DIFFERENCES IN PERCEIVING SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOUR BETWEEN FIRST-TIME AND MULTIPLE TIME VISITORS TO A DESTINATION: THE CASE OF THE GORIČKO NATURE PARK, SLOVENIA

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Abstract

Purpose – In this paper, we intended to a) identify factors of perceived destination image, and b) factors of perceived socially responsible behaviour among visitors to a destination, in which we differentiate between first-time- and multiple time visitors.

Methodology – The empirical research is based on an opinion poll conducted in 2022 on two independent samples, a total of 422 visitors in the Goričko Nature Park in Slovenia. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests were used to verify the normality of the data distribution. The factor analysis and the t-test for two independent samples (Mann-Whitney U-test) were used to test the research hypotheses, as the data were not distributed normally. The reliability analysis was done, too.

Findings – Results show that differences exist in perceiving the destination image among visitors who visit the destination for the first-time and multiple time visitors: differences in perceived socially responsible behaviour were noticed in the tested groups of "economic" and "environmental" dimensions. No differences, surprisingly, were perceived in the field "social dimension". Most items forming the economic, social, and environmental dimensions in revisiting tourists are expressed stronger as in the first-time visitors.

Contribution – Results highlight items, which tourism destination managers can use for reducing problems of different visitor perceptions. Results also allow tourism destination managers to anticipate future needs and expectations of tourists.

Keywords: perceived destination image, socially responsible behaviour, first-time and multiple time visits.

INTRODUCTION

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) represents one of the key success- and reputation factors in enterprises and destinations. CSR implementation helps grow and maintain their place in the market (Wong and Kim 2020).

The basis of CSR is the triple bottom line model (Elkington 1994), most often used to balance economic, environmental and social indicators. This research focuses on the concept of perceived socially responsible behaviour (PSRB) in the Goričko Nature Park

(GNP): a rural destination, characterized by sustainable tourism development. Konecnik and Gartner (2007) understands a tourism destination as a complex entity consisting of a multitude of different products, services and experiences influenced by several interested groups (e.g. various economic organizations, especially within the tourism sector, local community, public sector). Meanwhile, Lebe (2008) defines a tourism destination as an interlinked set of three major systems, namely: (i) the tourism offer system, (ii) the system of tourists who represent the demand side, and (iii) the local population system that can either happily accept this offer or, when a place turns into a mass tourism destination, they may feel pushed aside and hindered in their usual daily activities. The GNP is a green destination that offers a relaxed experience of culture in protected nature: no major transport routes nor heavy industry nor larger settlements. Throughout the history, diverse living spaces in nature were created and consequently a great landscape mosaic, which provides a high degree on life diversity (KPG 2023).

Many researchers study the perception of tourism destinations images: some from the perspective of visitors and non-visitors (Baloglu and McCleary 1999; Chon 1990; Hu and Ritchi, 1993); other explain the differences in the images of American tourists who either already have or still have not yet visited the studied Mediterranean countries, namely Italy, Turkey, Greece, and Egypt (Bologlu and McCleary (1999). Milman and Pizam (1995) found differences between tourists who have already visited Central Florida as a tourism destination, and respondents who were only aware of the destination. Literature on CSR (Alonso-Almeida et al. 2015; Lämsä et al. 2008; Marz et al. 2003) also notes that women are more socially responsible than men, e.g. women are more in favour of the ethical, environmental and societal responsibilities of businesses compared to their men (Lämsä et al. 2008).

Although several aspects of possible differentiation have been researched, no data is available on the perceived destination image (PDI) and the PSRB among visitors who visited the destination *for the first time*, and those who visited it *repeatedly*. With this research, we intend to fill this gap.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH

1.1. Perceived destination image

The importance of destination image is generally recognized in theory, as it affects the individual's perception and consequently customer behaviour (Gallarza and Saura 2006). Some authors (Gannon et al. 2017; Li et al. 2015) state that the tourists' perception of a destination's image can be divided into at least two stages: the pre- and the post-visitation ones. Tourists' image of a destination can be affected and modified after a first-hand information based on an own tourism experience (Tasci and Gartner 2007). Experiences are analysed as structured in recursive interactions between form and process in four layers, namely attention in sensing, categorization in perceiving, meaning in reflecting, and transformation in creating (Paulsen 2020). Tourists' experiences are constituted, as argued by Tasci and Gartner (Tasci and Gartner 2007), by destination aspects such as attractions, facilities, services, and perception of hosts.

