Sustainable tourism development and competitiveness: The systematic literature review

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Abstract
Tourism is one of most perspective and dynamic businesses in the world. It is of great significance to plan and develop tourism purposefully and sustainably though the search for compromises between environmental, economic and social aims of society. The sustainable tourism development management has to retain high satisfaction degree of tourists' needs, assure significant experience for consumers, increasing their consciousness under issues of sustainability, and propagating practices of sustainable tourism among them. The significance of sustainable tourism sector development ambition is analysed in this paper through the lens of strengthening its competitiveness. The paper analyses scientific literature and seeks to discover the main forms and factors for the strengthening of the tourism competitiveness by implementing economic, social and environmental targets of tourism destination territories development. The broad systematic literature review provided for some interesting findings: The business participants are interested in the implementation of new technologies in tourism services having positive impact on environment and local communities; however, a lot of challenges exist how to change environment, increase of consumers' motivations for sustainable tourism services and to change their behaviour towards more sustainable one. The current Covid 19 outbreak and high risks of future pandemics have risen new challenges for sustainable tourism development. In this paper the main sustainable tourist development challenges are addressed and new insights for the strengthening of competitiveness of sustainable tourism destination are provided. The future research guidelines are set based on analysis performed.

Highlights
• The systematic review of literature on sustainable tourism
• The trade-off between sustainability and competitiveness
• The main challenges of sustainable tourist development
• New insights for the strengthening of competitiveness of sustainable tourism
• The future research guidelines are set based on analysis performed

Keywords
aging society, competitiveness, consumer needs, sustainable development, tourism, tourism destinations
1 | INTRODUCTION

Travels have already become an inseparable part of human lives. Neither global world problems nor the terrorism threat cannot defeat a passion to travel. In the year 2019, in the world there travelled about 1.4 billion of the planet population (UNWTO, 2019). However, tourism as any other economic field not does only bring some economic benefits to states, but it also creates some serious problems as excessive energy consumption and increasing negative environmental effects including climatic change. Also due to tourism and travel expansions the nature is being wasted, tourist destinations suffer from high tourist flows and the life quality of the local people is also negatively affected. In order to decrease negative tourism effects, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) announced the year 2017 – the year of sustainable tourism and invited all world population to follow, traveling the principles of sustainable tourism and to turn to local communities (UNWTO, 2017).

The topicality of the research is related to the fact that many scientists have noticed the great challenges for sustainable tourism due to rapid growth of tourism services; however, at the moment there is a lack in sustainability as a such rapid growth has impact on unsustainable solutions in tourism sector. In this paper the key challenges of sustainable tourism development are addressed and some ideas about possible consolidation of the competitiveness in a tourism sector and sustainable development of tourism destinations are given. The research is based on systematic literature review to assess the current degree of research and to deliver guideline for further research in sustainable tourism field. The sustainable tourism issues were researched by UNWTO (2017). UNWTO (2014); Lu and Nepal (2009); Alvarez and Cooper (2014); Waseema (2017); Pjerotic, Delibasic, Joksiene, Griesiene, and Georgeta (2017); Pjerotic (2017). Coenen and Truffer (2012); Butler (1999); Mihalić, Šegota, Knežević Cvelbar, and Kuščer (2016); Waligo, Clarke, and Hawkins (2013); Kangwa (2017); Streimikiene, & Bilan, 2015; Agyeiwaah, McKercher, and Suntikul (2017) etc. The linkages between tourism and sustainable development of tourist destinations were also addressed in various studies (Egresi & Kara, 2018; Jeon et al., 2016; Madhavan & Rastogi, 2013; Nunkoo & So, 2016; Pesonen & Komppula, 2010; Woo, Kim, & Uysal, 2015). The competitiveness issues in tourism development were concentrated in several important studies by Crouch and Ritchie (1999); Hassan (2000); Mihalić (2000); Croes and Kubickova (2013).

Despite plenty of research in this area, sustainable development of tourism is a dynamic process that is constantly experiencing new challenges as there are changing the applied technologies and consumption aspects of tourism. The scientific problem: what are the current prospects of sustainable tourism in consolidation with the competitiveness of a tourism sector? The main goal of this paper is based on literature review to indicate the prospects of consolidation of sustainability and competitiveness in tourism development by taking into account the recent trends of development.

The rest of the paper is structured in the following way: Section 2 deals with the concept of sustainable tourism and addresses the main challenges of sustainable tourism and the main issues of competitiveness; Section 3 provides sustainable tourism development prospects by consolidating the issues competitiveness of tourism industries and sustainable development priorities of tourism destinations; Section 4 concludes and provides policy implications.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | Sustainable tourism

Sustainable development is the main concept of development and tourism has enormous economic, environmental and social impact in the modern world therefore the development of this sector is linked with all three mentioned dimensions of sustainability. As global economy, social and technological development processes are still expanding, the analysis of new and specific forms, present in business is necessary in tourism as well in order to achieve sustainable development of tourism. One of them involves the clusters, gaining a greater significance – to locate in one network geographical companies and establishments that closely cooperate and that are focused on mutual business results and ones that complement each other. The innovations are expected to contribute to breakthroughs at the international level and that may determine companies’ operation under new effective organizational forms that generalize ideas, provide with some competitive advantage and open new possibilities in tourism as well (Agyeiwaah et al., 2017). Therefore, sustainable tourism development issues are closely linked with competitiveness through increasing innovations in all areas relevant to business operations. In addition, tourism is described as a business, distinguishing by its great variety, integrity and multi-planning. Precisely, great interconnection of structural components, shaping tourism business, allow presumptions for the companies, providing tourism service, to cooperate in the implementation of innovations (Madhavan & Rastogi, 2013).

