissimilar views on how sport is used for destination branding. Nonetheless, the efforts exerted to utilise sport to promote the destination brand require the collaboration of a complex group of stakeholders in both sport and destination branding (Morgan et al., 2010). To the above-mentioned end, Todd et al. (2017) note that there is still limited understanding regarding stakeholder engagement with sport events over time; limited knowledge on the stakeholders' lived experience in event tourism; and consequent management implications. Thus, one of the key challenges for the effectiveness of the utilisation of events for tourism and destination branding is the poor coordination among the stakeholders (Todd et al., 2017). The current study, therefore, introduces the views and challenges of stakeholders in sport, tourism and destination branding during the hosting of non-mega sport events, for the purpose of achieving destination branding benefits. Moreover, the study reveals stakeholder strategic objectives, as well as details strategies for the utilising and leveraging of sport for destination brand development, albeit in the developing South African context.

### **DESTINATION BRANDING THROUGH SPORT**

The branding theory has advanced from its origins in the marketing arsenal of contemporary markets to the branding of places and destinations especially. As a result of such advancement, the role of brands has evolved from the mere giving of a brand name to a product. Brands are considered a direct consequence of strategic market segmentation and product differentiation (Xie & Boggs, 2006), and they have been conceptualised by De Chernatony and Riley (1998), Louro and Cunha (2001), Wood (2000) and De Chernatony and Segal-Horn (2001) as communication devices, in terms of their identity (logo, slogans and trademarks); as perceptual entities referring to brands appealing to consumer senses and emotions; as value enhancers leading to brand equity; and as relationships communicating the brand personality. Interestingly, Hankinson (2004) grounds the concepts in destination brands that consequently corroborate the similarity in brands across a variety of different environments. Sport has proven to be a powerful industry for promoting tourism (Tichaawa & Bama, 2012; Nyikana & Tichaawa,

2018a) and for positioning destination brands (Anholt, 2005; Freire, 2014; Mohammadi & Jazaie, 2016). Certainly, sporting events, in particular, are considered important pull factors (Turco et al., 2012) that generate opportunities for destination brand awareness through sponsorships and broadcasts, as well as for economic development through visitor spending on a destination's offerings, job creation, and sport business opportunities (Higham & Hinch, 2009; Tichaawa & Bob, 2015; Tichaawa et al., 2018). Moreover, sport events play a critical role in shaping national and local tourism products, with them having an ability to transform destinations (Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2018b). For example, such major events as the 1995 Rugby World Cup and the 2010 FIFA World Cup have consistently proved the above for South Africa's brand transformation as it emerged from its outdated segregated brand pre-apartheid (Bob & Swart, 2010; Cornelissen et al., 2011; Knott et al., 2013; Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa, 2018). As the global competition for prominence among destinations has intensified, there has been growing awareness of the significant impact of sport events on a destination's image (Hemmonsbey et al., 2018). The above has been particularly achieved through the media coverage of such sport mega-events as the Olympic Games and other international events (Chalip et al., 2003). However, there are some concerns around the degree to which the hosting of sport events enhances the host destination's brand image, and, subsequently, the extent to which the event stimulates the economy through travel behaviour post-event hosting (Chalip et al., 2003; Kaplanidou, 2007; Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2010; Gibson et al., 2008). Thus, the debate over the long-term economic and tourism benefits of sport event hosting, despite the benefits of travel intention as a result of destination brand image, continue to evolve between stakeholders, especially political groups and event organising committees.

While the above debate typically applies to the mega-event or hallmark event, Taks (2013) explains that non-mega events are significantly different from mega-events with regards to their effect on the local host community. The former sport events are generally smaller in size, scale, scope, and reach than are their mega counterparts, like the Olympic Games, the World Cup, the Euro Cup, and the Commonwealth Games (Taks et al., 2015). Through the hosting of non-mega events, there is seemingly great potential for establishing tighter social networks and connections than before with the local community and stakeholders regarding the event, no matter whether the stakeholders involved are politicians, spectators, volunteers, destination marketing managers, or event organisers (Taks et al., 2015). In addition, with regards to the event venues and the marketing of events, Taks et al. (2015) point out that the relatively small-scale non-mega event tends to use comparatively small-scale facilities, and it does not require an expensive infrastructure. Such types of small-scale events also create opportunities for sustainable local partnerships, and for enhanced coordination efforts, between the event organisers and their partners which, from a local community hosting and marketing perspective, makes non-mega events uniquely different to the mega-event, which is accompanied by a huge cost of hosting, and by exclusive marketing activities. In addition to capitalising on event tourism and media as opportunities for destination branding through sport events, the traditional event leveraging research by Chalip (2004) suggests that, in regards to the non-mega event, the consideration that is given to relatively strong social networks, and to sustainable local partnerships, must be included in the key strategic prospects. Thus, it can be posited that small-scale non-mega sport events create opportunities for the leveraging of sustainable local partnerships, and for the enhancing of coordination efforts between the event organisers and their partners (Taks et al., 2015).

Notwithstanding such opportunities and strategic prospects, Smith (2014) poses a question related to the responsibility of formulating and implementing effective leverage initiatives. According to the aforementioned author, event leverage initiatives are separate

from, despite them being related to, the delivery and management of event projects, making it difficult to assign responsibility for the formulation and implementation of the projects to an entire range of stakeholders. For the above-mentioned reason, Smith (2014) suggests that organisations with expertise in specific policies, such as social, economic or environmental ones, should take responsibility regarding the implementation and management of projects linked to their respective mandates. For example, in the case of a project being linked to a social objective, it should be led by the local authorities with the desired social mandate and expertise. Similarly, economic projects should be the responsibility of local economic partnerships. Kellett et al. (2008) discuss the example of the 'Green City' initiative, as it was pursued by the City of Vancouver in tandem with the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, which was specifically led by experts in the local leadership authority. Also, the 'Adopt a second team' initiative, which was pursued by the Melbourne municipal authorities in conjunction with the 2006 Commonwealth Games, saw stakeholders in the municipality leading the initiative. Smith (2014), however, recognises that, since the leveraging of projects relies, to a degree, on the actual event itself, there should be some formal involvement from the local organising committees or event organisers. While their involvement is limited to the event hosting, they tend not to be responsible for leading the long-term sustainability efforts that are directed towards social and economic development. Thus, for the non-mega event, the debate around the long-term sustainability of destination brand development exists in terms of the responsibility of stakeholder groups to implement sustainable programmes.

## **STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS IN STRATEGIC DESTINATION BRANDING**

### **Stakeholder theory**

Essentially, the stakeholder concept holds that an organisation occupies the centre of a network of relationships that it has with various interested parties (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Sheehan et al., 2007; Hankinson, 2010; Fyall, 2011; Houghton & Stevens, 2011). In their formative work on the stakeholder theory, Sheehan et al. (2007) claim that, in developing the stakeholder theory, efforts were made to explore issues of stakeholder identification, analysis and management. With regards to the stakeholder identification, Donaldson and Preston (1995, p. 67) posit that stakeholders are identified as "persons or groups with legitimate interests in the procedural and/ or substantive aspect of corporative activity", regardless of whether the corporation concerned has any corresponding functional interest in them. Clarkson (1995) explains that stakeholders need to be identified by their primary and secondary influences on organisations.

For instance, primary stakeholders are those that affect, and who are affected by, the survival of the organisation, whereas secondary stakeholders are those that influence, or affect, the organisations. However, unlike primary stakeholders, they do not engage in transactions with the organisations involved, and they do not affect the livelihood of the organisations concerned. Although no definitive list of stakeholders is identified in the destination branding literature, Sheehan et al. (2007), Houghton and Stevens (2011) and Ooi and Pedersen (2010) particularly note the following stakeholders in the involvement of branding destinations: the local residents; the community; the local, regional and national authorities; and the destination marketing organisations (DMOs), which, as a result of their significant influence in destination brand development, could be viewed as being the primary stakeholder groups. To the above-mentioned list of stakeholders, Morgan et al. (2003) add environmental groups and agencies, as well as trade associations and the wider private sector, which can then be regarded as secondary, due to their ancillary influence on the development of the destination brand, especially through the utility of sport. In addition to the stakeholders identified for destination

branding, and more specific to the context of the current study, the stakeholders concerned in major sport are identified, in particular, in terms of their role in event organising and in the strategic planning and marketing of events for brand-related benefits.

