

**THE IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE LIGHT OF THE
RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH BASED ON STRUCTURED INTERVIEW**

**A IMPORTÂNCIA DO TURISMO SUSTENTÁVEL À LUZ DOS RESULTADOS DA
PESQUISA BASEADA EM ENTREVISTA ESTRUTURADA**

**LA IMPORTANCIA DEL TURISMO SOSTENIBLE A LA LUZ DE LOS
RESULTADOS DE LA INVESTIGACIÓN BASADA EN ENTREVISTA
ESTRUTURADA**

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ABSTRACT

With a large number of tourists, many popular tourist destinations become crowded while their sightseeing becomes more and more difficult and burdensome. Crowds of tourists also cause difficulties for the local community and disturb their everyday life. It happens that by failure to respect the specific rules, tourists destroy the places they visit, drop litter, and negatively affect the environment. In order to find a balance between promoting tourism, protecting the place visited and making life easier for the local inhabitants, it is necessary to take into account the objectives of sustainable tourism. However, not everyone is aware of this concept, and often, despite being familiar with it, some tourists behave in their specific way. Bearing this in mind, research has been carried out to verify the knowledge and understanding of tourism-related issues in the context of sustainability. The survey was conducted using a structured interview with 26 respondents from three countries of the Visegrád Group who were asked to answer five questions about sustainability and sustainable tourism and its integration into everyday life. The most interesting statements were collected and commented on. It can be observed that despite the understanding of the assumptions of both concepts, the respondents do not always use them for planning and during the travel. All the research will continue in other European countries to compare the behavior of tourists from different regions of the continent.

Key words: sustainable tourism; overtourism; tourist behaviour; tourism impacts

RESUMO

Com um grande número de turistas, muitos destinos turísticos populares ficam lotados enquanto seus passeios turísticos se tornam cada vez mais difíceis e onerosos. Multidões de turistas também causam dificuldades para a comunidade local e perturbam seu cotidiano. Acontece que, por desrespeito às regras específicas, os turistas destroem os locais que visitam, jogam lixo e prejudicam o meio ambiente. Para encontrar um equilíbrio entre promover o turismo, proteger o local visitado e facilitar a vida dos habitantes locais, é necessário ter em conta os objetivos do turismo sustentável. No entanto, nem todos conhecem este conceito e, muitas vezes, apesar de o conhecerem, alguns turistas comportam-se à sua maneira. Pensando nisso, pesquisas têm sido realizadas para verificar o conhecimento e a compreensão das questões relacionadas ao turismo no contexto da sustentabilidade. O inquérito foi realizado através de uma entrevista estruturada a 26 inquiridos de três países do Grupo Visegrád a quem foi pedido que respondessem a cinco questões sobre sustentabilidade e turismo sustentável e sua integração na vida quotidiana. As declarações mais interessantes foram coletadas e comentadas. Pode-se observar que apesar da compreensão dos pressupostos de ambos os conceitos, os respondentes nem sempre os utilizam para o planejamento e durante a viagem. Todas as pesquisas continuarão em outros países europeus para comparar o comportamento de turistas de diferentes regiões do continente.

Palavras-chave: turismo sustentável; sobreturismo; comportamento turístico; impactos do turismo

RESUMEN

Con una gran cantidad de turistas, muchos destinos turísticos populares se llenan de gente, mientras que su turismo se vuelve cada vez más difícil y oneroso. Las multitudes de turistas también causan dificultades a la comunidad local y perturban su vida cotidiana. Sucede que al no respetar las normas específicas, los turistas destruyen los lugares que visitan, arrojan basura y afectan negativamente al medio ambiente. Para encontrar un equilibrio entre promover el turismo, proteger el lugar visitado y facilitar la vida de los habitantes locales, es necesario tener en cuenta los objetivos del turismo sostenible. Sin embargo, no todo el mundo es consciente de este concepto y, a menudo, a pesar de estar familiarizado con él, algunos turistas se comportan de su manera específica. Teniendo esto en cuenta, se han realizado investigaciones para verificar el conocimiento y la comprensión de los temas relacionados con el turismo en el contexto de la sostenibilidad. La encuesta se realizó mediante una entrevista estructurada con 26 encuestados de tres países del Grupo Visegrád a quienes se les pidió que respondieran cinco preguntas sobre sostenibilidad y turismo sostenible y su integración en la vida cotidiana. Se recogieron y comentaron las declaraciones más interesantes. Se puede observar que a pesar de la comprensión de los supuestos de ambos conceptos, los encuestados no siempre los utilizan para la planificación y durante el viaje. Toda la investigación continuará en otros países europeos para comparar el comportamiento de los turistas de diferentes regiones del continente.

Palabras clave: turismo sostenible; exceso de turismo; comportamiento turístico; impactos del turismo

1. INTRODUCTION

More and more emphasis in recent years is put on the environmental protection, doing business sustainably, and on making sure that future generations have the same rights as we have today. It should be emphasized that ecological awareness allows for the realization that each human is responsible for the natural environment, its status, degradation and protection (Železik, 2014; Kardas, 2016). However, not everyone is aware of what sustainability really means and why it is so important, why it should be followed. Furthermore, not everyone realizes that this does not concern only the environmental protection. Such an approach often exists among people. However, they do not know that this issue concerns the balance of three elements: environment, economy and society (Ulewicz, Blaskova, 2018; Zelga-Szmidla, Kapustka, 2015; Flizikowski et al., 2019). The concept of sustainability has long been used in various types of industrial production. Also in the case of the services sector such as tourism, this issue is being developed and widely researched.

The number of tourists around the world is growing year by year, especially in the most popular tourist destinations (Heslinga, 2018). This is caused by several factors, among which some should mention: the improving well-being, low-cost airlines that have reduced travel costs, and the development of the Internet, which makes it easier to find interesting destinations, accommodation and connections. With the globalization, tourism has become one of the largest sectors of the economy in the world, characterized by the largest and fastest development (Gorica, 2007).

Unfortunately, with the increase in the number of tourists, the phenomenon of overtourism emerged. It can be defined as excessive numbers of tourists at a specific destination that can result in negative impacts of all types on the involved community (Huete, Mantecón, 2018). It should be remembered that tourism involves not only the right of tourists to visit and spend their free time in a given place but also the right of its inhabitants to live a peaceful life (Ingaldi, 2020). Residents living in a specific destination often deal with tourists, and they have to function normally, work, and lead a normal family life. On the other hand, it should also be remembered that tourists drive the local economy and create jobs for the local community, spend lots of money, which is why it is so important to continuously improve the offered tourist services and maintain their high quality while respecting the interests of all parties (Klimecka-Tatar, Ingaldi, 2020; Anttila, Jussila, 2018). Therefore, it seems necessary to find a golden mean that is beneficial for all stakeholders.

Despite understanding the concept of sustainability, many people do not understand or are not fully aware of the importance of sustainable tourism. Tourists often do not realize that their arrival at a given place may have a negative impact on the local economy or residents. For many tourists, a trip means that they pay for the hotel, entrance tickets, food or souvenirs, which makes it possible for the businesses and inhabitants to make profits, so the local community should enjoy and be grateful for. Therefore, according to their opinion tourists have every right to have fun and have a good time. But they seem to forget that the inhabitants in such destinations live normal lives and work, despite the holiday season and increased number of tourists. They often work hard so that the tourists can forget about their problems and relax. The inhabitants often have to tolerate tourists who do not respect their rights, e.g. through night-time partying. It also happens that tourists do not respect the place they visit.

They go in where they are not allowed, they drop litter, destroy monuments, or take "something" as a souvenir. Therefore, the promotion of sustainable tourism and the rights of local communities is also important and should be respected by tourists.

There are many publications on sustainability and sustainable tourism. They describe issues from theoretical and practical standpoints. Many ordinary people and tourists understand both concepts. However, this does not mean that they use the assumptions of both concepts in their lives and behaviour.

The aim of the paper was to assess the understanding of the sustainable tourism by tourists themselves and to analyse their travel habits, which allowed to show whether the assumptions of sustainable tourism are taken into account by them when choosing a place of destination or during travelling. The presented research results are part of a larger research project, which the authors are involved in, concerning the approach of people from different regions of Europe to sustainable tourism. The analysis of the results presented in this study was based on structured interviews with respondents from three European countries who had taken part in the previous stage of the research (questionnaire survey) and agreed to participate further in the research. The analysis of individual statements of people, their points of view and their understanding of particular issues allowed for showing whether tourists are aware of the need for sustainable tourism and respect for local culture or heritage of the tourist destination. The survey was preceded by a detailed analysis of the available literature on the subject, part of which is also presented in this paper.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. An approach to sustainable tourism in the available literature

In order to conduct a critical literature review on the chosen topic, which contains two important indexes for the publications - highly cited and hot papers, was used. The distinguished results will be characterized in terms of their content. The discussion on the basis of the papers will allow to assess the potential research gap, which will be used by the authors of this paper.

The ones that determine the extent to which the research gap is shaped in terms of excessive tourism and tourist behaviour in the subject of research on sustainable tourism, and

to what extent these studies fill it, are indicated below. Selected papers are discussed in the order of their publication. In order not to refer to classic papers and papers on outdated cognitive perceptions, the selection was limited to the last five years.