Tourism has been acknowledged as one of the most significant economic sectors in major countries of the worlds. According to World Travel and Tourism Council (2020) in 2018, the Travel & Tourism sector experienced 3.9% growth, outpacing that of the global economy (3.2%) for the eighth consecutive year. Over the past 5 years, one in five jobs were created by the sector, making Travel & Tourism the best partner for governments to generate employment. Therefore, tourism as one of the world’s largest economic sectors, supporting one in 10 jobs (319 million) worldwide, and generating 10.4% of global GDP. Although tourism market is dependent on the health and natural environment; however, simultaneously it often affects them negatively. Therefore, environmental issues of tourism development require special attention and were addressed by several important studies (Butler, 1999; Lu, & Nepal, 2009; Pjerotic et al., 2017; Waligo et al, 2013).

The term of green tourism is mainly linked tourism addressing environmental issues of tourism (Lu et al. (2009). The research of the year 2018 disclosed that tourism contributes to the amount of the emission of the carbon dioxide in the world by 8% (Lenzen
The significance of the sustainable tourism is currently of the greatest importance. As a result, several future guidelines for developed for sustainable tourism providing main environmental indicators for tourism sector including climate change mitigation, pollution reduction, use of renewables, waste disposal etc. (UNEP, 2004; UNWTO, 2013, 2014, 2017). As was already mentioned before, innovations, research and technological development can provide significant solutions for dealing with environmental challenges of tourism development. The European Economy is recovering after the Great Crisis however there are new challenges liked to the threats of world pandemic. In the presence of such a situation, the pace of technological development has been slowed and as a result there is a harm not only for economy, but also for nature as further steps towards utilisation of renewables are lacking. The use of renewables has direct impact on climate change mitigation. The outcomes of the previous economic crisis are still being felt around the world, and as the growth of other countries’ economies slowed; the European economy has just few chances to turn into a powerful economic force. Investment into technological development is being observed as well as focus on social issues of sustainability. It is also significant to mention that in case of improving life quality – tourism is playing important role. The quality of life is one of the most important targets of sustainable development also relevant to tourism sector in terms of providing services for tourist as well as taking into account quality of life of residents in tourist destinations (Crouch, & Ritchie, 1999; Hassan, 2000; Jeon et al., 2016). Generalizing the expressed statements, the presumptions can be created, for finding the ways to maximize the quality of life in the future and accordingly to avoid a new economic crisis around the world (Kakoudakis, McCabe, & Story, 2017; Morgan, Pritchard, & Sedgley, 2015).

According to Agyeiwaah (Madhavan & Rastogi, 2013), even though there have been created unbelievably many indicators, following which, it would be possible to identify the advance of sustainable development in the tourism sector; however, principally it turned out that the following does not work. The authors (Agyeiwaah et al., 2017; Coenen & Truffer, 2012; Fayos-Solà et al., 2014; Jasinskas & Simanavičienė, 2009; Kangwa, 2017; Macdonald & Jolliffe, 2003; Mihalic et al., 2016; Pjerotic, 2017; Pjerotic et al., 2017; Waligo, 2013; Waseema, 2017; Smagurauskienė, 2009; Streimikiene & Bilan, 2015) are trying to answer the question if different theories, calculations and other mechanisms of sustainable development assure more successful and sustainable development of tourism sector or to find more simple ways to achieve sustainability in tourism. There are distinguished seven key indicators (UNWTO, 2014), following which, it is possible to measure sustainability issues in tourism: creation of workplaces, business vitality, quality of life and water, sorting of waste, energy saving and community spirit. A way to a more sustainable tourism sector consists of many small steps; however, the most important is consistency. Strengthening of sustainability in any sector is a continuous process; thus, it would not be purposeful to limit the following process by the certain aspects, and it might be even hazardous.

The first step seeking sustainability in tourism business is the identification of problems. One of the most painful problems in tourism are: non-traditional kinds of tourism, sorting of waste and seasoning (Murava & Korobeinykova, 2016). Having identified problems – it is necessary to prepare a plan of the key measures and a strategy. Having commenced the implementation of the actions and having gained positive activity outcomes, the next stage for the strengthening of the sustainable tourism are extra actions, which would assure the stability of the achieved result.

Analysing scientific literature, the following key aspects of sustainable tourism development can be defined: creation of new workplaces including employment opportunities in tourism destinations, preservation of natural environment, climate change mitigation, pollution and waste reduction, promotion of green and sustainable consumption practices (UNEP, 2004; UNEP, 2005; UNWTO, 2013, 2014, 2017). These effects manifests through other social factors, such as resident employment and unemployment, psychological climate, availability of social service in tourist destinations etc. Currently, in the tourism sector, it is particularly underlying to ensure socially responsible tourism or sustainable tourism in order to sort waste, preserve natural resources and other issues of ethical tourism (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005; Andereck, Valentine, Vogt, & Knopf, 2007; Luveeawattana, 2018; Morgan et al., 2015; Murava & Korobeinykova, 2016).