After the relevant stakeholders have been identified and differentiated, Sheehan et al. (2007) advocate for management to employ appropriate strategies that will guide their interaction with the other actors. The researchers concerned note that successful stakeholder management has the potential to lead to the establishment of substantial competitive advantage, through the forming and maintenance of relationships. They further argue that the support of all stakeholder groups is necessary for the continued survival of an organisation (see also Waligo et al., 2013; Todd et al., 2017). More specific to destinations, Morgan et al. (2003) point out that the management of stakeholders has to be proactive, with particular attention being given to the development of partnerships. It is, therefore, imperative that the relevant stakeholders should agree on the final vision statement that will provide a meaningful and operational 'dream' for the future of their destination, being one that reflects the values of the destination stakeholders, while not ignoring the realities and constraints of the marketplace (Morgan et al., 2003). Morgan et al. (2003) and Paskaleva-Shapira (2007), however, present a challenge for destination marketers to make the destination brand 'live' for visitors, so that they can experience the promoted brand value and the unique authenticity of the place. They state that, in such an undertaking, DMOs are vulnerable to a variety of political pressures and that they, therefore, have to reconcile a range of local and regional interests and promote an identity that is acceptable to a number of stakeholders. To the above end, the suggestion to DMOs, which can also present a challenge, is to search for strong brands that add value by answering to what people want and to what is relevant to them; finding out, and differentiating, what the city can offer; and making strategic decisions (Paskaleva-Shapira, 2007).

### **Stakeholder challenges in utilising sport events for destination brand development**

According to Palmer (2002) and Morgan et al. (2003), tourism destinations are, arguably, one of the most difficult 'products' to market, as they involve a large number of stakeholders and a brand image over which DMOs have very little control. Morgan et al. (2002) posit that, regardless of where destinations are in their life cycle, compared to product and service brands, DMOs face peculiar branding challenges, including in terms of the number of multi-stakeholder groups that destinations have to consider. Consequently, destinations involve a high degree of complexity and fragmentation, made up of complex entities, collections of individuals and communities, with the actions of the interdependent, multiple stakeholders impacting on the rest of the actors in the community (Lichrou et al., 2010). For all intents and purposes, the challenge is that the branding of destinations needs to unite independent groups of various stakeholders in collaborating, as well as to negotiate the interests of various parties. For the above-mentioned reason, Lichrou et al. (2010) note that place and destination marketers have expressed an interest in the concept of stakeholders.

Previous research on stakeholder roles in destination branding practices has shown that stakeholder commitment to collaboration, and, moreover, their prioritisation of investment in sport events hosting, as well as, more importantly, their implementation of leveraging activities, for tourism and destination branding benefits remain a concern among the stakeholders in developing nations, as is the case with South Africa (Hemmonsbey & Knott, 2016). The above is likely to affect the nation's competitive brand positioning, especially as destinations tend to depend on such collaborations to survive, in the face of increasing competition and environment challenges (Allan, 2011). Elsewhere, in the case of a developed nation, it is clear that Australia and the 2000 Olympic Games

achieved global benefits linked to tourism, investment, and business, for their destination brand development, as a result of effective stakeholder collaborations through partnerships and investment in the strategic utilisation of sport through event leveraging. For the above-mentioned reason, Trueman et al. (2004) postulate that stakeholder collaborations through effective partnerships can be achieved through the context of sport and, in particular, the sport events, for destination-brand-related benefits. Paskaleva-Shapira (2007) further posits that partnerships between the private and public sectors, for instance, are considered effective means of achieving destination competitiveness, as a result of the multiplicity of industries (both sport and tourism) involved in creating and sustaining destinations' competitiveness (also see Nyikana & Tichaawa, 2018b; İlieş et al., 2016; İlieş et al., 2018). What is more, the importance of pre- and post-event stakeholder engagement through sport event leveraging, especially in terms of building local brand awareness and preparedness, as well as through establishing networks and linkages among key stakeholders who might benefit not only the event, but also the destination brand, is advocated (Munien & Majola, 2012). With the increasing interest from stakeholders in the developing nations in participating in globalisation, and, particularly, in using sport for tourism- and destination-branding benefits, the key question that remains relates to the effective coordination among the stakeholders concerned for the effective utilisation of events to achieve such benefits. Consequently, the current study introduces the views and challenges of stakeholders in sport, tourism and destination branding during the hosting of non-mega sport events for the purpose of achieving destination branding benefits. The study focuses on examining stakeholder objectives, as well as on determining stakeholder strategies for the utilising and leveraging of non-mega sport events for destination brand development. An investigation into the South African brand presents empirical findings from a developing destination perspective.

### **THE RESEARCH STUDY**

The current study adopted a qualitative research approach, in terms of which in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key industry stakeholders representing local and national (public and private) sport, tourism and destination branding entities. Such entities consist of, for example, local sport and event organisers, city and national departments of sport and recreation, city and national tourism and destination marketing organisations, private tour operators, as well as sport tourism investment organisations. Respondents representing the organisations were purposefully selected by virtue of their leadership roles and characteristics, which had some bearing on their perceptions and experiences of branding South Africa through major sport events. From a city and national perspective, stakeholders provided insight into strategies for sport event leveraging for destination brand development. From a sport event organising and investment perspective, such respondents reported on their experiences on the strategic planning and marketing of major sport and events, alongside the objectives of national policy on sport event leveraging. Similarly, the private sport tourism operators provided insights into the knowledge and experiences operating in the field of sport tourism activations during the hosting of sport events. More specifically, all the respondents were sought from top management positions, preferably at the level of chief executive officer (CEO), director or senior manager. Having a geographical spread of cities representing not only their municipalities, but also the overall South African brand, was important. Thus, the stakeholders were chosen from within South Africa's major sporting metros (i.e. Port Elizabeth, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, and Bloemfontein). In addition to purposive sampling, it was important for the study to select key informants, based on the selected stakeholder theory underpinning the individual and

collaborative 'stake' and influence that each organisation held in the destination branding outcomes, in terms of the hosting of non-mega sport events in South Africa. The aim for the study was to gain a broad overview of stakeholder perspectives on key concepts and to gather rich and meaningful data, thus the selected sample size of 24 was used.

All the interviews were conducted with the prior consent of the respondents. Each interview was conducted at a location chosen by the respondents, which was usually their workplace. All the interviews were digitally recorded and manually transcribed verbatim by the researchers. Every effort was made to ensure the validity and the reliability of the data through the constant checking of the interview transcripts, along with comparing them to the voice recordings and the field notes made during the interviews. The semi-structured interviews were guided by a set of questions related to topics identified through the literature review. The interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions that allowed the interviewer to probe, or clarify, and to explore the particular areas of experience, or expertise, of the respondents. The overall focus of the interview schedule was geared towards exploring general concepts on destination branding and the utilisation of major events, in particular those promoting the South African brand. In addition, strategic stakeholder relationships and engagements in sport event hosting and leveraging were key areas of focus. The coding of the data was assisted by the software program called 'Atlas ti', which also assisted in the reduction and display of the data. The software program further served useful as a storage and reference facility for all the transcribed interviews. An inductive bottom-up approach followed, with individual codes being developed from key words, as each response was reviewed. From the resultant long list of codes, themes were developed and grouped that subsequently formed the basis of the results and discussion that are presented below.