Tourist's PDI and attributes can influence their behaviour before, during, and after their visit (Chen et al. 2013; Tasci and Gartner 2007). Similarly, Žabkar et al. (2010) claim that a destination's attributes impact its image and visitor satisfaction. Destination image also has a significant impact on tourists' destination choice (Iordanova and Stylidis 2019). Therefore, travellers faced with alternative choices of competing destinations are more likely to prefer destinations with a strong positive image (Foroudi et al. 2018).

In his analysis of the image of the State of Utah, Ahmed (1991) confirms that a prior visit to a certain destination affects the perception of its image. Similar conclusions are presented by Milman and Pizam (1995), who confirm that tourists who have visited Central Florida have a more positive image of it than those who only know about it. Konečnik (2005) presents an empirical evaluation of Slovenia's image as a tourism destination from the point of view of international tourism experts.

Various studies have discussed the influence of age (Baloglu 2001; Beerli and Martín 2004) gender (Chen and Kerstetter 1999; MacKay and Fesenmaier 1997), education (Chen and Kerstetter 1999) and country of origin (Beerli and Martín 2004; Chen and Kerstetter 1999; MacKay and Fesenmaier 2000; Sahinand Baloglu 2011) on the PDI. Bonn et al. (2005) compared domestic and international tourists' images of Florida and reported significant differences between these two groups' perceptions of destination image characteristics. The findings of Iordanova and Stylidis (2019) indicate that there are significant differences in the way domestic and international tourists perceive Linz as a tourism destination, both prior to- and during their actual experience.

Based on the previous discussion, the first hypothesis is formulated: *H1: Significant differences in the PDI of the Goričko Nature Park exist among visitors who visit the destination for the first time and those who visit it repeatedly.*

1.2. Perceived socially responsible behaviour

The CSR concept in tourism has become an important topic since more than two decades. Sustainability and responsibility as visible parts of system thinking become values in themselves (Lebe and Vrecko 2014). ISO 26000 (ISO 2010) emphasises the organisation's need to ensure healthy ecosystems, social equity and good organisational governance. Zupan and Milfelner (2014) believe that the perception of CSR performance by its stakeholders affects the firm's reputation and ability to retain employees and maintain their morale, commitment and productivity.

García-Sánchez et al. (2021) state that females present a greater commitment to CSR than men. Wisse et al. (2018) find that CSR has a stronger positive effect on employee satisfaction in older than in younger employees. Melovic et al. (2019) looked for the differences in CSR perception depending on employment either in private or in public sector.

Destination social responsibility (DSR) is defined as collective activities of destination stakeholders to conduct socially responsible tourism (Su and Swanson 2017; Tran et al.

2018). The perception of what DSR is varies with cultural differences (Yu and Goulden 2006), showing different degrees of importance on various components of PSRB (economic, social and environmental). Hence, the following hypotheses were developed:

H2: Significant differences exist regarding the perceived economic responsibility of the GNP among visitors who visited the destination for the first time, and those who visit it repeatedly.

H3: Significant differences exist regarding the perceived social responsibility of the GNP among first-time visitors and those who visit it repeatedly.

H4: Significant differences exist regarding the perceived environmental responsibility of the GNP among first-time visitors and those who visit it repeatedly.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Sample selection and description

The survey, conducted from May to June 2022, involved 422 visitors to the GNP; 46% were completed by male and 54% by female respondents, whereas two independent samples were formed: i) visitors who visited the destination for the first time (266 or 63% visitors), and ii) visitors who repeated their visit to the destination (156 or 37%).

2.2. Development of the measurement instrument

All measurement items were sourced from the existing literature in tourism and slightly adjusted to fit the context of this study. Items for the PDI were adopted from Milfelner et al. (2010). 8 items for the PSRB were adopted from Kim et al. (2017) and 6 items from Sánchez-Fernandez et al. (2019). All items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not agree at all) to 5 (fully agree). To ensure the content validity, the items and relevant definitions were reviewed by two tourism experts and by one marketing research expert. In addition, five potential visitors to the GNP assessed the scales.

The largest share of respondents were aged 31 to 40 (33.3%), followed by respondents aged 41 to 50 (21.9%), and those aged 51 to 60 (19,8%). 13.5% of the respondents were aged 61 years or more. Respondents aged under 30 (11.4%) represent the smallest share.

Regarding the education level, 8.1% achieved primary education, 45.9% finished a vocational or secondary school, 31.6% completed a university education and 10.3% finished a master's degree or doctorate. 4.1% of respondents skipped this question.

Rest and relaxation dominate regarding the purpose of visiting the destination (33.2%). In second is the purpose of learning about history (24.7%), followed closely by learning about cultural heritage (20.4%). The smallest percentages belong to the segments VFR (visiting friends and relatives) (9.1%), business (7.5%), and education in general (5.1%).