At the beginning two publication that both are related to the theme of the COVID-19 pandemic were analysed. The publication of Hall et al. (2020) provides a comprehensive overview of the impact of a pandemic on tourism, based on the literature available to date. Although there are no original empirical results, it is an interesting premise to expand the research (in the form of an interview and a questionnaire) with questions relating directly and indirectly to the pandemic. The second paper written by Higgins-Desbiolles (2020) concerns the possibility of "reinventing" tourism, which has become a tool of neoliberal exploitation. An industry crisis triggered by a pandemic makes it possible to look back and build a 'responsible' approach to tourism.

When reviewing the literature, it is necessary to mention a fresh perspective on sustainable tourism, which is based on the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development (Hall, 2019). There is no doubt that all contemporary research on this topic should also take into account the goals of sustainable development. This applies to both environmental, social and economic issues. It is worth remembering, also because tourism is one of the pillars of the economy of rural areas that develop on the basis of the principles of eco-development, and the local tourism is characterized by greater seasonality than in the case of tourism of the urban areas (Martinez et al., 2019). This applies to both areas attractive in terms of nature, as well as those of a historical nature. It should be remembered that there are two important groups among tourists. The first group includes people who like to visit well-known places, especially historical and cultural places. There are a lot of people who prefer places far from noise, rural areas, and rural tourism. That is why the field of research in this area is so wide.

In the latest research on heritage tourism, a lot of attention is paid to the attitudes of residents of such destinations (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2019). It is related to the nuisance of tourists and their behavior. At the same time, there is no similar research from the tourists' point of view. Additionally, economic, natural or even legal conditions are considered more often than tourists' attitudes. In an interesting analysis of the impact of tourism on the local economy and the environment on the example of Nepal (Nepal et al., 2019), econometric

methods were used. It is worth noticing the differences indicated between the short-term and long-term effects of tourist traffic on the economy and the environment. Awareness of this relationship, e.g. the ability to perceive the long-term costs of short-term benefits (and vice versa) is at the heart of the principles of sustainable tourism. A particularly interesting and inspiring conclusion from the paper is the recommendation for governments to implement the integration of tourism policy with energy and environmental protection policies in order to facilitate a sustainable tourism sector. This postulate should be confronted with the needs and attitudes of tourists. Because of the popularity of a given touristic place, the possibility of earning money on tourism, creating new jobs, but on the other hand, the pollution of that place depends on tourists. In order to create a place that will be visited by tourists, but also to take into account sustainable development, it is necessary to consult people who have visited or may visit such places.

An important review publication on the legal and social aspects of sustainable tourism is the paper on the relationship between the right to tourism and the rights of residents in tourist resorts. Perkumiene et al. (2019) discussed this confrontation on the basis of various scientific and legal sources. Although the work is devoid of empirical research, it is an interesting discussion of the current issues related to the topics of "sustainable tourism" and "overtourism". The paper also encourages further, in-depth research, which is a frequent postulate of publications on sustainable tourism. This subject is relatively new, which creates many research niches. This is proved by a different, more business approach proposed in the paper of Fu et al. (2019) presenting an overview of the literature related to entrepreneurship research in the hospitality and tourism industry. On the other hand, more methodological work on the development of a coherent set of indicators measuring progress towards the formation of sustainable tourism was carried out on the basis of the Delphi method (Asmelash, Kumar, 2019). One of the conclusions of this research was the need to expand the analysed groups of respondents to include entities related to tourism.

It is also worth getting acquainted with a bibliometric review of items about tourism in the context of sustainable development, where analysis of publications from 1987-2018 was included (Ninerola, 2019). The conclusions presented by the authors show that the amount of

literature on this subject is systematically growing, and sustainable development is becoming a key point in the strategies of companies and tourist destinations.

Another alternative approach to the problem is the issue of the environmental harmfulness of the existing forms of transport. Although the paper of Peeters et al. (2019) is a publication that introduced these issues, it is also worth mentioning because it deals with an important topic directly related to the tourism sector. A more empirical approach was presented in a study on the attitudes of residents of tourist destinations in the Taiwanese community (Lee, Jan, 2019). The conclusion of the analysis is the fact that these attitudes differ depending on the degree of sustainable tourism development in a given community.

Interesting in relation to consumer attitudes it is also the impact of hotel certification on their care for the environment (Rico et al., 2019). The survey conducted among the residents of Spanish hotels clearly showed the positive impact of the certification on the image of a given facility, and further on the attitudes of customers towards it, also expressed in the will to stay, recommendations and coverage of the premium price. It is one of the items showing the economic usefulness of conducting analyses on this subject. An interesting approach to sustainable tourism, empirically verifying a purely theoretical problem, is presented in the paper of Koens et al. (2018) devoted to the conceptualization of the concept of overtourism. Although it is commonly used, it is sometimes interpreted and understood in various ways.

The publication discussing the most important emerging economies, i.e. the BRICS countries, discusses the problematic relationship between tourism, economic growth and the quality of the environment (Danish; Wang, 2018). Based on not only literature reviews or surveys, but also econometric analyzes, it has been indicated that tourism not only strongly leads to economic growth, but also significantly contributes to environmental degradation. Similar threats are indicated in the paper of Higgins-Desbiolles (2018), where the author recommended greater impact of sustainable development on tourism management in the global dimension. This view goes far beyond the typical local perception of the presented subject and creates a broader cognitive framework. The original contribution of this publication are the ideas to transform the United Nations World Tourism Organization into the Office for Sustainable Mobilities and to create the global Tourism Wealth Fund. Although this is very different from the empirical approach to the attitudes of tourists and the future of

the industry as a whole, it shows that research must be part of a larger whole that deals with problems globally, especially in the context of progressing climate change.

Another locally embedded analysis concerns the attitudes of residents of a historic tourist destination in Spain, was published by Gonzalez et al. (2018). It includes an extensive interview method, but it is more concerned with social relations than with sustainable development.

On the basis of a large research sample (5,249) in south-west Norway, the question of the possibility of optimizing the relationship between the growing number of tourists and greater concern for the economic, social and environmental aspects of a given destination was examined (Oklevik, 2019). Here, too, the problem of basing the development of tourism on a constant increase in the number of customers, discussed in the above-cited publications, appeared. This approach is increasingly conflicted with the principles of sustainable development, so an attempt should be made to build a policy based on other guidelines. This is confirmed by the study of the relationship between tourism and environmental degradation, comparing the western and eastern groups of European Union countries (Paramati, 2017). Econometric analyzes have proven that while tourism undoubtedly plays an important role in accelerating economic growth, its role in CO₂ emissions depends on the implementation of eco-development policy and efficient management. Shaping such practices is based on insightful observations and taking into account all stakeholder groups, not only politicians and representatives of the hotel and tourism industry. It is also necessary to get to know the needs and attitudes of tourists themselves.

More references to these attitudes can be found in publications with the keyword “tourist behavior”. An innovative approach is indicated by the item presenting an analysis of attitudes demonstrated by young people, who intensively use more or less complex tools and ICT devices, directing their tourist interest towards the so-called Smart destinations (Femenia-Serra, 2019). This work does not draw universal conclusions, but it is an interesting analysis of expectations towards tourist destinations chosen by young people in the 21st century. It also shows the need to care not only about appropriate technological facilities, but also to protect user privacy. In the context of new technologies, an interesting research perspective is illustrated by the paper on the use of big data techniques to analyse the behaviour of tourists

(Miah, 2017), in this case on the example of Australian Melbourne. The use of photos posted on social networking sites is undoubtedly a new approach in research on tourism. It is worth noting that this observation was to lead to the construction of effective management support tools. Although this is the first step towards developing effective methods, the work on the strategic decision support system in the tourism management dimension should be assessed positively, especially in the context of sustainable development. With reference to a number of publications that will gradually appear on the tourism industry during (and after) the pandemic, it is worth quoting a review paper from 2016, which discussed earlier publications on this topic (Mair, 2016).

The presented analysis deliberately omits, apart from the newest, reviews and topics that are important, but differ from the issues and research methods used in this article. On the other hand, it has highlighted the fact that while there are similar studies in terms of methods, they usually differ either in terms of their approach (residents, not tourists) or are firmly established in a different geographic area, with their own local conditions.

Analyses conducted locally may help to use business and marketing techniques based on the attitudes and expectations of possible tourists. This is important in laying the foundations for further considerations based on an increasingly better understanding of the respondents. At the same time, it can be seen that due to the great development and potential of literature dealing with tourism in the perspective of sustainable development, empirical research, as a rule, constitutes a more valuable contribution to the development of this issue than review articles. This is particularly important in the situation of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which forces new paths towards the analysis of the expectations and attitudes of tourists, aware of not only traditional, but also completely new, previously unknown threats.

2.2. Vacation preferences of tourists

Traveling is one of the most popular forms of spending free time, especially if we travel for relaxation. Every year, people look for new and interesting places to visit. Their choice is determined by various factors, ranging from travel costs, date of departure and its duration, through the interest of the traveller. Due to easier access to modern means of

transport, lower travel costs, and a less complicated procedure of dealing with the necessary documents, it is becoming easier and more frequent.