All the responses are designated by an 'R', and by a specific number distinguishing the respondents from one another. The number held no significance either for the respondents, or for their affiliations. Such designation was done to protect the confidentiality of all the respondents who participated in the research. However, in some instances, an indication of an industry sector is given for the purpose of emphasising the responses obtained. Throughout the discussion, direct quotations are used to represent the original data gleaned. Each direct quotation was selected, based on the degree of its representation of a common response among the stakeholders, or on it clearly stating a core theme, or stating the key examples given as a particular point of discussion.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Destination branding of South Africa through non-mega events**

The respondents unanimously agreed on the significance of sport events for the development of South Africa's brand. Their sentiments consistently centred on the economic benefits gained through visitor spending and destination brand awareness opportunities emerging from tourism experiences. An excerpt illustrating the tourism and destination branding benefits as a result of the hosting of major sport events reads as follows:

The extraction of economic benefit for the local area [where the event is hosted], which is the municipality, and then South Africa on a global scale. So, if you don't get those benefits, including the branding benefits and international exposure benefits, then there is no reason to have the event (R4).

However, from an economic perspective, major sport event leveraging, according to O'Brien and Chalip (2008), should yield such long-term outcomes as the encouraging of repeat visitation, the reimagining of host communities in key markets, the fostering of

business relationships, and the encouraging of inward trade, investment and employment. While the respondents in the study universally agreed with the views of O'Brien and Chalip (2008), in that major sport events “stimulate the economy, it stimulate[s] jobs [both temporary and permanent], and it stimulate[s] tourism growth” (R3), their responses neither included, nor confirmed, any evident long-term economic benefits obtained through major event hosting in South Africa. For the above-mentioned reason, the major event organisers, together with the key role players, tend to adopt a strategic approach towards prior planning of the hosting of events (Smith, 2014). An event stakeholder, who recognised their event as an opportunity for yielding long-term national and international tourism for the wider South African destination, suggested a strategic way forward. Thus, with regards to the leveraging of major sport events, in particular the Cape Town Cycle Tour, a key informant in sport event organising held that:

Using the [Cape Town] Cycle Tour as an example, it is not just coming to a bicycle race in Cape Town, that is the hook, it's [more like] going to Cape Town, then stop[ping] in Johannesburg on our way back [home] and spend[ing] a week at [the] Kruger National Park. It's about leveraging those opportunities (R2).

Certainly, from the data collected, other events also exist that could yield similar economic benefits for the South African brand. For example, events, sporting or otherwise, would enhance the “upstream tourism, [such as] catering, [the] hospitality industry, museums, and shopping malls, would be enhanced” (R4). Major events identified across the respondents within the various South African cities that are believed to contribute to the South African tourism and destination brand are outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Major events contributing to the South African tourism and destination brand (Source: Authors, based on fieldwork)

Example of key major sport events in various South African cities	
Representative host city	Major event
Cape Town / Western Cape province	• ABSA Cape Epic (off-road cycle race)
	• Two Oceans Marathon
	• Cape Town Cycle Tour
	• Knysna Oyster Marathon
	• Laingsburg Marathon
	• Sun Met (horse race)
	• Cape Town Jazz Festival
	• Design Indaba (fashion and design exhibition)
Johannesburg / Gauteng province	• Volvo & Clipper Oceans Race
	• Telkom 94.7 Cycle Tour
Durban / KwaZulu-Natal province	• Soweto Marathon
	• Durban July (horse race)
Port Elizabeth / Eastern Cape province	• Comrades Marathon
	• IRONMAN (triathlon)
Various South African cities	• Currie Cup (rugby)
	• Sunshine Tour

What is significant from the above table is that key major events are not limited to sport, but also consist of cultural and festival events. Moreover, it is clear that the city of Cape Town is a key player in the hosting of major events, thus it should be considered immensely important for strategic leveraging through events, sporting and otherwise. All the events concerned are primary to the tourism and destination

imperative of South Africa, as they are believed to yield maximum socio-economic benefits for their host communities and, arguably, through brand association, for the broader South African context. As a result, some of the major events mentioned form part of the event strategy of the local and national authorities, in positioning the destination as an 'Events Destination', or as a 'Gateway of Events' for Africa, which further positions the global competitive destination's brand.

### **Clarifying stakeholder roles in the context of sport and destination branding**

The respondents were asked who they believed the key stakeholders involved in the major sport events for destination branding benefits were. Similar to the stakeholders involved in destination branding, as outlined by Sheehan et al. (2007), Houghton and Stevens (2011), and Ooi and Pedersen (2010), the following list of stakeholders became apparent through the stakeholder responses: the provincial and local government; various NGOs or charities that benefit from the sport itself; the private partners and the local communities/population; and a certain degree of national and international presence. However, the 'community', 'non-governmental organisations (NGOs)', and 'media' were uniquely mentioned in the context of a developing nation, with them also being perceived as key being role players in terms of sport event leveraging. Such entities differ from those that are typically stated in the developed destination context by such researchers as Chalip (2014). Moreover, the inclusion of 'sport event organisers' and of 'federations' as having a responsibility towards sport event leveraging, "due to the amount of sport brand sponsorships and television broadcasts that it attracts" is also unusual (R8). However, as Smith (2014) declares, the involvement of sport event organisers is limited to event hosting, and they are not responsible for masterminding long-term sustainability for social and economic development. Thus, the chief responsibility still lies with those who are operant in the local and national government organisations.

Although deemed significant, a key informant in local government held that, specific to tour operating companies, the group of stakeholders concerned tends to be absent or non-existent during the hosting of major events, which essentially impedes the effective utilisation of events for the efficacy of the destination brand. A key informant in local government intimated:

What I have noticed in and around cities is the lack of tour operators as a key role-player during major event hosting. They [the tour operating companies] can offer so much [in terms of] opportunities to show your guests the city and its attractions. That is where cities miss out on leveraging (R11).

The important role of media as a significant stakeholder was also emphasised, especially in the developing nation context. Consistent with the extant literature on the role of media in sport leveraging (see, for example, Brown et al., 2004; Higham & Hinch, 2009; Jago et al., 2003), and with regards to the social media and brand exposure, the respondents expressed a belief that the social media played a "huge role in showcasing experiences in a particular destination" (R6), which, further, created brand awareness. Moreover, a key informant in sport event marketing considered that the social media might prove to be a highly valuable marketing tool for reaching a broad international audience. If they were used in such a way as to create 'nostalgia' or 'FOMO' (i.e. the fear of missing out), they could create an online following, and, subsequently, induce potential participation and future visits. However, a key informant in tourism and destination branding argued that "exposure means nothing until the eyeballs are converted into visitors" (R6), thus signalling the significance of capitalising on event tourism through the



media as an opportunity for leveraging, as advocated for by Chalip (2004). Despite the important role of the media (both traditional and social) in creating brand awareness and online brand exposure, a few of the respondents argued that, specific to the South African context, “media is skewed in many cases” (R6). For example, a key informant in the local government argued:

Media and social media has [i.e. have] made all the issues of the country so prevalent, and it has become so visual and disturbing that there is little room for brand exposure in a positive way (R11).

Another key informant involved in tourism and destination branding admitted to the important role of such media, while acknowledging the skewed views that they portray of South Africa. This key informant expressed their view in the following way:

Media plays a very big role. The challenges that we [South Africans] have is that the media predominantly focus on the negatives and the sensational issues, which is not the total picture, and it is skewed in terms of representation of many negative incidents and very few positive incidents, where[as] the reality is just the converse (R6).

From an event leveraging perspective, Germany taught that media partnerships can be used to communicate positive messages about the destination brand image both pre- and post-event, through planned strategies relating to the destination (see Grix, 2012). Consequently, a concerted stakeholder effort is required, in the case of South Africa, to adopt the appropriate strategies and tactics for broadcasting messages that centre on new and innovative sport- and education-related projects, so as to instil a sense of confidence in the minds of potential future visitors.

### **The key role of the local and national government in support of sport events for destination branding**

The data revealed distinct views from a sport event stakeholder concerning the level of support received from the national stakeholders, in particular those involved in the National Department of Tourism and Investment. A key informant in sport event marketing centred his deeply frustrated concern on the absence of funding and investment in major sport event marketing. While it is evident that major events, by their very nature, are organised, supported and hosted in and by the local municipalities, R2 believes that major events are driving national and international tourism, and, consequently, promoting the South African brand as a destination. For the above-mentioned reason, the key informant in major event organising believes that National Tourism and Development is responsible for supporting and funding major events.