We included the question: "How often, including today's visit, have you visited the Goričko Nature Park?" into the questionnaire. This is our dichotomous variable with two categories: visitors who visited the destination for the first time, and those who repeated the visit. The constructs and the accompanying variables are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Constructs and variables

Constructs	Item numbers	Items			
	PDI_v1	Most people have a positive opinion about this place.			
	PDI_v2	People are friendly to guests in this tourism destination.			
Perceived	PDI_v3	This tourism place is something special.			
destination	PDI_v4	This tourism destination is popular.			
image (PDI)	PDI_v5	Guests come first to this tourism destination.			
	PDI_v6	This tourism destination takes care of preserving the natu environment.			
	PSRB_v1	Authorities in this tourism destination are investing (in cultural, educational, sports / recreation, and culinary events) to attract tourists.			
	PSRB_v2	In this destination, there are enough signposts for tourists.			
	PSRB_v3	The quality – price ratio of tourism services in this tourism destination is good.			
	PSRB_v4	This tourism destination is well supplied with local crafts (potter shoemaking, alternative medicine).			
	PSRB_v5	Economic benefits of tourism in this tourism destination are greater than the economic costs of tourism.			
Perceived socially	PSRB_v6	Locals value their historical heritage (e.g., monuments and others) in this tourism destination.			
responsible behaviour	PSRB_v7	Locals value their cultural heritage (e.g., public holidays, customs and more) in this tourism destination.			
(PSRB)	PSRB_v8	Locals preserve local culture, historical heritage resources and authenticity through tourism.			
	PSRB_v9	Smells in this tourism destination are acceptable.			
	PSRB_v10	The pollution level in this tourism destination is acceptable.			
	PSRB_v11	Cleanliness of the villages and the main attractions I visite good.			
	PSRB_v12	Noise in this tourism destination is acceptable with presence of tourists.			
	PSRB_v13	Authorities are encouraging energy saving (e.g. public lighting).			
	PSRB_v14	I participate in maintaining the local environment quality (e. preservation of local environmental resources).			

Source: adapted from Milfelner et al. (2010), Kim et al. (2017) and Sánchez-Fernandez et al. (2019)

2.3. Statistical analysis

The research instrument was sourced (and adopted) from several authors, intending to obtain a factor for each construct by using the exploratory factor analysis (EFA). To prove whether the use of EFA is reasonable, the value of the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin statistics should exceed or equal 0.5 (KMO ≥ 0.5) (Watkins 2018). The sense of using

the factor analysis was additionally tested by Bartlett's test of sphericity (p < 0.05). Based on the EFA results, we eliminated items whose communalities were lower than 0.40 (Costello and Osborne 2005). The Varimax factor rotation was used in cases when more than one extracted factor was obtained. The reliability of measurement scales was tested by using the Cronbach's alpha.

We also used some descriptive statistics to find the respondents' mean agreements for each statement, as well as the standard deviation, which measure the dispersion of a dataset relative to its mean. Arithmetic means and standard deviations were calculated for responses regarding the PDI and the visitors' PSRB.

To test the differences among the groups as defined in the hypotheses, first, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests were used to verify the normality of the data distribution (Tabachnick et al. 2013). We found that the items for the PDI and the PSRB were not normally distributed (p < .001) and have therefore tested the hypotheses relating to the differences among visitors who visited the destination for the first time and those who visited repeatedly, using the non-parametric test for two related samples. To analyse the differences between rankings of individual items, we used the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-test.

3. RESULTS

We first present the factor analysis results. We got one factor for the PDI and three the factors for the PSRB (i.e. economic, social and environmental) that were used for analysing statistically significant differences in PDI and in PSRB among first-time and multiple time visitors to the destination. Secondly, by using the descriptive statistics and the nonparametric Mann–Whitney U test, we analysed the differences between individual statements within the PDI and the PSRB among visitors.