Currently, the social issues of tourism development attract a lot of attention of scientists. The term of social tourism was developed to address concerns about socially disadvantaged people (Kakoudakis et al., 2017; Morgan et al., 2015). Kakoudakis et al. (2003) analysed the impact of social tourism economically and how this manifest for the quality of life in terms of socially disadvantaged people. In the presence of the impact of such psychological environment, it is significant to pay attention to the fact how the unemployed seek to find a desirable job and how vacations affect employees. It was determined that in the presence of better psychological environment there is much stronger residents’ health condition and in such a case there are reduced expenses for the disease treatment, improve interpersonal relationship and decreases the level of crimes. It is considered that social tourism – an alternative form of tourism, providing a possibility to travel for the people, possessing fewer possibilities. Different associations created in parallel: movements for family, trade unions, federations, etc., the key aim of which is to develop social tourism (Morgan et al., 2015). Social tourism is very well developed in Europe and it provides service to thousands of people. Tourism is also one of social integrity measures. Universal right to tourism is based on the criteria of values, which shape the development basis of social tourism (Ozdemir & Yolal, 2017). The number of people, who can enjoy vacations today, has significantly increased due to the boosting popularity of tourism in the world. However, there are still present groups of people, to whom vacations are unavailable due to different reasons: a lack of resources, manifestation of social exclusion, insufficient attention of the public sector, applying social resources and the actions of passive communities and non-profit making organizations.
Tourism is a contribution into social integrity, the activities of which can be perceived as a measure of social integration/integrity that enables the establishment of relations with other cultures, cognitions of places, customs, and conduct of cultural exchange and pithy spending of spare time (Cloquet, Palomino, Shaw, Stephen, & Taylor, 2017; Ganglmair-Wooliscroft & Wooliscroft, 2017; Ozdemir & Yolal, 2017; Ponnapureddy, Priskin, Ohnmacht, Vinzenz, & Wirth, 2017). Social tourism, more based on social than on economical presumptions, may aid at the creation or preservation of tourist destinations, taking into consideration economic, social and environmental criteria of sustainability. It is a significant contribution to the employment and the growth of economy. In the development of tourism activities, it is necessary to base not only on economic profit-seeking criteria, but also on ones of the social welfare increase, which are as following - stable and high-quality creation of workplaces, solution of seasoning and employment problems, cooperation of public and private partnership. Essentially, it can be stated that even short vacation provided for the job search motivate particularly positively for a job search and provide with some essence in terms of the creation of welfare. Thus, social sensitivity together with economic welfare is one of the most significant elements of sustainable development not only in the sector of tourism, but also in the other ones.

Though sustainable tourism issues are mainly linked with promotion of green and social tourism there are important issues of competitiveness necessary to address as competitiveness is perceived as one of the main economic dimensions of sustainability also relevant to tourism sector. The main problem identified based on systematic sustainable tourism research review is about finding possibilities to achieve all three sustainability dimensions (economic, social and environmental) together, that is, to develop competitive tourism business by addressing environmental and social challenges of tourism development in holistic way. The systematic review of literature of competitiveness issues of tourism might provide relevant answers how to trade-off between social, economic and environmental dimension of sustainable tourism development.

2.2 | Competitiveness and sustainability issues in tourism

According to study (UNWTO, 2017), modern economy is distinguished by high competitiveness in any business field including tourism. In order to survive, organizations are forced to increase business efficiency, implement the most advanced technologies, to seek for the competitive advantage of products and supplied service, to fight for the greater market share and to retain the best specialists. The author (Smagurauskienė, 2009) emphasizes that operating in such conditions, organizational management necessarily faces a problem, when further development is impossible with no attraction of investment resources. Investment provides an organization with extra competitive advantage and a powerful measure for growth. Following Smagurauskienė (2009), all the EU and major world states support business development in one or another form, paying great attention to small and medium business of the country that as it is thought forms an economic basis and secures its stability. Financial support for the certain size companies is the key policy instrument of small and medium business.

It was determined that small and medium enterprises are an economic engine in the EU. They form the greatest part of economy and create high income. However, in Lithuania the potential of small and medium enterprises is not completely exploited due to a very unfavourable situation in terms of business, assessing it under a complex approach. The greatest potential of small and medium business is related to the young generation that is focused on the creation of business consciously and purposefully (Macdonald & Jolliffe, 2003).

According to Jasinskas and Simanavičienė (2009), the three key aspects, verifying the provision of financial support to SMEs are distinguished: decision, rationality and human motivation:

- Aspects of dependence on the decisions, made by other foreign states. The authors describe such an aspect as a situation, when one state, making economic decisions, affects the decision-making of another country.
- Rationality aspect. It is known that support from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), makes 75% of the all the provided amount of the support. Thus, following this indicator, under the authors’ approach, it would be unreasonable to reject it and not to exploit it, as in another case “financial injections” could come to other states.
- Human motivation presumption aspect. Plenty of citizens would lose trust in state authorities if before declaring a willing to enter the EU, they had spoken about the advantages of the EU support, and having implemented that, it did not supply it to business.