While no partnership exists around relating to such proposals from national government, it leaves event organisers with budgeting challenges around marketing activation programmes, both nationally and internationally. Consequently, the deeply frustrated key informant in sport event marketing responded:

The challenge I have as an event, is that I get no support from national tourism at all, [either from] national trade and industry [or from] national economic development. We are left to our own devices to promote the event to our international participants and partners, and subsequently [to] augment destination branding (R2).

A different key informant in sport event marketing shares the frustrating sentiments of R2, in that the national Department of Tourism can add more value to events if they work in tandem with private stakeholders and event organisers. While such frustrations were noted by various respondents, a key informant in sport events marketing had no proposal

for a way forward, other than to engage regularly, and to discuss openly, opportunities for future strategic partnerships. An excerpt from his response reads as follows:

The involvement of national government is key in that they create many opportunities for expanding events. What happens is the proposals [for collaboration] get written up and presented, but sometimes it is left without any way forward, so you can imagine. It is very frustrating (R8).

### **Strategic partnerships among industry stakeholders**

Despite the perceived absence of stakeholders in the national government that might lead to the impeding of stakeholder collaboration across the role players in sport and destination branding organisations, there was a clear indication, across the respondents, that having strategic partnerships with both national and international businesses is extremely important to the sustainability of home-grown sport events, and to future marketing and leveraging practices. From a sport event perspective, notable strategic partnerships have been realised between sport event organisers and international event-related businesses. For example, the major event organiser of the Cape Town Cycle Tour has established strategic relations with international event organisers, the Prudential Ride London, in the United Kingdom (UK), in order to market the Cape Town Cycle Tour at the largest cycling event in the UK. At the same time, the event has also formed strategic relations with other international major sport events, such as the Five Boro Bike Race in the United States, the Vätternrundan in Sweden, the Etape Du Tour in France, and the Gran Fondo Campagnolo Roma in Italy, for similar branding benefits. As a result of the strategic partnerships concerned, the Cycle Tour is now able to lever collectively in terms of a database of approximately two million people, who are all interested in cycling. From a cycling perspective, the stakeholders are able to form an association called The World Association of Cycling Events (WACE), which allows each event organiser to market their event through the others' databases. The benefits of the international relationship so formed show promise for the weak South African currency (ZAR or Rand) in terms of international marketing, as well as in terms of direct promotion to healthy individuals, who have adopted an outdoor lifestyle, who are sporty, and who travel, as recognised by a key informant in terms of the organising of major sport and events.

A key informant involved in sport event marketing gave insight into the partnership in the following words:

Strategic partnering is huge, it is immeasurable. Look what you can do for your country through your event, not just for the event, but also [for] your city and country. You bring in these tourists, and they see what South Africa has to offer. We have this partnership with WACE to market directly to event participants and their families. So it works for me, as we are leveraging the event to market the country through these other events around the world ... So, strategic partnerships are absolutely key (R4).

Another key informant in sport event marketing emphasised the importance of strategic partnerships, in particular with the media, and noted that, through such media platforms as television and magazine broadcasting agents, their event could reach, and attract, new international markets to South Africa, as well as derive some form of insight into the destination's brand image through event hosting. The key informant in sport event marketing argued:

We have strategic partnerships with the National Geographic Channel (a cable/satellite television network), and I am busy with a partnership with Bloomberg (a newspaper and magazine media source) to market South Africa through our event. We don't have an office in the Middle East, for instance, but, through these

partnerships, the Middle East becomes a target market, and we use these [i.e. the] variety of media platforms to get the message of South Africa across (R8).

While R4 and R8 demonstrated their strategic partnerships with their international partners for purposes of sport event leveraging, from a South African perspective, strategic partnerships were believed to depend on stakeholder objectives and various mandates in terms of their business operations. Taks (2013) underscores that, as non-mega events occur more frequently than do mega-events, and are coupled with their accessibility to a wide variety of host cities and towns, they require tight local partnerships and human resources for their staging. However, in terms of the previous discussion on the absence of the NDT, it is plausible that strategic partnerships, in terms of collaborative relationships between sport and national tourism organisations, are lacking. R5 provided some insight into possible reasons for the lack of national government involvement, by alluding to the varied objectives across stakeholder (public and private) groups. The key informant in national government in sport and recreation argued that, unless their predefined objectives are aligned towards the same outcome, the relationship between public and private stakeholder groups will remain elusive. The key informant stated:

Remember, from a business perspective, major events seek to make profit, whereas the objective for government is using sport and events to achieve social development like job creation, priorities in education and poverty, and those type[s] of things, but events have to [have the] ability to create and sustain jobs. Those are very different objectives. It [partnership on a national level] will not work and be mutually beneficial for both, as [the] objectives [concerned] vary (R5).

While such statements are seemingly true, they do not justify the absence of national involvement in major event leveraging, especially since the above is achieved in other, more developed nations, like Australia, with their successful utilisation of sport events involving all role players. For reasons such as the above-mentioned, it makes sense that the stakeholders in sport events would prefer to partner strategically with other businesses with similar objectives. Consequently, despite the varied strategic objectives of the stakeholders in sport event organising and the government, in terms of their respective mandates, it is clear that, in connection with the utilising of sport for destination branding, the imperative for mutual objectives lies in the elicitation of funding and support for local socio-economic enhancement. The imperative also lies in establishing strategic public and private partnerships, so as to combat unique social challenges, and so as to cultivate the event and destination branding, which are believed to be two important means for developing destination brands in [terms of] the developing country context.

## **IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

The purpose of the current paper was to determine the views and challenges of industry stakeholders when considering the utility of non-mega events for destination branding. On the basis of the results and discussions concerned, the following key conclusions and recommendations are made for stakeholders in developing contexts. The results and discussions clearly show that sport events are significant boosters for destination brand promotion and, more importantly, for the enhancement of socio-economic development for destinations in both the developed and the developing contexts. For the developing destinations, however, the strategic utilisation of sport is emphasised in such policies as local event strategies for the establishing of brand positioning for global competitiveness. Both sport and non-sport events contribute to such policies, which implies the significance of events, both sporting and otherwise, for the securing of destination brand

benefits. For South Africa, stakeholders involved in destination branding through sport go beyond the primary role players in sport organising committees and tourism and destination branding organisations. The significant role of the media as a key stakeholder is particularly emphasised to portray not only the destination brand through broadcasting, but also to reach out to, and to attract, new international markets to South Africa, as well as to derive some form of insight into the destination's brand image through event hosting. The above is especially important due to the perpetuation of the social issues regarding the developing nations, and the South African brand in particular, through the making of regular media broadcasts. To eradicate such media challenges, the strategic partnership between sport and/or destination branding organisations and the media is seen as imperative. Furthermore, when considering sport for purposes of tourism and destination branding, strategic collaboration between the sport event organisation and the national tourism governments is critical. Beyond the strategic partnering of stakeholders with similar objectives, it is clear from the discussion that stakeholders with varied objectives (public and private) can complement each other on the nature of the sport tourism event industry. For example, sport event organisers complement the national imperative in their aim to enhance job creation and economic and social development through event hosting, and, to reciprocate, the national government supports sport events in their marketing to both the national and the international sport tourism markets. The effective collaboration between public and private stakeholders has a bearing on the marketing performance of non-mega events, and, likewise, on the socio-economic development of the South African brand.