When choosing the form of tourism, the decision-making process by tourists, also called the vacation planning process, is of key element of purchasing behaviour on the tourism market. It is related to making choices about tourist trips, their directions and goals, ways of organizing and form of vacation. It is not only an individual choice, but a decision concerning a complex product that satisfies a complex of needs (as part of this process, potential tourists decide on many elements of a tourist trip, i.e. the destination of rest, means of transport, accommodation, type of food, ways of spending time, etc.) (Pan et al., 2021; Japutra, Hossain, 2020).

The choice of purchasing tourism goods and services is influenced by the structure and average age of family members. In single-person households or among young, childless married couples, trips requiring more physical activity are chosen more often than in the case of the families with children. They appreciate relaxation in places where attractions for their children will be provided.

It should also be noted that tourist trips can be a symbol of social status and emphasize belonging to the individual social classes. This is due to the mimicry processes and the demonstration effect. Vacation trips to exotic places and shopping for luxury items tend to be the subject of such demonstrative behaviour. The owner of a prospering company will rather choose a prestigious place to rest, while the role of the mother often determines the choice of holidays in a family resort. The played role is closely related to the notion of social status, indicating the position held in a given society (Ingaldi, 2020).

Some people are also guided by the sights they can see, the customs they can get to know, the food they can taste, the possibility of living the way the local community lives. Fashion comes to the background, more important is to experience something interesting, something exciting. Still, for many people the main motive for choosing a destination for a recreational tourist trip are tourist values, which include natural and anthropogenic elements. Most of all, they determine the tourist attractiveness of the area. The universal significance of tourist attractiveness is said when the natural and cultural features as well as the provision of tourist infrastructure in the area are attractive to all tourists. In relative terms, the

attractiveness of the area is considered from the point of view of specific forms of tourism, e.g. attractiveness for ski tourism, cultural tourism or spa tourism.

Nowadays, both leisure and tourism are treated as one of the important elements of the lifestyle of developed societies. These are undoubtedly effective tools that allow people to stay in good shape, health and social activity for longer, thus helping to effectively postpone health problems resulting from everyday work. Active recreation and tourism have enormous potential, which can and should be skilfully used to the benefit of everyone. In addition, trips beyond their everyday environment provide opportunities to explore a new environment, allow engaging in other, unknown forms of activity, help overcome the resistance to trying "something new". Learning, even if it is an unintentional process, is one of the most important benefits that tourism participants derive from. Each trip brings new experiences which, through personal reflection, initiate the process of analysing new situations and, consequently, their evaluations. In this way, not only does the acquisition of specific skills, but also changes in perceptions and attitudes (Diez-Gutierrez, Babri, 2020).

Instead of passively spending our free time, people look for new experiences. After a period of fascination with passive rest, consisting mainly of sunbathing, travellers more and more often choose other forms of tourist activity. They are eager to learn about the history, culture, and everyday life of the inhabitants of a given region or country. They prepare for their trips theoretically and practically. When visiting interesting places, nooks, and establishing contacts with natives, people look for the authenticity that they lost in everyday, sometimes artificial life (Butowski, 2019; Gonzalez et al., 2018).

Unfortunately, in addition to the aforementioned premises, tourists rarely take into account the assumptions of sustainable tourism when planning their trips. They are more interested in their own comfort, willingness to adventure, to see something new, without thinking about the visited place and its elements. Many papers deal with the issue of holiday destinations and tourists motives, but little is said about linking this choice with the assumptions of sustainable tourism, so it is worth taking a closer look and asking for the opinion of the tourists.

2.3. Main problems related to maintaining sustainable tourism

It should be remembered that each form of tourism affects the local community in a specific way. Many papers emphasize both the negative and positive aspects of tourism. The main assumption of sustainable tourism is to minimize the negative impact of tourism on the natural environment and local culture, while helping to generate employment opportunities for local residents. The aim of sustainable tourism is to ensure that development brings a positive experience for local communities, tourism companies and tourists themselves (Peeters, Dubois, 2010; Larsen, Guiver, 2013; Canavan, 2014).

City dwellers, especially in the spring and summer months, have to accept many tourists and learn to live with them. The most popular tourist spots have unfortunately been taken over by tourists unsustainable (Mihalič, Kuščer, 2019). The most famous European cities that struggle with this phenomenon are Barcelona, Berlin, Lisbon, Roma and Prague (Koens et al., 2018).

Many popular tourist destinations are crowded not only during the summer and holiday season, but actually throughout the whole year. The influx of tourists affects the formation of traffic jams, different types of waste, higher prices, disrupting the daily life of residents, and even the appearance of criminals. Tourists often do not respect the local rules of life, do not respect the habits of the inhabitants, behave too freely, etc. It happens that they leave the designated tourist routes, enter forbidden places, destroy the natural environment. Often they do not respect the rights of the inhabitants of a given tourist destination to live peacefully, especially that for them, it is a normal day when they work or carry out their daily activities (Jamieson, 2019; Bouchon, Rauscher, 2019; Seraphin et al., 2018).

The negative impact on the environment is also caused by e.g. large investments in tourist infrastructure. This phenomenon was described by M. Franch et al. (Franch et al., 2008), pointing out that in mountainous regions, mass tourism can be described as 'sun, ski, snow'. However, in the case of the Alps, some localities and regions have been over-invested, leading to a decline in tourism. This forced the region's hosts to seek a solution to this problem.

Another problem related to overtourism may also be its impact on the quality of provided tourist services. With the increasing number of tourists, it is also difficult to find a place to eat something good and fresh without paying a fortune for it. Another, unfortunately

often commented on, phenomenon has also arisen, namely cheating tourists on the prices of various services. With many tourists, it is easier to check someone by quoting sky-high prices. Souvenirs produced on a mass scale in China and sold as 'local' at very attractive prices are also a threat. In many large cities, there is a problem with renting apartments, not only about the lack of such places, but most of all about the price, as well as the lack of a license to do so. It happened that tourists paid for the apartment that does not exist. On the other hand, tourists are not always aware that ordinary people live behind the wall of the rented premises, they behave more freely than usual, often abuse e.g. alcohol, disturb the quiet hours, which has a negative impact on the lives of the tenants of a block of flats or tenement houses (Gutiérrez et al, 2019; Capocchi et al., 2019).

Due to the dynamic development of tourism, residents and local stakeholders are increasingly calling for a way to deal with the problem of overtourism. This phenomenon should be viewed from two perspectives: as the right of tourists to travel, but also as the right of residents to a peaceful and dignified life, so to keep in mind the sustainable tourism (Perkumiene, Pranskuniene, 2019).

More and more cities are starting to fight the phenomenon of overtourism. For example the Italian parliament approved the introduction of an additional tax on admission to Venice for one-day tourists. In many Italian cities, bathing in fountains or eating meals near monuments was banned (such restrictions were introduced, for example, in Rome). Tourists can no longer sit on the famous Spanish Steps. In Santorini (Greece), a daily limit of tourists entering the city has been introduced (Pogórska, 2019). In Barcelona, during a protest organized by left-wing social activists in 2017, the slogan 'Tourists go home' appeared (Hughes, 2018).

However, it should not be forgotten that the increase in the number of tourists visiting a given tourist destination may also have a positive effect. For example, new jobs are created in which local residents are employed, which is especially important in places with high unemployment. Tourists provide cities with an inflow of money, using the hotel and gastronomic base, as well as the tourist attractions themselves. Tourists want to get to know the local culture, a lifestyle that is often completely different from their everyday life, try local

dishes, buy local souvenirs, which also allows the local community to work and brings money (Gonzalez et al., 2018; Scheyvens, 2009).

The economic role of tourism manifests in economic activities aimed at preparing the region for the reception of tourist traffic to receive tourists and creating sources of income for the service sphere. Tourism activates economic activity, influences the size and structure of consumption of the population, causes the transfer of people, as well as an inflow of means of payment on a national and international scale. Among the economic factors, the most important factor for the emergence of tourist demand on the market is income, which can be analysed individually, for local people as well as nationally, in relation to the general economic situation. Therefore, the authorities and entrepreneurs operating in today's tourist towns and regions are aware of the need to increase the tourist attractiveness of the destination in which they operate. In order to achieve market success, it is worth taking a comprehensive look at a potential tourist, recognizing his needs and factors affecting them. It is also important to ensure the supply that will meet the needs of a specific segment of tourists and ensure the level and quality of services offered and the provision of information about them (promotional activities).