Having taken into consideration these three discussed aspects, the presumption can be made, that financial support should not be rejected in order to establish own business or seeking for relevant initial funding. It is required to search for and select the most relevant form of financial support from possible ones. According to Smagurauskienė (2009), there are two key categories of financial support: “State to business” and “Business to business” (not trying to analyse what business gives to the state in such a case) (See Figure 1).

Following Figure 1 it can be seen that both the state and business take part in the distribution of the financial support. It is significant to distinguish and comprehend that the state role remains an important

**FIGURE 1** The key categories of financial support [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]
one as without the support provided by the state; the realization of ideas and establishment of SMEs would not be possible in some cases. Meanwhile, it should be reasoned that without business that is one of the most significant moments of the economic added value, there would be no state. The more business ideas are being implemented; the greater economic growth of the country is being observed. Considering financial support to business, it can be imagined that a businessperson, having invested into the industry of tourism business and provided he/she has established a new hotel, supplies additional work, for example, to a local laundry. Following the example, it can be emphasized that every newly established business creates quite a great added value to another enterprise, supplying another service or product, therefore the financial support to business can be acknowledged. However, taking into account the laws of market and efficiency of resource allocation provided by markets state interventions into the markets should be limited by dealing with market failures such as pollution, public goods and internalization of external and internal costs linked to business operations. Therefore, state support for sustainable tourism should be linked to promotion of innovations, use of renewables, provision of social integrity for disabled people, creation of new job places and other benefits for quality of life of local population which are being treated as public benefits (Streimikiene & Bilan, 2015).

In addition, it is necessary to stress that sustainable tourism development is closely linked to payment attention to a consumer as this allows to attract more consumers, expand business and increase competitiveness (Luekveerawattana, 2018). Tourism business organizations invest quite a lot in consumer market research and are interested in their consumer behaviour and motives. In scientific literature, it is mentioned that not only does motivation, life style or demographic parameters affect tourist behaviour, but also do the nationality and country's culture (Andereck et al., 2005, 2007; Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; Morgan et al., 2015). Tourism business is expanding quite at a high pace, more tourists of different nationalities and cultures are emerging and the following fosters greater interest in cultural differences, cognition of local traditions and habits. Tourism service suppliers, knowing intercultural differences and cognizing tourist behaviour, apply this knowledge for the creation of tourist service packages and consider the following while forming tourist groups. This will enable to fulfill consumers' expectations and create more favourable environment both in groups and in individual service. The result of that is felt - gained a greater everything involving added value for consumers and organizations (Ozdemir & Yolal, 2017).

Looking deeper into the market research areas that are being paid more and more attention under the aspect of sustainable consumption, there is present comprehension and cognition of tourists' consumption significance (See Figure 2).

Following Figure 2, it can be seen that tourism is business, the impact of that is made on environment and economy and on society. Analysing the research and the presented outcomes by Ganglmair-Wooliscroft and Wooliscroft (2017), it can be noticed that although the society is being more and more responsible in terms of consumption; however, the selection of sustainable tourism service remains relatively low. The results disclosed by these scientists also showed that there is strong dependence/correlation between consumer's daily consumption habits and behaviour during holidays. Generalizing there can be drawn a presumption that in daily activities, society follows the principles of sustainable consumption and it will apply the same principles during holidays.

There is wide penetrated of sustainable consumption aspect of sustainable tourism. The tourists, who are for sustainable and responsible consumption, usually do not select sustainable tourism service packages that are proposed by Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO). According to Ponnapureddy et al. (2017), that can be explained as distrust in the organization, proposing that service. Some organizations, willing to attract more tourists, convey themselves as more sustainable than in reality they are. A contemporary tourism service consumer is a sophisticated service consumer and the following sets some ambiguities and distrust in an organization. Under the basis of research results, made by these scientists it was proved that trust in an organization directly impacts tourism service consumer's intentions to order the certain service. The research results have disclosed that higher trust is set for tourists by the hotel advertising that provides with clear and useful information, at the same time reflects sustainability, and does not overshadow with some exceeded information through very obsessive emphasis (Ganglmair-Wooliscroft & Wooliscroft, 2017). That is a very significant highlight talking about a tourism service consumer and analysing his/her decision motives to purchase service.

Sustainable tourism is not only the nature preservation or socially responsible business. It is necessary to remind that the theoretical definition of sustainable tourism involves economic, social and environmental protection dimensions. In that context there is noticed that the issue that receives less attention is social involvement. The following can be noticed analysing the communication among organizations and potential tourism service consumers and especially among those,
who are disabled in one or another way. According to Cloquet et al. (2017), tourism-advertising measures are not focused on disabled tourists no relevant information in commercials/films are delivered for them, disabled persons are not shown and the following creates the feeling of no involvement. Following the research, it was determined that advertising that a consumer can identify himself/herself with, also increases the feeling of involvement, also increases probability, and in that way strengthens motivation that a consumer will gain the proposed product or separate tourism service or service package. Thus, strengthening the remarks, determined by the research results, it can be stated that tourism organizations, expanding the development of sustainable tourism, should pay a greater attention to the involvement of the disabled tourism service consumers (Benur & Bramwell, 2015).