The present study makes a modest theoretical contribution by adding new insights to the stakeholder theory, through uncovering the multiple stakeholder roles involved, in particular in areas of destination branding. In the areas concerned, an additional group of stakeholders is considered in terms of sport, as an important part of destination branding practices. In relation to non-mega events, the findings present insights into stakeholder roles, contributions and objectives in terms of destination branding regarding the utility of sport events, which contributes to the new perspectives that have been gained into strategic stakeholder partnerships and collaborations, in terms of providing evidence of non-mega events for developing destinations, which are often neglected in the extant sport and destination branding literature. The current study further offers practical significance for South African stakeholders, in providing guidance for the utilising of sport events for tourism and destination branding. Moreover, the study confirms, through definitive sport, brand and tourism stakeholder perceptions that a shared commitment from all role players, especially those at a national level, is imperative to the growth and stimulation of all-inclusive and destination brand promotion, as has similarly been reported by such researchers as Hankinson (2010). It further separates the South African brand from the developing nations by recognising the absence of the strategic alignment of predefined objectives between the public and private stakeholders in major events and the national departments concerned, leading to the elusiveness of strategic brand alignment. While the study provides the starting point for an empirical investigation into the utility of sport for the destination branding benefits to be gained in the developing context, critical analysis into a specific major sport event case study could provide enhanced understanding and deepen the insight into best practices for securing effective leveraging and strategic partnerships. The above could be of relevance not only to the wide-ranging major event industry, but also to stakeholder confidence in national and international departments for the South African destination as a whole.

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## **DEVELOPMENT OF SCIENTIFIC TOURISM AT BAIKONUR COSMODROME KAZAKHSTAN**

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**Abstract:** Many people see tourism as travelling, relaxing, getting new experiences and having a good time. However, considering it from different perspective, tourism can be developed and be related to other things. Current research is dedicated to one of the types of tourism - scientific tourism. After researching and defining the word “scientific tourism”, it has been considered as a new type of tourism. The classification of scientific tourism depends on the mission of that tourism. The result has shown that there are two types of scientific tourism: expedition and individual. The modern classification of these two types of scientific tourism is considered as introductory or educational. The research has shown that Kazakhstan has enough resources to develop scientific tourism. As an example, Baikonur Cosmodrome has been considered for future scientific and space tourism.

**Key words:** tourism, types, scientific tourism, research, scientific expeditions, cosmodrom Baikonur, development, space tourism

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Tourism has been and remains as one of the leading and main profitable sector of global economy, despite, even the global economic crisis (2008). For rapid growth and

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development, it is recognized as economic phenomenon of the XX century (Żegleń & Grzywacz, 2016), as it determined the levels of world relations between states and territories, influenced their economic and social development, legislative decision making, development systems the of world, continental and local tourist connections. In many countries, tourism plays significant role in the formation of gross domestic product, creation of additional workplaces and employment of the population (especially at small island states, where it is the main revenue source) (Stauvermann & Kumar, 2016), intensification of the foreign trade balance (for example of our Republic of Kazakhstan and China). Tourism has huge impact on transport (Cirer-Costa, 2016), communications (Arikan, 2017, construction, production of consumer goods and others.

Tourism in the view of most people is associated with travel, leisure, new experiences, pleasure. It is natural for person to strive to discover and know uncharted lands, monuments of nature, history and culture, customs and traditions of different nations. But tourism can also be considered from the other side, it has many types and prospects for the development in certain conditions, in particular, economic development of the country. Therefore, classification of tourism serves as the basis for the development of target and regional programs using industry-specific economic standards applicable for given region, for diverse development of territories, protection of ecosystems, etc.

It also makes it possible to determine the place of the tourist industry among other sectors of regional economy, calculate profit that tourism can provide (Birzhakov, 2004; Gozner & Avram, 2010; Ilieş & Wendt, 2015; Ilieş et al., 2016). One of the types of tourism to which the research is devoted is scientific tourism. Scientific tourism and scientific heritage is relatively new concept, although it has long history (Jafari et al., 1992; Ilieş & Josan, 2009). Novelty lies in the fact that especially today scientific tourism ceases to be exotic and becomes the subject of normal market circulation. As a concept, scientific tourism includes ecological, and ethno cultural, and underwater, and many other species, but the main feature is the active participation of tourist in the tour process (Ilyina, 1992). Scientific tourism includes cognitive system of scientific research in the regions and in general throughout the country. Cognitive part allows tourists to exchange various areas of research, in which new scientific ideas are born. Excursion-treatment services and resort-treatment activities that promote healing and recreational rest should be tightly linked to scientific communication. It must be said that scientific tourism is quite well developed in the USA, where it is called “learning travel”, which means educational, cognitive or scientific tourism (West, 2008; Kosiewicz, 2014). Scientific tourism is also one of the most developing industries in the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean region of the Canadian province of Quebec ([www.intacadem.ru](http://www.intacadem.ru)), where it is planned to expand the scope of scientific tourism and include active participation in such activities as speleology and archeology, agriculture, criminology, literature or medicine to educational routes.

In Europe also, it is the type of tourism that has become very popular among many people involved in science (Brouder, 2014; O’Gorman et al., 2014; McClinchey, 2015; Hung et al., 2016), politics (Mihalič et al., 2016) and culture (Truchet et al., 2016). About six hundred international scientific meetings and congresses are held in Germany every year. Germany is on 4<sup>th</sup> place by this type of tourism. The largest cities - centers of scientific tourism are Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Hanover, and Frankfurt am Main. Likewise in other European countries (Austria, France, Italy, the Czech Republic, etc.) international fairs, conferences and congresses in various fields of science are held annually. The Republic of Kazakhstan has all the prerequisites for the development of all types of tourism, including scientific, because tourism has been recognized as one of the developing economic sectors and entered the list of priority non-primary sectors of the economy of Kazakhstan as a cluster №1 (Saduov, 2014; Gozner, 2010; Ilieş et al., 2017, 2018).



## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Object of research**

The object of research is the world's first and largest cosmodrome Baikonur, located in Kyzylorda region, of 350 km north from the railway station Toretam. The name of the cosmodrome coincides with the same name of small town, which is located next to the village station Toretam. It was suggested by the Soviet secret service in order to confuse the "potential enemy" in search of the real location of the cosmodrome. The territory of Baikonur cosmodrome is 6,717 km<sup>2</sup> (<https://www.advantour.com/rus>) The Baikonur cosmodrome and the city of the same name together form the Baikonur complex, leased by Russia from Kazakhstan for the period until 2050.

### **Research methods**

Research used descriptive method for comprehensive disclosure of the topic, as well as a set of complementary methods: information retrieval, analysis and systematization of scientific publications and media materials on the object and subject of research, comparative method, statistical and cartographic method (using satellite images from Google Earth Pro: [www.maps-world.ru/sputnic.htm](http://www.maps-world.ru/sputnic.htm)).

The analysis of publications on the subject of research allows to define the concept and types of scientific tourism. As it was noted that most researchers mainly consider general special types and nature of tourism, causes and prerequisites for their occurrence (Birzhanov, 2002; Babkin, 2008; Serikova & Orazbayeva, 2010), some analyze various aspects of tourism in general (Kvartalnov, 2002; Karpova & Lavrova, 2009). Only some authors, single out scientific tourism as a separate independent type (Kholodilina, 2011; Pavlov: <http://www.intacadem.ru>), at the same time, linking it with ecological one (Panov, 1998; Kholodilina, 2011,) and cultural type (Pavlov: <http://www.intacadem.ru>).

In order to identify the relation between scientific tourism and environmental tourism, we have analysed foreign literature, where some authors consider ecotourism "in an amicable way of doing business" (Bădulescu & Bâc, 2009), others believe that the development of ecotourism requires motivation factors such as self-development, interpersonal relations, evaluation of nature and so on (Carvache-Franco et al., 2019), Whereas the rest associates it with geotourism (Ovreiu et al., 2019), that in principal is a scientific tourism. Aspects of the formation of regional tourist clusters of Kazakhstan were also considered, to one of which the considered study area is attributed (Artemyev & Abdreyeva, 2015). System analysis was used as the main research tools, quantitative methods of collecting and processing information were used qualitatively. Calculations were based on the data of the Committee on Statistics of the MNE RK. When defining scientific tourism, the characteristic of the term was taken from Glossary Commander: Service thematic explanatory dictionaries (<http://www.glossary.ru>).

## **RESULTS DISCUSSIONS**

During the years of independence and with the transition of Kazakhstan to market relations, tourism has taken its firm place, both in the economy and in science. For the development of young republic, its entry into the world arena for establishing international relations and attracting investments was important and necessary.