Table 2: Results of the exploratory factor analysis regarding the PDI

PDI	Communalities	Factor loadings			
FDI	Communanties	Perceived destination image			
PDI_v1	.877	.937			
PDI_v2	.863	.929			
PDI_v4	.817	.904			
PDI_v5	.891	.944			
PDI_v6	.907	.953			
Cronbach's alpha for the construct .963					
K-M-O measure: 0.840; BTS: Approx. Chi-Square = 2878.800, p = 0.001;					
Total variance explained (%): 87.120					

Source: Research results

Table 3: Results of the exploratory factor analysis for the PSRB

PSRB	Communalities	Factor loadings Perceived socially responsible behaviour			
PSKD	Communanties				
PSRB_v1	.915	.910			
PSRB_v3	.780	.825			
PSRB_v4	.920	.909			
PSRB_v5	.885	.847			
PSRB_v6	.983	.891			
PSRB_v7	.992		.899		
PSRB_v8	.990		.900		
PSRB_v9	.930		.938		
PSRB_v10	.925			.933	
PSRB_v11	.896			.915	
PSRB_v12	.942			.942	
PSRB_v14	.773			.826	
Variance explained (%)		37.252	29.696	24.143	
Cronbach's alpha		.934	.810	.956	
Cronbach's alpha for the construct		.940			
K-M-O meas	sure: 0.892; BTS: Approx. Chi-S	Square = 8628	.469, p = 0.001;		
Total variance	e explained (%): 91.091	_	_		

Source: Research results

Results (Tables 2 and 3) of Bartlett's sphericity test (p < 0.001), and values of measuring the sampling adequacy for each construct, i.e., PDI and PSRB, suggest that it is appropriate to apply the EFA. Since the KMO values obtained were over 0.8, this suggests an appropriate result. We eliminated variables in which communalities the values were lower than 0.40 on any of the calculated factors. For the construct PDI, we eliminated one variable (PDI_v3); for the construct PSRB, we eliminated two variables (PSRB_v2 and PSRB_v13). All factor loadings on the underlying factors were higher than 0.80, significant at the 0.001 level. For the PDI construct, the one-dimensional factor solution was obtained, and for the construct PSRB, we obtained multi-dimensional factors (economic, social, and environmental ones). The total variance explained for two constructs is as follows: PDI = 87.1%, and PSRB =91.1%. Considering the coefficient Cronbach's alpha values, which were higher than 0.80 for all constructs, we confirmed that all measurement scales proved a high reliability.

The results in Table 4 show that the means for answers regarding the PDI among the first-time visitors to the destination indicate that they agreed most with statements regarding the kindness of local population towards guests, popularity of the destination, and the destination's positive image. Results further show that in this visitor segment, the lowest agreement was obtained at statements PDI_v5 and PDI_v6, regarding the natural environment and whether they put the guest first.

On the other hand, results indicate that multiple time visitors, on average, agree with five statements: that tourists have a positive opinion about this place, that local people are friendly to guests, that this destination is popular and that guests come to this tourism destination first, and, finally, that this destination takes care of preserving the natural environment. The highest dispersion of responses (standard deviation) among multiple

time visitors was observed for the statement "People are friendly to guests in this tourism destination".

Table 4: Descriptive statistics and statistically significant differences in the PDI among first-time visitors and multiple time visitors to the destination

PDI	First-time visitors to the destination			ime visitors estination	Mann-	Asymp.	
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Whitney U test	Sig. (2-tailed)	
PDI_v1	3.48	1.199	3.59	1.092	19762.000	.462	
PDI_v2	3.50	1.127	3.58	1.133	19357.000	.330	
PDI_v4	3.50	1.157	3.58	1.116	19590.500	.376	
PDI_v5	3.38	1.255	3.65	1.066	17984.500	.028	
PDI_v6	3.39	1.238	3.63	1.081	18226.500	.040	

Source: Research results

Based on the results of the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test (p < 0.05), we found that statistically significant differences in the PDI exist among first-time visitors and multiple time visitors to the destination (Table 4). There are statistically significant differences in two statements, PDI_v5 and PDI_v6 regarding the preserving the natural environment, but no statistically significant differences for three statements regarding the positive opinion about the destination, friendliness towards guests, and popularity of the tourism destination. Moreover, Table 4 shows that, on average, the first-time visitors to the destination agreed less that the repeated time visitors with these two statements: "Guests come first to this tourism destination" and "This tourism destination takes care of preserving the natural environment". Based on the presented results, we can confirm the hypothesis H1, as we could prove two statistically significant differences in the PDI.

Results further show (Table 5) that the means for answers about the PSRB in first-time visitors indicate that they most agreed with statements regarding preservation of local culture, as well as historical and cultural heritage. The results also show that the means for answers on PRSB indicate that this visitor segment on average has the lowest agreement with the environmental dimension of the PSRB. On the other hand, we note that visitors who repeat the visit to the destination agree with the claims regarding the preservation of local, historical and cultural heritage, investing in cultural, educational, sports and culinary events, and provision of local crafts.

The highest dispersion of responses (standard deviation) among the first-time visitors was marked by the item "PSRB_v12", while the highest dispersion of responses among visitors who repeat the visit to the destination was at the item "PSRB_v11".