Therefore, then main competitiveness issues in tourism can be addressed also by achieving social and environmental targets of sustainable tourism development by developing innovations linked to sustainable consumption practices in tourism services and attracting environmentally conscious consumers and training such type of consumers by provision of green or environmentally friendly tourism services. Another important input to competitiveness of tourism is innovating in social area and providing social tourism services for disabled and old people. At the same time green and social tourism can deliver a lot of benefits to local communities of tourism destinations by increasing the quality of life etc. Therefore, based on systematic literature review, the main directions of consolidation of competitiveness and sustainable tourism development prospects are analysed further in Section 3.

3  THE CONSOLIDATION OF COMPETITIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

For consolidating competitiveness and sustainability issues in tourism the analysis of tourism services and products and customer’s needs is necessary especially taking into account current demographic trends around the world as following the statistics, the major part of tourists are at the age of 30–50 or over 65 and it can be foreseen that the number of tourists is going to increase every year and most of them will be at the age over 65 therefore in order to ensure competitiveness of this sector development the tourism services and products necessary to satisfy future tourists needs should be reconsidered as well.

3.1 Implications of aging society on tourism development trends

The aging process started more than 100 years ago in many developed countries and during XX and XXI centuries, it turned out that in many developing. Resident aging will soon turn into one of the most significant social transformations in the 21st century that will affect almost all social sectors, including labour and finance markets, products and services, transport and social needs as well as family structure and relationship of different generations. Following statistic data, almost in every country there is present a part of people older than 60 years that is growing faster than one of any other group. Especially this trend is fast in European Union and creates many important challenges. The following discloses that soon the number of the people at 65 and older will double in accordance with the world resident part. In accordance with numbers, it can be stated that the number of people at the age 60+ will double until 2050 in comparison to the year 2016. Most elderly will be present in Japan and developed countries. Such rapid increase in the number of the elderly changes all stages of life. The following reveals that the birth rate is decreasing globally (UN, 2020). UN (2020). This indicates that there predominant the elderly in the world. It cannot be stated that the elderly has emerged suddenly and in an unplanned way. They pass several stages through their life until they reach the last one - eldership. The comprehension of the world and activities expands in the process of human development. In each stage of development, we choose new alternatives that will provide us with some possibilities for the achievement of a normal level in life. The following is determined by the person’s biological age, historical circumstances, under which the personality was forming, his/her economic and family status, and cultural factors (Peterson & Martin, 2015).

Human aging is determined by many factors that affect a human from both environment and from inside. Each factor has positive and negative sides (Batini, 2015; Flatt, 2012; Itrat, Nigar, & Huque, 2013; Katz & Calasanti, 2015; Lee, Lan, & Yen, 2011; Liang & Luo, 2012; Nikitina & Vorontsova, 2015; Sedgley, Pritchard, & Morgan, 2011; Villar, 2012). Aging – a very wide concept, involving different fields of life: physiological (medical), psychological and many others. According to Itrat et al. (2013), aging is a gradual and progressive process and in general a disorder of functions, when it is adapted to stress and the increased disease risk. However, according to Flatt (2012), the aging – stabilizing and adapting of powers, based on natural selection, to the changed environment. There are more broad concepts like - process, during which, the number of the elderly are increasing in the general society. Therefore, there is no one term to describe the concept of aging. However, there can be made a conclusion that aging affects the whole human organism (both inside and appearance) and that is an irreversible process. All-natural creatures age and this is natural for nature. Human is also a natural creature; thus, the same conditions work for him/her. There are several social indicators, describing aging - the number of the residents at the older age; residents’ senility degree; the indicator of the doubled period for the resident senility degree; senility demographic coefficient; resident median age; average resident life expectancy, so called resident pyramid; gender coefficient (gender correlation – the number of all men resident in the country divided from the women in the country); different coefficients of dependence and the coefficient of supported parents (supportive age people) (Mendes de Leon, 2005; Noll, 2002, 2005).

According to the United Nations Organization (UNO), human is assigned to the aging society after having got 60 and according to the
World Health Organization (WHO) – after 65. Currently, people at the age of 65 and senior make 8–10%. Their number exceeds the number of children under 5 (Figure 3).

In accordance with the Figure 3 it can be seen that the child birth rate started decreasing from 1970s and in the same year, the number of the elderly increased. Following the presented data, it can be seen that until 2050, there will be by 10% more people at the older age than children, younger than 5. It is obvious that aging is a “problem” that affects everybody’s life, including social, cultural and religious. Undoubtedly, gradual resident aging is one of challenges that the society is facing in this century (Batini, 2015; Flatt, 2012; Itrat et al., 2013; Nikitina & Vorontsova, 2015; Sedgley et al., 2011).

During several upcoming years or even decades, there is intended a rapid world resident aging, as result of that the part of the population of the working age will be significantly decreasing. Longer lifespan is a great winning in the field of health as a person can enjoy a good quality of life longer and remain employable longer. However, due to the resident aging there appear quite many economic and social problems. Demographic changes are considered one of the greatest difficulties, emerged for the European Union and the whole world. According to UN data (UN, 2020), the number of the elderly at the age of 65 and older will increase by 16% in terms of the resident part until 2050. In the world, there will be present more older people than children (0–14 years old). This will happen for the first time through the history of mankind. Such a dramatic change in age is already affecting the world economy and, in the time, it will be more and more obvious. In the case of the elderly number increase, there are put efforts to make their lifespan longer. A lot of attention is paid to health care and physical activity. If the elderly remains healthy longer, they will be able to enjoy the better quality of life, be independent and active.