That is why the significance of sustainable tourism is so important both from the point of view of the tourist and the resident of the tourist destination. It seems that a symbiosis that will be beneficial to all parties is necessary. However, both residents and tourists must be aware of this. They need to understand what sustainable tourism is all about, that both sides have their own rights and obligations which must be respected. Without the interest of the inhabitants, it is impossible to create an interesting tourist destination, without tourists such a place will not be able to develop. Therefore, it is worth, for example, through various types of actions, research, surveys, to educate both parties, to show them that it is worth taking into account not only your dreams, but also the other parties.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study analysed the attitudes of people in different regions of Europe towards sustainable tourism. The presented research was part of a larger research project the authors were involved in. The part presented in the paper was conducted in the form of a structured

interview. This part was expected to find whether the respondents understand the concept of sustainability and sustainable tourism in particular, but also whether they apply these principles in their lives during holidays. This part of the research was treated as preliminary(pilot) research. The study will be supplemented with the results of the survey and the conclusions drawn from it and published in the nearest future. In this paper the authors decided to share the results of the structured interview, as they contain very interesting answers and important references to the topic under study.

The first part of the project was conducted in the form of an online survey. It was made available on various Internet forums and social networking sites. The survey was made available in English, which may have had an impact on its results, as the survey could be attended by people who speak this language at a communicative level. However, such a solution made it possible to address the survey to a wider range of respondents, without limiting it to just one European country. In the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to assess, on the Likert scale of 1 to 5 points (with 1 meaning “I completely disagree”, and 5 meaning “I completely agree”), 20 statements concerning the way they organized and spent their holidays and then to answer 7 closed-ended questions. The survey was attended by over 2,500 respondents from the countries of the Visegrád Group (i.e. the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary). Its results are analysed and soon will be published. Authors plan to continue the research in other European countries. The results of the survey was presented in paper (Ingaldi, Dziuba, 2021).

According to previous assumptions, the structured interviews with the authors were to be attended by respondents who had taken part in an earlier stage of the research (the survey) and agreed to participate further in the research. This was declared by about 8% of respondents. However, eventually, 26 people from the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia took part in this part of the structured interview. Other respondents either did not respond to emails about the further participation in the research or, after receiving such an email, refused to participate or were unable to determine the specific date and time of the interviews. Therefore, it should be emphasized that the authors did not have much influence on the structure of the respondents.

The structured interview was conducted by both authors. At that time, one of the authors asked questions and talked to the respondent, while the other wrote down the individual answers in a previously prepared form. The authors did not try to suggest or in any way prompt the respondents to provide the correct answers. Every interviewee was familiarized with the purpose of the study, its basis and procedures.

Meetings with the respondents were held using various instant messengers (depending on the respondents' declarations). Interviews with individual respondents were conducted between January and March 2020. Individual interviews were not recorded due to the lack of consent of many respondents, but all responses were recorded in detail.

The participants were asked the following questions in this part:

1. What is sustainability to you?
2. What does sustainable tourism mean to you?
3. What are you guided by when choosing a holiday destination?
4. Do you buy local souvenirs made by local craftsmen / local food?
5. Do you take into account the local community, tradition, customs and culture of the community during sight-seeing?

While analyzing the answers, the most important and interesting ones were quoted and commented on. During analysis each statement was marked with the name of the respondent so that the reader could identify the answers of individual people.

4. RESULTS

Table 1 presents the characteristics of respondents participating in this stage of the survey. As the respondents did not choose all options for particular characteristics, only the indicated answers were included in this list.

Table 1
Characteristics of respondents (author's own study)

Characteristic	Option	Percentage
Gender	female	46
	male	54
Nationality	Czech Republic	27
	Poland	58
	Slovakia	15

Age	21-30 years	62
	31-40 years	19
	41-50 years	19
Social status	pupil/university student	29
	I work	71
Education	secondary	18
	higher	82
Place of residence	rural areas	12
	city with up to 50 thousand inhabitants	15
	city with 51 to 100 thousand inhabitants	4
	city with 101 to 200 thousand inhabitants	8
	city with 201 to 300 thousand inhabitants	8
	city with over 50 thousand inhabitants	54

Source: research data

The gender structure of the respondents was very even, with 54% of them being men. The respondents were people aged 21-50, who worked (some studied at universities), mainly with higher education. No distinction was made between the individual degrees, which was reflected in the education, and graduates from first-cycle studies could mark this option. Most of them were people from big cities, although the percentage of people from rural areas and small towns was noticeable.

The structure of the respondents does not correspond to the social structure of the inhabitants in the three countries of origin of the respondents. According to statistics, people aged 21-30 constitute approximately 5% of all inhabitants in individual countries, the employment rate is around 50%, while higher education has less than 20% of the population.

The structure of respondents certainly influenced several things. Age and education may indicate people for whom the environment is important and who understand the need for sustainable development. They are also not afraid to express their opinions and like communicating with others via the Internet. These are people who like travelling, they can afford it and do it quite frequently, so they can provide much valuable information on these problems. Summing up, the structure of the respondents may have a large impact on the results of the presented research.

The structured interview was attended by representatives of three countries (Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia). The Czech Republic was represented by Alexander, Anna, Francis, John, Mark, Martha, and Pavel. The Polish respondents were: Agnieszka, Alex,

Christopher, Cristian, Dorota, Jaga, Justyna, Luca, Magda, Maria, Olga, Sara, Thomas, Vincent, and Zuza. Katarina, Martin, Robert, and Simon came from Slovakia.

4.1 What is sustainability to you?

Perhaps the education of the respondents influenced the answers to the question "*What is sustainability for you?*". It should be emphasized that most of the participants of the structured interview declared higher education. Therefore, it can be concluded that they were likely to have come across or read about this concept before. All of them dealt with this question more or less and explained what sustainability meant to them. They mostly stressed the environmental aspect and the need to protect the environment, and, in many of their statements, there was also an economic and social element.

Below are the most important parts of the respondents' statements together with the authors' comments. The first statements concern the definition of the concept of sustainable development and its individual areas. Not all respondents emphasized all three areas at once. Part of them referred to only one selected area.

"Sustainable development leads to economic development while minimizing the use of natural resources, the use of renewable raw materials and the management and minimization of waste" (Anna).

"Sustainable development is a new form of economy in which the country is developed with respect for the environment, without its excessive pollution and modification and excessive consumption of natural resources while re-using various types of waste" (Vincent).

"For me, sustainable development is the economic development of a country with zero impact or the lowest impact possible" (Cristian).

These respondents referred only to the best-known area of sustainable development, i.e. the environment. These statements stressed the possibility of caring for the environment, whereas this possibility is ensured by minimizing the use of natural resources, using renewable raw materials and waste management. According to the interviewees, the environment is most important and should be taken care of. This is a popular approach to the concept of sustainable development. This aspect has been often emphasized in various

publications, which may explain the respondents' approach. These statements were extended by another one:

"Taking full responsibility for the changes in the environment caused by businesses" (Olga).

The important word 'responsibility' appeared here, which often accompanies the basic definitions of sustainable development, but is also used in various management systems. This term often emphasizes the responsibility of the current generation for leaving these resources and the environment for future generations. But this also means the corporate responsibility for activities and for how these activities affect the enterprise's immediate and further environment.

"This activity enables the development of a given environment/area without affecting future generations. That is, our actions in the present world should not disturb their functioning and allow people to live with dignity" (Martha).

"Sustainable development can be defined as an economic and social development that takes into account and protects the surrounding people and natural resources" (Robert).

The respondents also pointed to the social aspect, which is the second important element of sustainable development. The environment is important, but it is used and protected by the current population. If people are not provided with adequate living conditions, they will look for other solutions to get their livelihood. This can even be done at the expense of the environment. It should be noticed that Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943; Green, 2020) is based on physiological needs, followed by safety needs. Without meeting them it is impossible to ascend the higher levels of this pyramid. Therefore, this aspect is also important.

"Economic development which emphasizes available resources and their use... we should not do this excessively, but also look to take care of the well-being of the current society, which is part of the environment. We must also think from the point of view of an economy that ensures jobs and livelihood" (Martin).

Some people also noted the economic aspect. Reducing the consumption of raw materials, leaving it to future generations, and proper waste management is not the only element of sustainable development. Sustainable development is impossible without the economic aspect and development of enterprises. Enterprises must have access to materials,

energy and other inputs, appropriate regulations so that they can carry out their activities effectively and manufacture products that meet customer requirements but also do not adversely affect the environment. With their activities, enterprises create jobs that enable the local community to work and thus get adequate resources to support themselves and their families.

"The model of economy and management aimed at increasing and protecting both the cultural and natural resources of a territory" (Alex).

This statement is very interesting because sustainable development defined in this way also takes into account the achievements of mankind to date in the form of resources or cultural goods used by everyone. Furthermore, as in the case of the environment, many people who use such resources do not take other generations into consideration and do not care about them. There is also the term "economic and management model", which indicates that the respondent who gave such an answer has more experience with the concept.

"This is a development that is capable of meeting consumer needs without adverse effects on the environment and the ecosystem" (Agnieszka).

"By sustainability, I mean development that meets the current needs of the consumers without excessive consumption of resources, so that they can be used in later years" (Luca).

Other respondents supplemented the information about sustainability with consumers and their needs. The consumer is the most important element in any enterprise as they communicate their needs and determine what they are willing to buy. No business can be conducted without satisfied customers and without meeting their needs. In order to earn money, the enterprise must meet their requirements. This highlights the important economic factor in addition to the environment.