Table 5: Descriptive statistics and statistically significant differences in the PSRB among first- and multiple time visitors to the destination

	First-time visitors		Multiple time visitors to		Mann- Whitney	Asymp. Sig. (2-
PSRB	to the destination		the destination			
	Mean	Standard	Mean	Standard	U test	tailed)
		deviation		Deviation	O test	
Economic						
PSRB_v1	3.09	1.193	3.71	1.213	17061.500	.002
PSRB_v3	3.14	1.147	3.34	1.195	18458.000	.064
PSRB_v4	3.10	1.184	3.76	1.210	16572.500	.001
PSRB_v5	3.20	1.155	3.33	1.178	19120.500	.199
Social						
PSRB_v6	3.69	1.063	3.75	1.060	20260.000	.758
PSRB_v7	3.71	1.064	3.68	1.041	19792.000	.546
PSRB_v8	3.71	1,062	3.76	1.045	20066.000	.680
Environmental						
PSRB_v9	2.88	1.277	2.97	1.280	19664.000	.483
PSRB_v10	2.90	1.271	2.99	1.273	19851.000	.515
PSRB_v11	2.88	1.280	3.17	1.334	17915.000	.022
PSRB_v12	2.91	1.293	2.99	1.278	19533.000	.356
PSRB_v14	2.99	1.277	3.21	1.272	17871.000	.020

Source: Research results

Results show that differences exist in the PSRB in two statements regarding the economic dimension, and in two statements regarding the environmental dimension. Additionally, in the first-time visitors the lowest values regarding the PSRB are in the perceived economic and environmental dimensions. No differences in PSRB were perceived in the social dimension. Based on the results of the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test (p < 0.05), and the presented results we can confirm the hypotheses H2 and H4, as statistically significant differences exist in both economic and the environmental dimensions of the PSRB. Hypothesis H3 is rejected, as there are no statistically significant differences in the social dimension of the PSRB. Most items forming the economic, social, and environmental dimensions in the segment of multiple visitors are expressed stronger as in first-time visitors.

4. DISCUSSION

The topic discussed in this paper is important from the theoretical and applied points of view. The literature review reveals that there are relatively few studies that would empirically analyse differences in the PDI and the PSRB between first-time and multiple time visitors to a destination. Therefore, this research has a theoretical value. Further, in theoretical sense, this paper contributes an adaptation of the scale for measuring visitors' perception of a destination. The conducted research can be placed into the group of studies that empirically confirm differences like those between the genders, between visitors and non-visitors of a certain destination, and between domestic and international tourists.

Similar to Milman in Pizam (1995) who stated that tourists visiting the Central Florida have a more positive image of it than those who only are familiar with it, and similar to Bonn and co-authors (2005) who stated significant differences in the perception of the destination's image between domestic and international tourists, and similar to the noted by Alonso-Almeida et al. (2015); Lämsä et al. (2008), that women are more socially responsible than men, we in our research can confirm the differences between first-time visitors and multiple time visitors: differences exist in the PDI and in the economic and environmental dimensions of the PSRB.

This research provides also practical guidance for managers who wish to improve their destination's image and the SRB of its visitors. The study findings show that six items of the PDI in multiple time visitors to the destination are expressed stronger as in first-time visitors. Tourism destination managers can use this study's results to reduce problems of different visitor perceptions regarding the destination. The study findings also show that most items in economic, social, and environmental dimensions of the PSRB are stronger expressed in multiple times visitors as in first-time visitors. From the practical point of view, outcomes might be of interest to relevant stakeholders of the tourism sector when developing destinations to duly consider the principles of the triple-bottom-line in the overall planning and development of a tourism destination. That, in turn, helps the tourism sector to make a substantial contribution to the economic, environmental, and social improvement of a tourism destination.

Limitations and future research

Given that the research was conducted in a single setting, replicating the study in different contexts would help to cross-validate its findings. Second, the data were collected over a limited time frame (May & June 2022), which might have affected the availability of some events/attractions. Similarly, other important measures were excluded from the analysis such as length of stay in the GNP, trip purpose, or destination personality.

In future research, more attention needs to be paid to other types of diversities (e.g. cultural, country of origin, income) regarding the visitors' expectations and perceptions and consequently their SRB. It would also be of interest to analyse whether among visitors to the destination differences change over time and space. Such an investigation would imply whether, over time, results could be transferred from one region to another. It could also be of interest to inquire into the difference in CSR perceptions and expectations among different kinds of stakeholders (e.g. management, employees, suppliers).

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