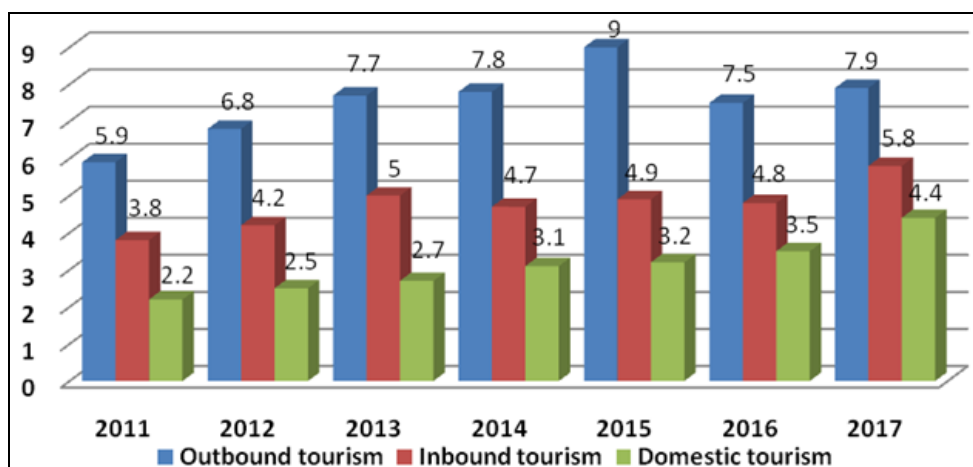
Kazakhstan had to present itself as a new independent subject of international relations, because for many Kazakhstan was terra incognita, uncharted land. It was necessary to present its capabilities, its people, its potential, therefore representatives of the intelligentsia and scholars were always part of our state delegations. They looked at various models of economic and political development of other countries. It was necessary on the spot to understand the advantages and disadvantages of various models of modernization, to explore the possibilities of transferring foreign experience

to Kazakhstani soil. This was the most positive path for the development of political, economic and other systems in Kazakhstan. The geography of international relations of our republic covers almost all continents. Among our partners are leading countries in Asia, Europe, America and Australia. Relations of Kazakhstan with the USA, China, Japan, France, Canada, Turkey, Iran, India, Pakistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Hungary and other Eastern European states, with the Baltic States, Scandinavia, Ukraine and Transcaucasia are successfully developing.

With the establishment of international relations, quite a lot of serious and diverse scientific research has appeared in various sectors of the economy, including types of international tourism and its organization, allowing to form the necessary basis for comprehensive study of conditions and factors, increasing the efficiency of resource use in the region for the development of particular type of tourism.

All these conditions, in turn, required qualified specialists, for which departments of tourism were opened in many universities of the republic. Currently, tourism is distinguished by quantitative changes. According to UNESCO, the annual number of international tourists is 625 million people (Kholodilina, 2011). First of all, it concerns scientific, environmental-expeditionary, sports-educational and cultural tourism, since science and culture affect the main motivations of people movement.

Figure 1 presents the data of the MNE RK on the number of visitors by type of tourism in Kazakhstan for 2011-2017. The data presented show the growth rate of all types of tourism. These rates are not identical in different years, but, nevertheless, gradual growth is obvious. This is the reason for the intensive development of tourism, both as a science and as a branch of economic activity (Figure 1). Scientific tourism is one of the least studied and underdeveloped types of tourism, so it is still in the initial stage of development. There is an opinion that considers scientific tourism as a regular trip, with the aim of participating in various conferences, congresses and symposia (Senin, 2003; Kholodilina, 2012). We agree with this opinion, because international scientific conferences always set goals for establishing scientific links between scientists, contacts, and for solving these or other common tasks that concern the world community.



**Figure 1.** Number of visitors served by type of tourism (thousand people)

(Source: <http://stat.gov.kz>.)

Under the term "scientific tourism" every researcher has his own opinion. Some understand the type of tourism, the purpose of which is professional research of interest

to science, familiarization with the history of scientific research, the uniqueness of natural resources ([www.intacadem.ru](http://www.intacadem.ru)). Others believe that scientific tourism is the implementation of research (scientific) activity in a specific area, which is not the tourist's place of residence during the period from 24 hours to 6 months in a row without gaining material gain (Kholodilina, 2011: 169). Still others believe that scientific tourism is a trip and collection of information about the culture and life of the population in a given period, which are the basis for the development of scientific tourism (Kvartalnov, 2002).

The Charter of Cultural Tourism, adopted by UNESCO (Kholodilina, 2012:169) and the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the Manila Declaration on World Tourism gives the following definition: "Scientific and cultural tourism is aimed inter alia - personal knowledge of scientific achievements and discovery of historical sites and monuments". (Kvartalnov, 2002:4; Dorofeyev, 2010). Based on the analysis of existing definitions of scientific tourism, the following concept is adhered: scientific tourism is the implementation of scientific activity with the personal participation of researcher on specific territory without any material benefit. The main distinguishing feature of scientific tourism from any other types of tourism is the active participation of the researcher in the tour program. According to experts of the Russian Geographical Society (RGO), (<http://www.knt.org.ru>), there are two main types of scientific tourism:

- expeditionary, as part of field organization of scientific organization;
- independent scientific tourism at your own risk.

Expeditionary scientific tourism, in turn, can be divided into:

- archaeological;
- restoration, (study and restoration of ancient monuments and buildings);
- ethnographic (study of national cultures, customs and traditions of peoples);
- study of rare animals in reserves;
- geological, etc.

Independent scientific tourism here is understood as follows: when a group or one traveler, at their own risk go to poorly studied regions and even countries, study abandoned or wild places, shoot video films. With this opinion we disagree a little. We believe that this is a common educational tourism. At present, some researchers divide scientific tourism into three main types (Kholodilina, 2011; <https://www.svastour.ru>):

- introductory, in order to familiarize with the history and uniqueness of natural resources, historical and cultural heritage, the education system, which is a feature of tourism potential and is successfully used by many countries as an element of attracting tourist flows, in particular, as the basis of educational tourism. For example, the world-famous universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard have long become tourist attractions and independent objects of the tourist show. The possibility of obtaining prestigious education attracts students from different regions, which strengthens established and sustainable segment of the consumer market.

- supporting participation: tourists take part in scientific works or expeditions as auxiliary personnel (participation in restoration works, work in reserves for the conservation of rare animals, field research);

- independent, i.e. independently study and explore nature, its flora, fauna which is of interest to science, thanks to the help and explanations of the scientific staff.

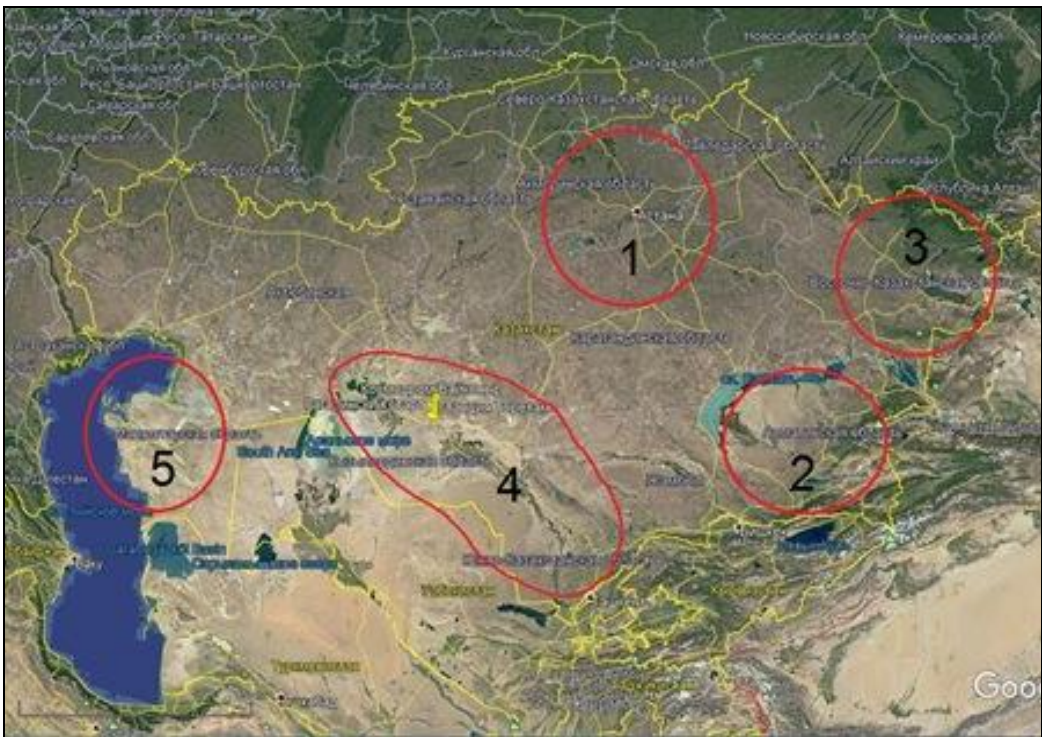
When conducting scientific and practical conferences and seminars, educational institutions are often used for tourism purposes, where tourist organizations can provide various services to scientific societies (holding meetings, events providing scientific information, visiting scientific objects, etc.).