Many statements contained some expressions that can be considered as characteristics of sustainable development. The respondents paid special attention to these characteristics.

"This is a development that is not based on high risk/stress or free time. It is something more gradual and stable, like the German economy, which has come step by step to its present state with hard work" (Maria).

This statement differs from typical definitions found in the available literature but it contains very important elements. Any development and any change is not free of risk. It is

never certain whether the goal can be achieved and what the consequences of the decisions will be. But if people try to do something gradually and slowly, with hard work, and think carefully about every step, they can achieve stability. There is no reference to the individual elements that make up sustainable development.

"Financial assistance for underinvested locations to bridge the gap between differently developed areas" (Alexander).

"Sustainability allows you to freely expand your views and skills" (Sara).

"This is a compromise between economic development and the utilization of resources, which also protects workers and their jobs" (Magda).

"This is a development that affects all aspects important to the individual, such as the company or society" (Francis).

"Optimally meeting the needs of the generation by managing resources accordingly" (Christopher).

The respondents have highlighted several important aspects here. The first statement concerned a purely economic and social area, which means that sustainable development aims to ensure social equality, and thus to eliminate various types of social exclusion. The absence of exclusion and removing differences may also be indicated by a statement about the free expansion of one's views and skills. This means an approach to various kinds of individuals here. Respondents also emphasized the negative effects of an unsustainable economy, environmental impact, available resources, and the generation of huge amounts of waste, which is also very important. They understand that human activity has very negative effects on the surrounding environment and all its elements.

Attention should also be paid to the term 'compromise'. The basic definitions contain three elements/areas: society, economy, environment, but sustainable development occurs only when there is a balance or compromise between these elements. It can therefore be assumed that they consider their own good as well as the good of the natural environment, society as a whole and future generations.

Despite the differences in the statements, the respondents understood what sustainable development means, they were able to define it and indicate its basic characteristics. These were not typical book definitions, but they reflected the true meaning of this concept.

However, it should be stressed that this concept is currently very popular and often described. Therefore, the respondents found it easy to refer to this concept. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that giving correct definitions of sustainable development may be related to the demographic structure of respondents. Most of them were university graduates, working people who understand the need to include this concept in everyday life. These people took part in the earlier stage of the research, so they could also properly prepare for the interview by looking for information on this topic.

4.2 What does sustainable tourism mean to you?

The respondents answered slightly worse to the question: *"What does sustainable tourism mean to you?"*. This term is not as often described as sustainability itself. However, knowing the concept of sustainability and having experience with tourist destinations where overtourism occurs, this term can be easy to define. Despite great uncertainty about the discussed topic, the respondents attempted to answer this question using their knowledge and experience.

The simplest but very accurate definition was presented first.

"This is tourism that takes into account both the needs of tourists and the local community and environment" (Maria).

This statement contains everything that is important because it highlights the needs of the tourists who visit the place, the local community that lives there on a daily basis and the environment, i.e. the place visited. Each of these three elements is equally important. Tourists come to rest and visit the place but the residents lead a normal life there and do not want to be disturbed. Both parties must take care of the place they visit (i.e. the environment) so that it can be used by the next generations. Another definition is an extension of this simple definition.

"Sustainable tourism should combine the pleasures related to tourism, such as relax, active recreation or exploring new places, without destroying natural areas, and even encouraging the preservation of as large a portion of the ecosystem as possible, and the right of residents to normal and undisturbed life" (Anna).

This respondent understood the concept of sustainable tourism and placed a great deal of emphasis on two elements: on the one hand, the tourist and his or her right to have a nice time and, on the other hand, the environment and inhabitants with their right to a normal life. This statement can be considered a typical definition of sustainable tourism.

Another respondent referred in the first sentence to the previous question concerning sustainability. There was no standard definition here, but the example given illustrated the meaning of the term discussed. The respondent stressed the characteristics that are important to sustainable tourism. For many people, this approach may be easier to understand.

"Sustainable tourism is the same concept but applied to tourism. A perfect example is Bhutan, which receives only a certain number of tourists every year, even at the expense of its economy, without affecting the natural beauty and the ecosystem it is part of" (Cristian).

Another respondent defined sustainable tourism using the description of a sustainable tourist, i.e. a person who supports this type of tourism. The respondent mentioned characteristics of a tourist, the way he or she should behave, and what they should think about. He is aware of the negative impacts of tourism and how it can change individual places.

"Sustainable tourism means not focusing on Airbnb with your eyes closed when looking for accommodation. In some cases, the benefits of tourism are lower than the costs for residents. A sustainable tourist has qualities such as curiosity, respect for tradition, the environment, and is always bitterly aware that sometimes a traveller can have a negative impact on the community, for example by accelerating the phenomenon of gentrification in the centres of big cities and the disintegration of the social fabric in so-called tourist destinations" (Simon).

Many interviewees gave short definitions of sustainable tourism, with some basic elements. One group of definitions referred directly to the environment, its community and the need to take care of both. Due to the fact that many of them were similar, only a few examples of statements were chosen.

"Sustainable tourism means minimal interference of tourists with the natural and cultural environment to me" (Martha).

"Tourism that does not affect the lives of local people and does not disturb their environment" (Marc).

"This is tourism that does not harm the environment and the local ecosystem of the location where we are going on holiday" (Alexander).

"Tourism that does not destroy the local culture and does not worsen the standard of living of the inhabitant." (Justyna).

In these statements, the respondents continued to refer to the protection of the local community and the environment, emphasizing another element as the most important.

Some people approached this problem from the point of view of development possibilities. They considered tourists as those who let a place grow and help people earn money.

"Sustainable tourism is an excellent way to accelerate the development of underdeveloped countries and to increase their income with the money brought in by tourists" (Vincent).

"Caring for tourism resources without disrupting ecological processes while meeting people's needs" (Zuza).

"Visiting places that are not very popular" (Agnieszka).

"Businesses owned by the local people in the region" (Sara).

The subsequent statements partly concerned the questions that were asked later. This may have influenced the fact that later the respondents had less to say because they did not want to repeat the answers.

"It's important to me to respect the rules of the places I visit and to respect the rules of the countries or geographical areas" (Dorota).

"I like travelling through a territory and choose traditional tourist structures that are related to the history of the place or agrotourism, and choose meals and attractions based on local customs" (Alex).

"The use of local products by tourists, so that everyone can benefit from it" (Christopher).

These statements made it possible to show the need to respect a given community and its culture but also pointed to the need to support this community by using small and little-known accommodation opportunities, buying local foods and products.

Not all the respondents coped with this question. In several cases, the answer *"I don't know"* was recorded. These respondents did not even attempt to define sustainable tourism.

Some of them did not understand the concept and defined a completely different phenomenon.

"This is tourism where popularity is important" (Luca).

"Tourism with an extreme element and the possibility of spending free time on beach chairs" (John).

Despite the differences in opinions, it can be observed that the majority of respondents managed to cope with the definition of sustainable tourism. Many statements emphasized the most important elements or examples that make tourism sustainable. This means that the respondents were aware of the need to protect popular tourist destinations, the life of the local communities but also the rights of tourists to visit.

In their statements, the respondents emphasized many important aspects related to the sustainable tourism. Many of them took into account the fact that not only tourists have the right to visit a new place and have a good time, but also they should also take into account the needs and rights of the local community because it is their home. Respondents also often stressed the need to research the place itself, the environment, so that future generations could also benefit from it.

Respondents emphasized the negative effects of not taking into account the assumptions of sustainable tourism. They indicated the influence on the inhabitants, their lives and the ecosystem. These are elements often overlooked by tourists and not taken into account. For many tourists, it is more important to have a nice and exciting vacation, no matter what the costs are.

Perhaps the understanding of the concept of sustainable tourism among respondents is the result of experience related to travel, as well as the phenomenon of overtourism. It is visible in some statements, when the respondents indicated such elements as visiting less popular places, caring for the natural environment, and respecting the rights of the local community. They also mentioned local cuisine, products that will not only allow tourists to learn about local customs, but also bring benefits to the local community in the form of places to work and money. It is important that most of the respondents understand this concept and are able to describe it more or less precisely.

4.3 What are you guided by when choosing a holiday destination?

The definition of sustainable tourism and its understanding are not so important if respondents do not apply it in their lives. In the case of sustainable development, all people have an impact in its individual areas. As far as sustainable tourism is concerned, the greatest impact is caused by the tourists who visit the tourist destination, their behaviour, habits, etc. The next questions are to show what the respondents are guided by and how they behave during their holidays. Firstly, they were asked *"What are you guided by when choosing a holiday destination?"*. It should be stressed that these and other questions were only answered after sustainability and sustainable tourism were defined.

It can be observed that individual respondents indicated different factors that determine the choice of the place to spend the holiday. Part of them was repeated, but there were also very specific statements, especially the first.

"I choose places where culture is quite different from ours, I like to familiarize with as many customs as possible, see how local people live their everyday lives and how they are different from ours" (Pavel).

"Generally I would like to be able to go to the sea and see something new, so I choose new cities, museums, monuments, etc., but also adventures in the mountains or isolated places. It is important to have fun and the conditions should be quite comfortable" (Cristian).