Seniors – is non-homogenous group of persons, the members of which have different needs, different motivation and different expectations. Seniors experience a greater social isolation and the tourism adapted to the elderly aids them to restore social relations. It has been proved that the tourism, adapted to the elderly, aids at the reduction of a health care need. Travelling, they widen their attitude and communicate with alter ego. Sedgley et al. (2011) presents the groups of the elderly, who travel, considering their approach and wishes. Such travellers can be grouped in groups as passive visitors, enthusiasts, culture hounds, active learners, careful participants, ordinary holiday-makers, world investigators, independent adventure seekers and restless travellers. All these groups of people look for the service, present in the tourism industry that they need in order to fulfil their wishes (Table 1).

According to the Table 1, we can see that it is complicated to implement the elderly needs, as it is a diverse system and it cannot be named as “the cheapest product”. Considering the elderly income, health condition and employment, their needs become individual. Applying the presented model, the elderly consumer needs enable the increase of the tourism supply effectiveness for this group of tourists. Having found of senior needs, there arises a possibility to propose a relevant tourism product for them, what they expect or demand, that is, that it complied with the value and their needs.

In order to implement needs of seniors, a search for innovative solutions is necessary. According to Van Vuuren and Slabbet (2011), there are key travellers’ factors, determining their behaviour during travels. The most significant is the travel aim; the type of travel (cultural travels, business meetings, holidays, etc.). Taking into account these factors, it is possible to ensure the quality of tourism product and service, to attract more customers and increase competitiveness.

### TABLE 1

| Field of life | Possible consequences of aging and retirement | Needs and changes for consumer behaviour |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Health       | General worsening of health (loss of hearing, weakening of vision, bad sleep). | Medicines and equipment. Prophylaxis (supplements, pharmacy, cosmetics). Medical service (housekeeping, hospitals, specialized health centres, home, nursing home, etc.). Comfortable clothes, footwear and equipment, etc. domestic and social service. |
| Social field | Changed usual circle of friends (due to retirement, funerals), a lack of communication, loneliness. Free time, related to retirement. | Rest: Sports clubs (health), cultural and educational events, tourism and voluntary activities. Hobbies, pleasures, creativity, leisure time (gardening, handicrafts, fishing). |
| Financial field | Decrease of income. | Price sensitivity, saving, rational purchase behaviour. Extra livelihood sources (room rent, real-estate mortgage, etc.). |

Source: Completed following Nikitina and Vorontsova (2015).
Due to the fact that motives and needs are individual, the tourism market can be segmented in order to find and present the best result easier and more simply (Figure 4).

In Figure 4, we can see that the tourism market is divided into geographical, psychographic and consumer behaviour. This figure enables the highlight of age, as it is one of the most significant criteria of the segment. According to the categories, the age can be divided into children, teenagers, youth, middle-aged and the retired (seniors). From all people's categories, the elderly most frequently has a command of free time. The most relevant place for the elderly activities, complying with their abilities and needs is their usual place of residence. A lot of depends in the person and his/her ability to find some activities for himself/herself. The elderly stays most frequently alone and are condemned to loneliness (Murava & Korobeinykova, 2016).

Talking about leisure, it is necessary to pay attention to the fact that the forms and ways of spending leisure is determined by a complex and closely interacted blend of different factors. However, the selection of the certain leisure activities and participation in it highly depends on the person and in particular on his/her age, gender and education (Araña, León, Carballo, & Moreno-Gi, 2015; Dhiman, 2013; Liu, Yang, & Pu, 2015; Ok Luy & Lee, 2015). There are many ways of leisure spending, relevant to the people of different age and different character (Delespaul, Reis, & DeVries, 2004; Lanzendorf, 2002; Mokhtarian, Salomon, & Handy, 2004; Schlich, Schonfelder, Hanson, & Axhausen, 2004; Tschan, Semmer, & Inversin, 2004). As it was mentioned earlier, the most popular way of leisure spending among the elderly is travels and physical activity. Many other elements complement these two fields. They are as following: transport, accommodation, catering, attractions, etc. Travels turn to be one of the primary leisure spending ways for the elderly. It does not matter if they travel in their country, their city or beyond the boundaries of their homeland. Such a way of time spending turns into the seniors’ basis of physical activity.

Both travels and physical activity may be divided into forms, that is, places where all the presented activities may be taken. Seniors most frequently select such destinations, where there is calmness, silence and little noise. They find these things in a natural environment and in holiday and amusement parks. Therefore, the Seniors are a target market in the tourism business. Every year the number of seniors is increasing annually and at the same time there is increasing a number of travels and the following reveals that they are more and more willing to change their residential environment, experience and feel something new (Cerina, Markandya, & McAller, 2011). However, not all seniors are able and can implement their travel aims. There are quite many reasons disturbing that, for example, finance, health problems, etc. All reasons are solved invoking the certain ways of solutions. Many seniors cannot go abroad and they select travels in their country or even city. It is not necessary to go far away in order to see something new. It is sometimes to discover what we have never seen in the environment surrounding us. Those seniors are using this principle, who are not willing to go far away from their home.