Analyzing proposed classification of scientific tourism, the following can be said:

- the first type - introductory scientific tourism, is no different from ordinary educational tourism;

- the second type, auxiliary scientific tourism is the same as expeditionary tourism, because the tourist, taking part as auxiliary staff, is a member of the expedition itself. It includes foreign research expeditions, study of remote and new areas, when scientists from many countries jointly investigate world problems (global warming of the climate, formation of ozone layer, melting glaciers, study of Antarctica (where scientists from our country took part), human survival in extreme conditions (Everest), etc.; This may also include carrying out scientific field research;

- the third type of scientific tourism is quite well developed, when quite a few scientific researchers independently or in a group of 2–3 people conduct regular trips with a scientific purpose, for example, participation at international scientific conferences, seminars, commissions, etc. According to available estimates, participants of such international events make up 6–7% of the total number of foreign temporary visitors, and they account for about 10% of foreign exchange earnings from tourism (Serikova & Orazbayeva, 2010). Thus, it follows from this that only those trips can be attributed to scientific tourism, where the main goal of the tourist is not acquaintance with the object, but active participation in the scientific work of expedition or group. In the age of scientific and technological revolution, scientific complexes are important resource of scientific tourism. Specialized planetariums, nuclear power plants, space centers, as well as nature reserves, aquanariums, museums and exhibitions, etc. should be considered among the most popular scientific objects. Excursions to scientific objects can be organized both for specialists in a specific field of knowledge and for mass tourists.

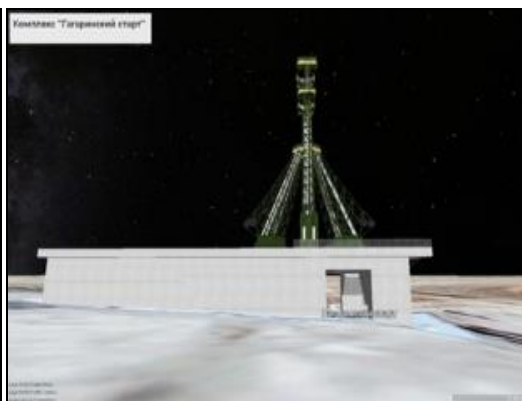


**Figure 2.** Planned tourist clusters of Kazakhstan, between them Baikonur - in the 4<sup>th</sup> cluster of the Republic (Source: <https://kapital.kz/>)

Kazakhstan has sufficient resources for scientific tourism, namely:

- developed system of scientific research in the widest areas, which are concentrated by the Ministry of Education and Science (the National Academy of Sciences of Kazakhstan was reorganized in 1996 and became part of the Ministry of Education and Science, and since 2003 it is a public association);
- variety of natural landscapes and biosphere reserves and national parks;
- interesting architectural monuments;
- interesting historical, memorial complexes of different eras;
- centers of various national traditional crafts.

Not all of these resources are fully mastered by the tourist business. Their development requires investment, and thoughtful plan to create competitive tourism products. Currently, there are few methods for designing scientific tourism products, in which a number of its specific features have to be taken into account. There is also the problem of personnel capable of organizing and conducting scientific tours of studied objects. One of such interesting objects not only for tourists, but also for science is Baikonur - the largest and most developed cosmodrome of the planet, whose territory is included in five planned tourist clusters of the republic (Figure 2). Five tourist cluster in Kazakhstan (1. Astana; 2. Almaty; 3. East Kazakhstan with Altai; 4. South Kazakhstan region and revival of the Great Silk Road; 5. West Kazakhstan region, the Caspian Gate).



**Figure 3.** Location of the complex "Gagarin's start"  
(Source: Satellite world map: Google Earth Pro: [www.maps-world.ru](http://www.maps-world.ru))

**Figure 4.** Complex "Gagarin's start"



**Figure 5.** Rocket launch

**Figure 6.** Statue at the entrance to Baikonur



It annually attracts a huge number of visitors and offers educational and scientific information to tourists who do not even have knowledge in this area (Figure 2-4, satellite images are taken from Satellite world map: Google Earth Pro: [www.maps-world.ru](http://www.maps-world.ru)).

As it is known to everyone, the first artificial satellite of the Earth was launched from the Baikonur cosmodrome, and then the first manned flight into space took place (Figure 3, 4) In the following years, the “Vostok”, “Voskhod” and “Soyuz” manned space rockets, orbital stations of “Salyut” and “Mir” series, the “Energiya” - “Buran” reusable systems, interplanetary spacecraft and artificial Earth satellites were launched from Baikonur (Figure 5). To the south of the cosmodrome (350 km) there is the city of Baikonur of the same name (Figure 6), where almost all the sights are connected precisely with cosmonautics. The tourist potential of the city is huge. The most popular among tourists are the Cosmodrome History Museum, the International Space School, the Gagarin’s Arbor, the Cosmonauts Alley and the Cosmonaut Hotel, where the cosmonauts stop before space flight. Only in this city you can see the launch of a real rocket. Almost every street in Baikonur has monument in honor of scientists, astronauts, writers and poets. For the development of tourism there are all the prerequisites in the city, because the city (officially considered closed city) becomes available, but tourism there develops and works according to certain rules (<http://strana.ru>; <https://habr.com/ru/post>). Tourists in this city, as well as in reserves, move only when accompanied by employees of tourist companies. To visit this city, it is necessary to send application to the travel agency no less than 60 days before the date of intended visit. Also permission is needed from Roscosmos and get permission to visit the cosmodrome and its facilities, as well as approve permission for professional film and photo works (<https://24.kz/ru/news/social/item>).

But, nevertheless, scientific tourism in this city has its beginning. The city of Baikonur annually hosts the International Scientific Competitions for Space Research for Schoolchildren called “Discovering the World of Science” (<https://www.buro247.kz>). Competitions are aimed at stimulating research abilities of schoolchildren to applied research in the field of science of Earth and Space, space technologies, modeling and astrophysics. In addition to the performance of schoolchildren with research projects, exhibitions of materials, models and devices of the participants are organized. Leading Russian scientists in the field of Earth and Space Science are present at these competitions as guests. In April 2018, on the eve of Cosmonautics Day, the XIV space research competition took place. Organization of such event in the city of Baikonur has become traditional; it opens up the scientific world of cosmonautics to the younger generation. In addition, on August 26, 2016 the Association of Physics Students and Young Scientists of Russia (APS Russia <http://www.imp.uran.ru>) and the International Space School of Baikonur organized visit of physics students and young scientists to the city and the Baikonur Cosmodrome with a conference seminar entitled “Physics to space. Modern and advanced space research and technology”. The conference program included thematic excursions and visits to museums, historical, memorable places and scientific and technical centers of the city of Baikonur; visiting memorial sites, museums and scientific and technical space centers of the Baikonur cosmodrome, and also roll-out can be seen– installation of launch vehicle at the launch site of the spaceship, which is made 3 days before launch and see the launch of the vehicle itself (<http://sktur.ru>). After the events, participants can be offered excursions around Baikonur (Table 1), visit memorable sights, including Baikonur Cosmodrome Museum, which houses unique collections, including the Moon Globe, personal belongings of the first cosmonaut Yu.A. Gagarin, the first satellite of the Earth, “Union”, “Belka” and “Strelka” capsules. The International Space School, can be visited, where there is a meeting with the leadership, teachers and students of unique space school and where rocket model can be independently launched.