"For me, the most important thing is meeting my curiosity, the need to be active in a different environment or to relax, have new experiences and get new impressions" (Francis).

"When choosing a holiday destination, I am guided by my curiosity about the diversity of culinary, landscape and architectural traditions" (Alex).

These three statements relate to the interests, to the possibility of seeing something new, getting to know the world, new cultures and locations. This is all that matters. Nothing in these statements concerned the conditions, costs, and the number of other tourists. This is a frequent approach by tourists. Many people want to familiarize with new places, new cultures, traditions, and new people.

The most interesting and surprising statements in this group are the subsequent ones.

"When I make decisions on my next holidays, I am guided by my innermost dreams" (Martin).

"When I choose a holiday destination, I am guided by several factors, i.e. the books I have read, what my friends said about the place, and the needs and dreams of my family" (Sara).

"The main factors that determine my holiday choices are mainly conversations with friends, opinions on the Internet, advice from a travel agency, photos from a given place and climatic conditions" (Alexander).

The respondents referred to their dreams which arise after reading an interesting book, watching an interesting film etc. However, for the average person, such a decision can be difficult, because the places the people wish to visit are often beyond their financial possibilities, especially if it is the basis for choosing a holiday every year. Many of the places described in the books are impossible to visit due to e.g. restrictions on visits and closing the place to tourists.

Other factors that affect the decisions on holiday destinations that are not related to the subject discussed in the present article or economic factors include:

"...convenience and attractiveness for my family" (Maria).

"...weather, landscapes, interesting places to visit, the hotel" (Zuza).

"...attractiveness, proximity to nature, opportunities to explore" (Christopher).

"...weather, opinions/recommendations of friends" (Agnieszka).

"... ..my interests and popularity" (John).

"...easy access and Wi-Fi accessibility" (Jaga).

These are factors more related to the interests, the weather itself or the attractions waiting for tourists. Among these characteristics, Marc's statement should be highlighted, as he was one of the few to touch on the issue of sustainable tourism in this question, but probably more by chance. This concerned the number of tourists, but this respondent did not say if he liked it when the place is not too crowded. The other parts of the statements are typical features taken into account in this case.

In the statements made so far, it was impossible to find elements of sustainable tourism or typical rational reasons for a given choice. However, in other statements, economic factors typical of ordinary people have appeared more or less frequently.

"Among the elements that influence my and my family's decision to choose a holiday destination are above all the price, the attractions, the possibilities of rest, and the best are

the places with the beach, but also with the monuments; this is kind of a balanced (sustainable) mix" (Anna).

The word sustainable appears in this statement but it refers to factors of choice rather than the environment or tourism itself. This word was used to emphasize that all these factors partly influence holiday decisions. Other respondents mentioned each time the economic factor, i.e. the price they have to pay for the holiday. However, it can be noted that this is not the only factor taken into account.

"I choose my holiday destinations based on the quality of the location, the costs of living and the opportunities to meet the needs of my wife and myself. We like spending time together, so we both have to be happy" (Vincent).

"I take into account primarily the price, climate, tourist attractions, and means of transport. It is important that the weather is clear and that the journey does not take too long and is not tiring for the children" (Dorota).

Those two respondents, apart from the economic problems, take into account their requirements, needs or family habits. If people are going to spend their holidays together, it is important that everyone can spend this time comfortably and have the right conditions and attractions.

"For me, the price, the distance, the attractions and the popularity of tourism are important. Often the less popular the place the better, because I don't like crowds (Magda).

"Good value for money, with particular emphasis on comfort and accompanying services is the most important thing for me when choosing a holiday destination" (Simon).

"When we talk to our family about holidays, we always think about the price, whether there are mountains or sea or some other lakes, rivers or reservoirs, whether there are places to visit" (Katarina).

"The choice of a place for a holiday is based on the cost, whether I've already been to the place, its nature and culture" (Justyna).

In addition to prices, the respondents again emphasized their interests and tourist attractions, which will be waiting for them in a given place, because they are going on holiday to have fun, see something new, and have a nice time.

"I'm guided primarily by value for money and value for experience. Unfortunately, the price essentially influences decision-making. My family can't afford to spend money unnecessarily, so we'd rather think the decisions over" (Martha).

In the case of the last statement, it can be observed that it is often the price that determines where to spend the holiday. Not everyone can afford exclusive trips, travels, or hotels. Therefore, people are often guided by economic reasons. It should be remembered that respondents were from the countries of the Visegrád Group. These are countries that have undergone systemic transformation about 20-30 years ago. Big changes are visible, however, there are many people who decide about vacation on the basis of the prices. Among the respondents, many made decisions based on other factors, but their structure, i.e. education and social status, which are above average, should be taken into account.

It is important to note that when choosing holiday destinations, the respondents rarely paid attention to elements related to sustainable tourism. They knew what the conversation was about, but they did not even try to relate to the question.

Tourists are increasingly driven by fashion and their desires. And here, unfortunately, there is a problem. Because many people, despite understanding the concepts of sustainable development and sustainable tourism, the need to care for the natural environment, the right of the local community to a normal life, do not include these things in their plans. So it can be sum up that respondents do not think about the problem of overtourism and sustainable tourism when choosing place for vacation.

Unfortunately, such behaviour of the society can be seen in various aspects of life. People know that we need to take care of the natural environment, we need to keep in order everything around us, we need to conserve natural resources, we have to predict the consequences of our behaviour, because they will be felt by future generations. However, very often convenience and our own benefits wins.

4.4 Do you buy local souvenirs made by local craftsmen / local food?

The next two questions were directly related to sustainable tourism, although the respondents were not informed. The authors wanted to check whether they apply selected assumptions of this kind of tourism in their lives.

The first question from this group was about supporting local trade and local production *"Do you buy local souvenirs produced by local craftsmen / local food?"*. Many respondents answered positively to this question. In the case of this question, the respondents answered less expansively. Most often they answered briefly, even if the interviewer tried to ask further questions without interfering with the answer. Examples of short answers, which unfortunately could not be extended are:

"I try, although it is not always possible" (Martha).

"Yes, very often. I like to try new things" (Zuza).

"Yes, but only if it suits my tastes" (Alexander).

However, these respondents did not say what kind of souvenirs or products they bought, whether they bought them for themselves or others, and why they chose them.

"I buy such things because I like to taste something local. I can also support local producers, and I don't like Chinese products. I like to have some souvenirs from the places I visit" (Agnieszka).

"I like buying products made by local people (not those funny fridge magnets made in China) for myself and as gifts for my loved ones" (Olga).

"When I'm at the holiday resort, I like to taste the local cuisine, but those really local. Information can be found in the Internet forums. When buying souvenirs, I pay special attention to whether they are not cheap fakes from China. I usually buy souvenirs that are made before my eyes" (Simon).

These statements are very interesting and showed that the respondents were experienced in buying souvenirs. A big problem was raised here, occurring in many tourist resorts, i.e. that the same souvenirs are sold in many holiday resorts but with a different inscription (the name of the place). They are produced elsewhere, mostly in China, and their quality leaves much to be desired. They are often used to deceive children who ask their parents to buy them. Unfortunately, such souvenirs often are more popular than those produced locally, which are usually more expensive.

"I generally buy souvenirs if they're better, but I don't always get them. I love to taste local dishes. For me, it is a necessary part of my holiday, but within the limits of decency (for example, in China, I would not eat dogs, bats, monkey heads etc.)" (Cristian).

"I think that tasting local foods is my duty. Otherwise, you can't say you've visited the place"
(Dorota).

"When I travel, I always buy local products and taste the local cuisine with pleasure"
(Vincent).

"I usually buy foods, sometimes unique handicraft products. Sometimes shirts, cups, magnets"
(Anna).

The group of answers was mainly related to local foods. Many of them paid attention to this and liked to taste new dishes. Not only learning about culture is part of the holiday, but also learning about local cuisine. Perhaps some of the respondents who did not pay attention to it had bad experiences with dishes from other cuisines and were afraid to taste them. However, local cuisine and local souvenirs are part of sustainable tourism. They give work and means of subsistence to the local community and promote its culture and traditions.

Several respondents stated that they did not buy such souvenirs or did so very rarely. The reason is, unfortunately, the price of such souvenirs, especially for those who are mainly guided by the price of the trip when choosing a holiday.

"It is not the price that is too high. It is not commensurate with real value" (Robert).

The positive impact of tourism on the local community, as mentioned earlier, are jobs for residents and money for the place visited. It should be noted that each place offers a lot of local attractions that cannot be bought or tried elsewhere, including souvenirs, especially handicrafts, local cuisine. Buying local souvenirs or tasting local dishes is not only interesting cognitive values for tourists, it is also an opportunity to understand the local culture, contact with the local community, it is also a form of thanking the local community for their hospitality.

It was possible to notice that many respondents declared buying local products, emphasizing their uniqueness, pay attention to their origin (the mentioned Chinese products). It is part of the sustainable tourism. This means that some of its assumptions are taken into account during their travels.