Other seniors – have set some aims and motives for themselves concerning travels. They are trying to implement that through the application to tourism agencies or planning their trips on their own. Such a type of seniors, wants to get everything from a trip what is possible: nature and culture, sports and leisure, trial of new entertainment, discovery of new places, etc. Their motives and aims are individual (Carey, Kang, & Zea, 2012; Kim & Yoon, 2012; Westcott, 2012). It is not that easy to make a trip in accordance with their requests; thus, many seniors plan their trips themselves. Some of them pay attention to their hobbies (communication and finding of friends, search for romance, interest in historical places and events, etc.); rest and calmness is significant for ones and religion, safety and health is significant for others (Jang & Wu, 2006; Losada, Alén, Domínguez, & Nicolau, 2016; Moal-Ulvoas, 2017; Patterson et al., 2018). Therefore, taking into account the trends of ageing population, especially in developed world countries, the main issues of competitiveness of sustainable tourism development are linked with innovations in providing tourism services for seniors and disabled people at the same time addressing social tourism challenges.

3.2 Sustainable development of tourism destinations

Tourism has become the main economic business field and survival possibility for many countries. Therefore, the competitiveness issues of tourism are closely linked with addressing sustainable development targets of tourist destinations and providing green tourism services which do not have negative impact on environment, ensure resources savings, protection of natural environment and is based on innovations in green services development. In case of the tourist flow increase, there are being established new companies that supply accommodation catering, transportation, entertainment or other services that they travellers need. Žilinskas (2011) states that “strengthening public economic and cultural integration determine the development of tourism...”
development of regional tourism that unavoidably is related to the impact on the economy, socio-cultural environment and nature. "Due to the increasing tourism demand, municipalities foster tourism, expecting to receive income from tourism, to create new workplaces and encourage the development of business service."

However, in order to develop business, it is necessary to master the principles of tourism management and implement innovations in this field as well. Paulauskiené (2013) notices that "tourism management is a complicated process – it is directly and indirectly related to many fields (accommodation, catering, transport, connections, insurance, etc.), which are intended not only to tourists, but for satisfaction of the local residents’ needs. So far there have not been identified how to assure effective management of a tourism sector at national, regional or local municipal levels." Following the author's statement "it is one of the most difficult issues, solved in practice that tourism policy formers face in the countries of different economic development level."

The tourists have contact with both the producer and the product, leading to three important and unique aspects between tourism and sustainable development of tourist destinations. Tourists constitute touch points with the local environment, host communities and employees. The relationship between the host areas (including both social and natural environment) and have impact on local environment, host communities and employment opportunities development (Lee, 2001). Therefore, tourists and the tourism industry have important implications for sustainable development of tourism destinations. The sustainable consumption practices should be promoted by tourism sector in order to contribute to sustainable development of tourism destinations (Sharpley, 2000; Singh & Singh, 1999; Zmyślony, Kowalczyk-Aniolt, & Dembińska, 2020).

Currently, scientists are discussing about communities and their centres and increase possibilities of public administrative effectiveness (Szromek, Kruczek, & Walas, 2020; Widz & Brzezińska-Wójcik, 2020; Zmyślony, Leszczyński, Waligóra, & Alejziak, 2020; Zucco, et al. 2020). The involvement of a local community into the participation in the development process of self-government may be different: political, social, satisfaction of personal needs, business development in a rural area.

Many authors agree (Aldebert, Dang, & Longhi, 2011; Bilgihan & Nejad, 2015; Peters & Pikkemaat, 2006; Szromek & Naramski, 2019; Zarębski, Kwiatkowski, Malchrowicz-Mosko, & Oklevik, 2019) that the most important factor, fostering competitiveness in tourism business is implementation of various kind of innovations. Creation of a new service and development of an old – an innovative process that enables the introduction of original services to the market. Creation of green tourism services – an innovation process that attracts environmentally responsible tourists. The main aim – satisfaction of consumers’ needs. Creation and development of new services is the main condition for the company’s growth and functioning, empowering the increase of the market share, seeking for aims of the growth of sales volume and profit and to limit the entrance of new competitors into the market (Aldebert et al., 2011). Innovative activities are a criterion of success for economic growth and social welfare, grounding on advance that fosters the development of business companies. It involves social change processes, fostering innovations. Therefore, one of the key sources of competitive advantage – application of innovations, creation of innovative products and services as innovations are more frequently seen as the key source of competitive advantage. Under the conditions of contemporary market, business-people are forced to search for the ways how to implement innovative activities in order to be able to expand their possibilities, constantly develop and change and through the satisfaction of consumers’ needs to achieve excellent results.

Developing tourism business, the most significant element is employees that communicate with a client directly and also to address the local communities needs. For tourism agencies and their specialist, in order to meet leisure, recreational or creative interests and needs of customers it is necessary to have necessary theoretical and methodological knowledge, an ability to find out the interests and needs of resident community in different fields of leisure activities, an ability to involve children, teenagers, the disabled and the elderly to active cultural activities (Bilgihan & Nejad, 2015).