The city also has a huge number of monuments set up in honor of famous scientists and researchers who devoted their lives to science and space: Yu.A. Gagarin, S.P. Korolev and others. Academician S.P. Korolev is the first founder of the city and the cosmodrome, so Baikonur has square and avenue, named after him, where is a monument devoted to him. As can be seen, the tourist potential of Baikonur is huge. Every year, cosmodrome attracts groups of travelers from Holland, Spain, Switzerland, Poland and other countries.

**Table 1.**Suggested tours at Baikonur

No	Excursions on the cosmodrome Baikonur	Brief description
1	Sightseeing tour at the city of Baikonur (travel information about the history of the city, stops at memorials and monuments)	The Baikonur complex is international space port providing reliable implementation of Russian and international space programs. Baikonur retains its leading position in the global space infrastructure for over 50 years. The history of the international space port is full of interesting and diverse pages related to the names of great people of the 20th century, with interesting engineering projects, which were ahead of their time in many ways. The rapid growth of the city occurred in the 1980 s in connection with the development of the space program "Energiya-Buran", which caused large flow of specialists from all over the USSR.
2	Baikonur Cosmodrome	The Baikonur Cosmodrome is unique scientific and technical complex. Over the past 50 years, it has become the largest cosmodrome in the world. Its area is 7000 square km; It is 75 km long from north to south and 90 km from west to east. The cosmodrome includes 9 launch complexes (15 launch sites); 11 test sites, 3 filling stations for space ships and 2 airfields. At present, Baikonur is open for worldwide cooperation in the field of space exploration, for orbital stations of new generation, for manned cosmonautics, which is the only and largest space center in the world.
3	Excursion at the International Space School	The International Space School (ISS) was established in 1990 by the decision of the Board of the Ministry of Education. When the Baikonur complex was leased to the Russian Federation in 1995, the name and status of the school were retained by the decision of the Government of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan.
4	Visit to the monument of the newcomer of space	The sculptural composition shows the history of the creation of the "Space Harbor"
5	Museum complex of the cosmodrome (museum, orbital ship "Buran", historical houses of S.P. Korolev and Yu.A.Gagarin)	The uniqueness of the museum lies in the fact that there are unique exhibits that are of great interest to visitors. Among them - the ejection seat with a dummy, which was used to test the parachute system during flight and space tests of the "Vostok" type spacecraft on March 25, 1961, options for returning sealed cockpits used in conducting biomedical experiments on animals.
6	Excursion to the Museum of the history of BaikonurCosmodrome	The Baikonur Cosmodrome History Museum was opened in 1967. At present, the exposition includes more than 15,000 storage units, four halls are functioning: hall of military and labor glory, hall of history of the development of rocket and space technology, outer space hall, ethnographic hall and exhibition gallery. The museum holds large video library with films about space, the Baikonur cosmodrome, as well as educational and popular science films on astronomy.

There are many prerequisites for the development of scientific tourism in the region, although it is believed that scientific tourism makes up a small share in the total tourist flow, but, however, its role is quite large. In particular, it can significantly replenish information about the study area and objects (which was previously considered closed), and can be useful not only for the development of science, but also for the further development of tourism in this region on a sustainable basis. At the same time, scientific tourism can contribute to the expansion of scientific and educational ties between various countries, laying the foundation for important and relevant international projects carried out on grants of charitable foundations. With such meetings and exchanges, new scientific ideas are born, and scientists receive strong impetus for creative development for the state of mind (Pirozhnik, 1996; Senin, 2003).

As it is known, one component is necessary for the development of tourism, including scientific, - uniqueness of the territory. Uniqueness of the territory is the originality, exclusiveness of the site or the object located on it and rarity in relation to other objects and territories. Exclusiveness of the site of territory or object lies in its location, natural and climatic factors, its historical development process, peculiarities of the biocenosis, etc. There are many remarkable places in the world marked by the history of human civilization as unique. One of these places on Earth is the Baikonur Cosmodrome, rightly called the first space harbor of the planet. Baikonur is unique in its complex, because it is the first and largest space center in the world. Tourists even have great opportunity to attend the launch of manned or unmanned missiles from the cosmodrome according to the launch schedule.

In terms of nature and resources, Baikonur is located in a semi-desert zone between 45° 7' N. and 63° 18' E. The relief of the territory is a flat accumulative plain, in the southern part of which, the Syr-Darya River flows from east to west. The entire territory is characterized by the presence of drainless depressions, occupied mainly by salt marshes or takyrs. On the territory there are small arrays of fixed hilly sands, sand mounds have a height of 2-10 m. The climate is continental: the winter is mild, the average temperature is - (minus) 10°, summer is hot, the temperature rises to +40° degrees. Prevailing wind direction is east and west. There is very little rainfall, the average long-term precipitation is 98 mm. However, the weather practically does not affect the launch of rockets: the launch can be transferred only in the case of storm wind with a speed of more than 50 m/s, which is exceptional phenomenon.

In the southern part of Baikonur, the Syr-Darya River flows, in its lower course it has no inflows. The water in it is sandy-earthly in color and contains a lot of silt particles, therefore it requires long sludge and filtration. The river flows among the loamy-sandy plain, covered with sandy mounds, towering 10-20 meters above it. The valley of the river has no clear boundary. In high-water years, during high water, as well as in winter, when river jams in various places, they overflow their banks, forming significant spills. The width of the river until the mid-70s was 200 meters. Since then, the width of river has significantly decreased and in the area of the city of Baikonur does not exceed 100 meters. The prevailing depth of the river is 3 meters, the maximum depth is 8 meters (Figure 3). The soil and vegetation cover of the territory is represented mainly by light chestnut saline soils.

The middle and southern part of the territory is covered with sparse vegetation, consisting of a wide variety of wormwood, salt worts and camel thorn. There is no continuous vegetation cover anywhere, the plants are located at considerable distance from each other. In some places there is absolutely bare soil. Tugai thickets and bushes are widespread along the Syr-Darya lowland. The sandy areas are represented by fixed hilly sands with extremely thin soil cover. Sand vegetation is easily destroyed.



The city of Baikonur and a number of residential and industrial sites of the cosmodrome are artificially well landscaped, although the grass cover is mostly insignificant, there are large number of trees).

## CONCLUSIONS

The XXI century must become the century of the development of scientific tourism. The phenomenon of the new century will be scientific expeditions and scientific stations that are included to the orbit of tourism (<https://bnews.kz/ru/news>). Therefore, in order to develop scientific tourism in the region under study, the following is proposed in the future:

- It is necessary to promote domestic science, which should serve society. For this, it is necessary to restore the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as the center of science and scientific research;
- To create interesting and attractive scientific basis for tourist facilities in order to interest local authorities in organizing tourist routes, expeditions and research;
- To provide training of qualified personnel for tourist firms, organizing scientific tours;
- To popularize economic importance of scientific tourism, as well as any kind of tourism that will become source of replenishment of the regional budget. Well-established scientific tourism will contribute to the growth of science, culture and the general economy of both the region and the country as a whole.

According to UNESCO experts, the share of scientific tourism by 2020 will be 25% of the total world tourism, or about two trillion US dollars per year (Kholodilina, 2012), which will actually complete the process of turning tourism into the leading complex of world scientific and cultural development, since science and culture affects the basic motivations of people movement. Scientific tourism will allow to attract trained enthusiasts to conduct various fundamental and applied research in various fields of science and technology, significantly expanding the boundaries of these studies in our Republic in all areas. And in this case, annual scientific competitions and conferences in Baikonur will be the basis for the development of space tourism, behind which the future stands (<http://www.unikaz.asia/ru>).

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