4.5 Do you take into account the local community, tradition, customs and culture of the community during sight-seeing?

The second question directly related to sustainable tourism was *"Do you take into account the local community, traditions, customs and culture of the community during your sight-seeing?"*. The respondents understood this question in very different ways and thus answered it differently. Part of the interviewees referred to this topic and revealed their thoughts more. Therefore, in the case of some interviewees, a few parts of their statements were quoted, while others, as in the case of the previous question, were more reserved. They did not want to develop their statements.

These were often answers such as:

"I'm trying to explore the local culture" (Alexander).

"I'm trying to fit in with the local population" (Dorota).

"Yes, I'm trying to make good contacts with them" (Francis).

"Of course, I take their opinions into consideration and I like them to show me something" (Maria).

"I try not to violate local customs" (Francis).

These respondents did not want or did not know how to broaden their statements. However, it is important that they understood the right of the local communities to have normal lives, the need to respect the customs, traditions and culture of the place. Since these elements determine the specificity of a given location, they make it unique and have its atmosphere.

The first statements analyzed in more detail indicate the need to respect the residents and the place visited.

"Of course, I take this into consideration as it is their home, they live there. I live in a holiday resort myself and I understand the problem of overtourism" (Martin).

"Yes, because I know this is where they live every day, so I behave properly and do not destroy the monuments" (Thomas).

"As a tourist, I have to adapt to the people who live in the places I visit since it's their home. They have the right to normal life" (Cristian).

"I try not to stand out from the crowd. You have to respect the local community, their habits and culture. I also want to feel the local atmosphere by behaving their way" (Olga).

These answers show that the interviewees understood the need for sustainable tourism and that tourists need to adapt to the place and not vice versa. After all, the opportunity to come, the prepared infrastructure, the atmosphere of the city, the positive attitudes of the local residents to tourists are the proof that the residents accept them and want them to come. This is also shown in the next statements.

"I take the local community into consideration because it's the locals who know what's best to visit. Sometimes this helps you see something that is not in the guides. The people know where it's cheaper, where I won't be deceived" (Martha).

"I like to watch the locals behave among themselves, whether they don't consider tourist as easy marks. I like to see the differences between the behaviour of locals and their attitudes towards tourists and how much they are honest with them" (Simon).

"The local community is important to me, I would never visit a place that has an unfriendly local community that is not open to tourists" (Vincent).

These statements indicate that the respondent did not refer to the community as a group that lives in a given place all the time and should have the right to privacy in their lives. The more important factor emphasized here was the attitudes towards tourists and their arrival. The locals know what to visit, where are fewer tourists, where to buy food or souvenirs cheaper.

"I try to find a local community during my holiday and discover their traditions. Foods and tourist attractions are an essential part of any holiday, which should be a way to enrich the spirit and develop further" (Cristian).

"Yes, if possible, it is best to immerse yourself in these habits and culture" (Thomas).

"Tradition and local culture are very important and often also fascinating. That's why I'm happy to participate in local events and festivities" (Vincent).

This is a very interesting approach. Local community and its traditions allow to feel the atmosphere of the place. It represents a way of really getting to know and visiting this place. They make us feel good on holiday as we use the local communities and their habits as an opportunity to get to know something new and enrich our inner life.

Many interviewees referred in their statements to the benefits of sustainable tourism and direct contact with the local community.

"I'm always looking for a local guide to get to know the place I'm visiting. This person can show me places they don't write about in the guides" (Alex).

"Local wineries, small family pubs are the best. I always look for such places" (Zuza).

"I prefer to sleep in small hotels or rooms for rent, buy in small shops, especially souvenirs produced locally" (Anna).

"This is the main reason for my travels, and the only way you can visit places and see what they really are. I like exploring new customs and traditions because they are different in every country or region" (Alex).

The respondents indicated that through contacts with the local community one can better familiarize with a place, especially those little known but very interesting. This also allows them to learn new things, habits and take them home. They can feel part of this society, see the real life of the inhabitants.

A very specific answer was received from Simon.

"In mass tourism, and therefore when going on an all-inclusive holiday, in the initial phase I do not take into account local traditions and cultural habits. At this stage, I am interested in the hotel and its comfort, attractions and entertainment packages. When I am on the spot, I choose a local travel agency which offers services that bring closer the local culture and customs of the people living in the area. The opinions from the Internet matter to me, but I also listen to those of people who have already used such services. You can also find out a lot at the reception desk which local travel agencies are good. I am happy to learn about the history of the places I visit. I am interested in famous people who were born and raised there. During such optional trips, I am interested in original products, both culinary and material ones, which are characteristic only of the region I visit" (Simon).

This respondent did not need any encouragement to develop his statement. This was a person who often travelled with his family and enjoyed exploring new places. At first, it seems that he was more oriented to consumerism, as the first sentence would suggest. Perhaps the fact that he travels with his family and children, makes him need appropriate conditions

during the journey, regardless of the cost. However, further on, one can see that he looked for contact with the local community and its culture.

Some respondents either did not understand the question or answered negatively. Here are examples of such statements:

"I'm trying, but I don't like chain store products" (Pavel).

"Only if the culture of society is by far different than European culture" (Jaga)

"No, I'm a tourist, I leave money there and I want to have fun" (Magda).

Pavel may have made a partial reference to sustainability by supporting local industry instead of chain stores, but he did not really address the question. The others are either not at all interested in the local community and their habits, or do so to a small extent. Furthermore, Jaga may get interested, but only if this culture is truly exotic.

This question, although it seems uninteresting at the beginning, is very important for sustainable tourism. The problem related to overtourism and the bad behavior of many tourists was previously indicated. When traveling, we must take into account the local community, their daily life, celebrated holidays and traditions. They are part of the place we visit, and they will stay here after we leave. Tourists must remember that they are not the only visitors to a given place, that after their departure, more and more tourists will come. And the residents will have to live in this city all the time. Many respondents understand this problem, take it into account during their holidays. Despite the fact that when choosing place for vacation, they think about current fashion and their desires, while traveling many of them try to respect the local community, culture and customs.

5. DISCUSSION

Summing up the results of a structured interview with respondents from the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia, it was noted that the respondents understand the problems of sustainable tourism. But they partially take into account its assumptions when choosing the destination of their journeys. The decisive factor is the economic wealth of the participants. However, it should be emphasized that this research is a preliminary(pilot) research with a local scope limited to selected respondents from the countries of the Visegrád Group. The

analysis of the results of the direct review conducted as part of this research should therefore be treated as a case study without the possibility of general conclusions.

Additionally, it should be remembered that this research the second stage of the larger study. The first stage was in the form of a survey and covered a larger group of respondents. People, who participated in the survey and declared their willingness to continue it in the second stage, participated in the structured interview. The authors began the analysis of the results with this part, right after its completion. They believed that this would allow to reflect the atmosphere of the conversation and include this element in the analysis of the results. In addition, they stated that this part of the research deserves a separate publication, because it is based on very interesting statements of the respondents, which reflect the unscientific approach to the research subject.

Comparing the results obtained from this research with the studies on sustainable tourism and overtourism conducted by Me et al. (2020), who stated that culture has significantly become one of the factors concerning the preferences of modern tourists, can confirm the truth of this claim. In this case, the benefits that the local community can achieve if tourists follow the principles of sustainable tourism are highlighted. In both studies one can find the conviction that many households can use this approach to create and present the material cultural resources and the intangible cultural heritage of their country or region. Me et al. even specified that it would positively influence their livelihood strategy by strengthening the financial, human and social capital of the inhabitants. The research showed that tourists are interested in less crowded agritourism places, which offer interesting forms of spending free time.

Another issue presented in the research was aspects related to tourist behaviour, which, according to Liu et al. (2020) play a significant role in directing civilized behavioural intentions, and personal norms mediate subjective norms and intentions. An appropriate approach to tourists may encourage tourists to behave in a positive and civilized way in tourist places. Liu et al. also pointed out that discussing the topics of sustainable tourism and overtourism together can have a positive impact on the behaviour of people as tourists, and thus on the overall situation of the tourism industry. However, this research does not quite fit in with the conclusions presented by Liu et al. As few respondents expressively share their

reflections on the need for appropriate behaviour in tourist destinations in the context of sustainable tourism and overtourism. Interestingly, in further statements, the respondents indicated that pro-ecological behaviour and a positive attitude to the natural environment as well as the awareness of connections in ecosystems are an important factor in creating sustainable tourism.

Similar conclusions were drawn from their research conducted by Ashraf et al. (2020). What's interesting, they also showed that environmentally friendly places and their perceived ecological image have a positive impact on the intentions of many tourists with pro-ecological views and may influence the ecological awareness of other tourists.

Other interesting reports were presented by Testa et al. (2019). In their work, they showed the behaviour of culinary tourists on the example of Italy, and in particular, the frequency of buying local food and drinks in agritourism sites. They concluded that social and environmental sustainability, among other motivations, proved to play a key role in influencing the frequency with which tourists consume local food and drink at agritourism sites. After analyzing the answers of the respondents to this research, it can be assumed that the conclusions of Testa et al. are similar to these presented above. Many respondents state that through local food and customs they want to get to know the atmosphere of the visited place. In the case of Italy, we can talk about slow tourism, especially in the case of smaller towns, where the climate, culture and local products are highly exposed, and thus noticed and appreciated by customers.