The corporate social responsibility initiatives, corporate governance and business excellence which can also provide valuable inputs to sustainable tourism development if properly addressed by companies operating in tourism and other related business sectors (Popescu, 2019; Popescu & Popescu, 2019).

### 3.3 | Research findings

Sustainable tourism development can be achieved without damage to competitiveness of this sector development if such important issues like ageing human population and disable people needs, sustainable consumption and sustainable development of tourism destinations will be addressed by providing tourism services.

Therefore, in order to address the main economic sustainability issues or to strengthen the competitiveness of sustainable tourism sector, it is necessary to tackle with many social and environmental issues linked to sustainable tourism development in tourist destinations. All these economic, social and environmental issues need to be addressed together: welfare and need of local communities, sustainable development priorities of tourism destinations to changing demographic profile of tourists and their changing needs for tourism services and products. Sustainable consumption issues should be taken as priority by developing tourism products and services in order to address environmental sustainability issues. Social issues of sustainability in tourism development are linked with contribution to local communities development and addressing the needs for tourism products and services of aging society and disabled people.

In Figure 5 the main dimensions of sustainable tourism development are interlinked with drivers of behavioural changes and their implications to sustainable consumption. At the same time this figure summarizes the main research finding and provides future research guidelines for investigation of sustainable tourism development paths and challenges.
The current COVID-19 outbreak is affecting tourism industry and rising new challenges for sustainable tourism development. According to Lew (2020), companies that survive the pandemic will need to make their products more resilient to future pandemics—which health experts warn will continue to occur—and be able to adapt to the predicted change in consumer interests, which will include greater demand for sustainable products. The challenge for global sustainable tourism will be to strike a balance between maintaining activity in rich countries, while avoiding overcrowding, and bringing activity to poor countries, some of which are overly dependent on the sector and markets that will need a lot of incentives to recover (Romagosa, 2020). In a post-Covid world, changes to travel and tourism are inevitable and will likely be driven by a combination of consumer choice, destination availability and regulatory change (Spalding, Burke, & Fyall, 2020). Therefore, these issues are also need to be addressed in future research shaping sustainable tourism development trends at the risks of pandemics which can arise also in future as well.

4 | CONCLUSIONS

Summarizing it can be stated that although sustainable development and sustainable tourism are gaining more and more attention; however, the following are not implemented completely neither by tourism service suppliers, providers nor by the very tourists. In order that sustainable and responsible tourism turned into a social norm, it is needed to educate both organizations and consumers as well interested parties systematically.

There are new perspectives of sustainable tourism development in terms of products and services, focusing on new tourism kinds and separate consumers’ segments, focusing on elderly and disabled as well as green tourism services. During the last two decades, due to globalization, tourism has turned to be available to many people, especially of the middle-class, and as a result, tourism industry has become one of the greatest industry fields in the world. Although, tourism has become available to a majority, and was is easier to travel, some social groups, for example, disabled people and seniors usually were underestimated and forgotten in the tourism market, as they represented the minority that have low economic power. However, due to the low rate of birth in the whole world and the high number of the elderly, this situation has got a new trend and currently, seniors have become a wide and important group that provides with greater use of tourism services than other groups.

As tourism services have impact on host areas including impacts on local environment, host communities and employment opportunities, the tourism industry has important implications for sustainable development of tourism destinations. The sustainable consumption practices should be promoted by tourism sector in order to contribute to sustainable development of tourism destinations.

There is wide penetration of sustainable consumption aspect of sustainable tourism. The tourists, are currently looking for sustainable tourism services and enjoy responsible consumption practices therefore they are keen to select sustainable tourism service packages that are proposed by various tourism organizations.

Competitiveness and environmental and social issues of sustainable tourism development can be addressed together by implementing innovations and fostering sustainable consumption principles, providing new tourism services for disabled and old people and achieving competitive advantage together by contributing to welfare and needs of local communities and dealing with sustainable development priorities of tourism destinations.

The demographic profile of tourists and their changing needs for tourism services and products should be also addressed. Therefore, the sustainable consumption and social tourism functions should be taken as priority by developing tourism products and services in order to address environmental and social sustainability issues.

The current COVID-19 outbreak will have significant effect on tourism industry and provides new challenges for sustainable tourism development. Companies in tourism sector that survive the pandemic will need to make their products more resilient to future pandemics—which health experts warn will continue to occur—and be able to adapt to the predicted change in consumer interests, which will include greater demand for sustainable products. In a post-Covid world, changes to travel and tourism are inevitable and will likely be driven by a combination of consumer choice, destination availability and regulatory change, therefore, these issues are also need to be addressed in future including the sustainable consumption practices which should be further promoted and fully integrated in tourism sector by including also international agreements on carbon footprint or other limitations etc.

Another important issues for future research are linked with corporate social responsibility, corporate governance and excellence models of business performance which can provide valuable inputs to sustainable tourism development if properly addressed by business sectors (Popescu, 2019; Popescu & Popescu, 2019).

The further studies how to ensure social tourism development are necessary to ensure innovations in this field as well as provision of tourism services for disabled and old people should be also put as priority for policy agenda in European Union taking into account current trends of ageing population in all EU Member States and risks of pandemics.

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