Some respondents in the definition of sustainable tourism indicated the need to work out a compromise between the needs of the tourist, the local community and the natural environment. Westmont (2020) reached similar conclusions in his work. He stated that an appropriate sustainable development program directed at people can positively influence especially in tourist areas, where the community suffers from high poverty and disease. He cited the example of Sierra Productiva's farming activities in the Peruvian Andes outside Cusco, creating a sustainable tourism development model that can be used as a framework for other industries and types of tourism.

Many publications emphasize the understanding of issues related to sustainable tourism and overtourism, as well as the living of the life, taking into account the assumptions of this

type of tourism, that's not all. On top of that, the approach of the local community has to be added, and research shows that it is not always easy. Ramos and Mundet in their research (Ramos, Mundet, 2020) showed the negative side of tourism and overtourism. Despite the fact that Barcelona records more and more tourists visiting, and thanks to this observe economic development and new jobs can be observed, too many tourists and their behaviour cause a phenomenon called tourist phobia among the city's inhabitants, which often translates into hatred of the tourism sector and tourists themselves. This aspect described by Ramos and Mundet was not reported in this study. So far, the respondents have not had such unpleasant experiences during their journeys. However, they note the problem of overourim and its impact on their level of satisfaction with traveling, which was aptly presented by Saeeporsdottir and Hall in their work (Saeeporsdottir, Hall, 2020) on the satisfaction of tourists visiting Landmannalaugar in 2000, 2009 and 2019. They proved that the satisfaction of tourists decreased, which was caused by bigger and bigger crowd in this place. Which means overtourism is noticed by tourists and many of them are not satisfied with it. In completing the problem, Saeporsdottir et al. in another work (Saeporsdottir et al., 2020) showed that the media only partially covered overtourism and the crowding phenomenon in Iceland. They reiterated the low level of tourist satisfaction related to this phenomenon, but also pointed to the insufficient support of the local population for tourism.

In the discussion, it is also worth citing the report of Clark and Nyaupane (Clark, Nyaupane, 2020), who analysed various publications on the negative impacts of tourism on the environment. These effects have an impact on the planning and environmental management framework. They showed that the media often places too much emphasis on overtourism, which fails to consider a number of possible solutions to properly manage the problem, preventing the root cause of the problem from being addressed and mislead the political consequences. In relation to the above statements, the respondents spoke in a similar tone as one of the participants, who subjectively states that sustainable development, a part of which is sustainable tourism, should be a properly constructed economic model which elements such as the protection of natural and cultural assets must be to coexist in the economic plane.

In conclusion, one should refer to the crisis in tourism caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which forces new paths towards the analysis of the expectations and attitudes of tourists, who are aware of not only traditional, but also completely new, previously unknown threats. Through the prism of a pandemic, it is worth getting acquainted with the conclusions presented by Frey and Brivib (2020), who before the outbreak of the pandemic stated that the closure of domestic and international tourism may cause a reverse phenomenon, i.e. undertourism. Therefore, one should consider how to organize various types of visits to tourist sites. They also claim that despite the phenomenon of undertourism, it's opposite of excessive cultural tourism will repeat itself again, worsening the condition of the monuments. Additionally, there will be local concern about overpopulation, vandalism and pollution. They proposed the 'Revived Originals' program, a new conceptual approach designed to duplicate frequently visited historical sites in an appropriate different place. Or maybe by visiting online, will it be accepted by tourists in the time of a pandemic? Is it possible? These and many other questions should be the subject of further research in the current context.

It can be noticed that the presented results are in points consistent with the available publications on similar topics. This research supplements this information with direct, often very interesting, statements by respondents who express their views on sustainable tourism, taking into account their behaviour, experience and knowledge gained during the trip. It should be recalled that these results are treated by the authors as preliminary results, which will be supplemented with the analysis of the survey (the first stage of the research) and similar research that will be conducted in other European countries.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The growing number of tourists visiting the most popular destinations has intensified overcrowding in such places and caused the appearance of a phenomenon called overtourism. Too many tourists, their substantial interference in the life of local communities, often disrupting this life, has resulted in the need to think about what to do and how to behave in order to ensure sustainable tourism, which takes into account both the tourists and the local community. In order to develop the principles of such tourism, the most important thing is to convince the most interested people, i.e. tourists to follow them. Their understanding of the

assumptions of sustainable tourism and influencing their behaviour can bring benefits to themselves, the place they visit, and its inhabitants.

Based on the structured interview with respondents from the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia, it was possible to demonstrate how people (tourists) understand the problems of sustainable tourism and whether they take its assumptions into account when choosing their destination and the journey.

The very way of conducting research in the form of a structured interview was interesting. This was a new experience to the authors and inspired them to further in-depth analyses in this field. With such research, the authors could learn about other people's points of view and their approach to sustainable development and tourism. However, the answers of the respondents provoked additional questions that could not be asked.

It should be emphasized that in the case of the definition of sustainable development and sustainable tourism, the correct answers were obtained in most cases. These were not typical scientific definitions, but they reflected the most important elements of both concepts.

There is a very important thing to be emphasized. Although the respondents first precisely defined sustainability and sustainable tourism, they virtually did not refer to their previous statements when answering questions about their holidays. Many of them take into account the local community, local customs, and culture. Often, this is even an important part of the holiday, something that determines the destination. However, they did not explain their behaviour by the need to protect the environment, the local community or that tourism should be sustainable. This approach was more driven by their approach to life, the way they like to travel, or their habits. Visiting less crowded places often allowed them to relax better while buying local souvenirs or tasting local cuisine helped them familiarize with the place they visited more closely.

In this context, the research indicated the need to broaden the field of social awareness and to include the concept of the sustainable tourism. In order for the postulates contained in this concept to be effectively implemented, training sessions or educational interviews by appropriately prepared groups of educators should be conducted. Such activities should be included in a well thought-out training system including cooperation with schools and NGOs. It should be emphasized that education in the field of sustainable tourism will fulfil the tasks

for which it was established if it covers every scope and all levels of formal and informal education. This can also be reflected in the search for solutions that will contribute to the improvement of the relationship between man and the environment, both in economic and social terms.

The presented results are the basis for future research. Perhaps it is impossible to draw very important conclusions from them yet, but they allow to show that some tourists understand the need to take into account sustainable tourism, its assumptions, because it allows both them, the residents and the visiting place to benefit. They also understand that the phenomenon of overtourism means that they cannot spend their holidays in peace and the inhabitants cannot live their ordinary lives. It showed that ordinary people have knowledge about it, and they want to share it with other people. If an ordinary tourist does not want to listen to scientists, then maybe he will listen to the opinion of another tourist.

6.1 Limitations and future directions of research

The research presented in the article is not free of limitations. First of all, the research itself in the form of a structured interview certainly influenced the results of the research. The respondents were asked to answer specific questions, they were not directed to answers, they were left with total freedom of speech.

It should be stressed that the structured interview was conducted with 26 persons. Given the actual number of declarations, this is not a big sample. However, the authors had no influence either on the number or structure of the respondents. The results were certainly influenced by the structure of the respondents, including above all age and education. These features may suggest that the participants understood the need for sustainable development, were not afraid to express their opinions and liked to travel (and actually travelled) frequently.

The research was attended by representatives of the countries of the Visegrád Group (in the case of the structured interview these were Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia). It can be expected that the respondents from Western Europe or other countries of the world would respond in a completely different way. The countries in which the research was conducted are the countries that have undergone systemic transformation about 20-30 years ago, but have not yet fully adapted to Western Europe. Many inhabitants of this part of Europe, when

choosing a place and way of spending holidays, take into account the price first, and only then other factors.

In the opinion of the authors, the perception of the issues presented may be affected by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the repeated research and comparison will be very interesting due to the uniqueness of conducting research in such conditions, since so far, such analyses have been conducted on different problems and the elaboration of the results was of a completely different nature.

The results of the questionnaire survey (the main part of the study) are currently being analyzed and will also be published after conclusions are drawn. Perhaps the conclusions will differ significantly from those presented in this article. Therefore, the results and conclusions presented here are considered as preliminary (pilot) results or as a basis for further analyses.

The research will be continued. The authors want to make use of their cooperation network and extend the research to other European countries, which will allow for a more detailed analysis of the problem under study. It will also show whether there are differences in the approach to sustainable tourism and the way of choosing and spending time during tourist trips in different parts of Europe.

Additional future research directions can be identified. It is worth taking a closer look at the reasons for individual tourist behaviour in the light of sustainable tourism. The method and reasons for choosing vacation destinations should be explored more closely. It is also interesting to look at the process of spending time, preferences as to entertainment, using local attractions, and integrating with the local community. The second line of research is the attitude to tourists and their behaviour of the local community. Whether residents accept the place where they live, or are they aware that tourists create jobs, a given location can count on a profit thanks to their visits and thus possibility of its development. But also whether residents know that they have the right to a normal life and peace in their place of residence.

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