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Impact and dissemination

HiH International scientific conference

T6.3	HiH International scientific conference in December 2023	1. International conferences on the topic of sports tourism. 2. We will invite lecturers - academics from the field of sports tourism from Finland. 3. The conference will be a two-day event. 4. HiH International academic conferences is important because: - Networking for future collaborations. - Publication. - Socialization and the culture factor. - Added Research Value.
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Due to unforeseen circumstances, the invited speakers from Finland were unavailable in December 2023, and the facilities in Kranjska Gora were fully booked. Consequently, the international scientific conference "Hand in Hand (HiH): Active Leisure Healthy Lifestyle and Sports Tourism" was rescheduled to May 2024 and held at Terme Čatež, the largest tourism provider complex in Slovenia.

Holding the conference at Terme Čatež in May 2024 proved to be an excellent decision for several reasons. The change in date allowed for the participation of renowned experts from Finland, enriching the conference's content value. Terme Čatež offered larger capacities and excellent accommodation options for participants, contributing to a better atmosphere and overall event experience. Additionally, Terme Čatež, as the largest tourism complex in Slovenia, offered a wide range of wellness and recreational activities that aligned with the conference theme and further enhanced the participants' experience.

The change in location enabled better networking opportunities among participants and research opportunities in a specific environment, adding greater value to the conference. Participants had the chance for more intensive networking, socialization, and exchange of ideas in a relaxed setting, strengthening potential future collaborative projects. Thus, the conference at Terme Čatež successfully achieved its goal of promoting a healthy lifestyle and sports tourism while providing quality research and networking opportunities for all attendees.



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Invitation



Event overview

The scientific conference "Hand in Hand (HiH): Active Leisure, Healthy Lifestyle, and Sports Tourism" took place from May 27-28, 2024, at Terme Čatež. Organized by the Faculty of Tourism at the University of Maribor, this event brought together experts and enthusiasts from various fields to discuss the intersections of active leisure, healthy living, and sports tourism. The conference featured keynote speeches, panel discussions, and presentations, providing a platform for exchanging ideas and exploring new research.

Target audience

The primary audience included academics, researchers, industry professionals, policymakers, and students with interests in tourism, sports, health, and sustainable practices. This diverse group aimed to bridge gaps between academic research and practical applications in the tourism and health sectors.

Agenda and highlights

- **Opening ceremony:** Assoc. Prof. Dr. Marjetka Rangus, Dean of the Faculty of Tourism, set the stage for the event, emphasizing the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in promoting healthy lifestyles through tourism.

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- **Keynote speakers:**
 - **Dr. Samo Rauter** from the University of Ljubljana discussed the role of sports tourism in promoting physical activity and its economic impact.
 - **Dr. José-Carlos García-Rosell** from the University of Oulu shared insights into sustainable tourism practices, highlighting case studies and innovative approaches.
- **Panel discussions:**
 - **Panel 1:** Focused on sports tourism, moderated by Dr. Gregor Jagodič, explored strategies to enhance sports tourism infrastructure.
 - **Panel 2:** Healthy lifestyle session, led by Dr. Andreja Trdina, discussed the integration of health and wellness into tourism offerings.
 - **Panel 3:** Active leisure panel, led by Dr. Saša Zupan Korže, examined the benefits of leisure activities on overall well-being.
 - **Panel 4:** Moderated by Dr. Marko Koščak, focused on sustainable tourism trends and their long-term benefits for communities.
- **Scientific presentations:** Researchers presented their latest findings on various topics, including the impact of sports events on local economies, innovative health tourism products, and sustainable destination management.

AGENDA:



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International Scientific Conference
**Hand in Hand (HiH): Active Leisure, Healthy Lifestyle,
and Sports Tourism**

Terme Čatež - Hotel Terme Conference Center

Programme

Monday, May 27 th , 2024	
9:00 – 10:00	Registration
10:00 – 10:45	Welcome to the Conference assoc. prof. Dr Marjetka Rangus Conference Room: Termopolis
	HAND IN HAND – PROJECT PRESENTATION Katja Čanžar, Project Leader
	KEYNOTE 1 Samo Rauter, Ph.D., University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
	KEYNOTE 2 José-Carlos García-Rosell, Ph.D., University of Oulu, Finland
10:45 – 11:00	Break

10:45 – 11:00	Break
11:00 – 12:30	Panel 1 – SPORTS TOURISM Chair: assist. prof. Dr Gregor Jagodič Conference Room: Riviera
	Jasenka Kranjčević, Izidora Marković Vukadin, Diana Baus TRADITIONAL SPORT GAMES IN CROATIA: INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO CREATIVE HERITAGE TOURISM INTERPRETATION
	Izidora Marković Vukadin, Snježana Boranič Živoder, Nora Mustać UNLOCKING ACTIVE TOURISM ENGAGEMENT: LEVERAGING BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE IN INTERPRETATION STRATEGIES
	Vanja Krajinović SPORTS TOURISM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN – HOW WILL CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT ITS DEVELOPMENT?
	Tomi Špindler, Mitja Gorenak, Miha Lesjak CHANGING LIFESTYLES THROUGH GENERATIONS: THE CASE OF MOUNTAIN TOURISTS
	Nejc Pozvek, Marjetka Rangus TOURISM DEGROWTH PRACTICES: SHIFTING TOWARDS QUALITY AND WELL-BEING IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

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11:00 – 12:30	Panel 2 – HEALTHY LIFESTYLE Chair: assist. prof. Dr Andreja Trdina Conference Room: Vrelec
	Tjaša Alegro, Milica Rančič Demir, Aida Babajić MINDFULNESS-BASED PRODUCTS AS A PART OF THE WELLNESS OFFER IN THE SLOVENIAN NATURAL SPAS
	Jerneja Lešnik, Mihaela Škrij Brglez EXPLORING LIFESTYLE PATTERNS AND BEHAVIORAL SHIFTS AMONG STUDENTS: THE CASE OF VSGT MARIBOR 6-WEEK STUDY
	Tatjana Klakočar, Lazar Pavić SPORT, RECREATION, AND WELLNESS OFFER OF TOURIST FARMS AS A BASIS FOR THE CONCEPT OF AGROWELLNESS
	Nika Javornik, Violeta Motoh, Tia Dolinšek, Nicole Vrunč THE PERCEPTION OF SLOVENIAN YOUTH ON SLOVENIA AS AN ACTIVE AND HEALTHY TOURIST DESTINATION
	Katja Kokot EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF WELLNESS TOURISM ON HEALTHY HABIT FORMATION – FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT
	Samuel Uwem Umoh, Sarah Mohlago Ramahlo, Adetola Elizabeth Oyewo POLITICAL COMMITMENT, POLICIES, AND INTERVENTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA'S PHYSICAL (IN)ACTIVITY
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch break
14:00 – 15.30	Panel 3 – ACTIVE LEISURE Chair: assoc. prof. Dr Saša Zupan Korže Conference Room: Riviera
	Saša Zupan Korže, Vesna Loborec BLOCKCHAIN IN ACTIVE LEISURE TOURISM: A BIG QUESTION MARK?

12:30 – 14:00	Lunch break
14:00 – 15.30	Panel 3 – ACTIVE LEISURE Chair: assoc. prof. Dr Saša Zupan Korže Conference Room: Riviera
	Saša Zupan Korže, Vesna Loborec BLOCKCHAIN IN ACTIVE LEISURE TOURISM: A BIG QUESTION MARK?
	Mateja Kregar Gliha, Jasna Potočnik Topler LITERARY ROUTES AS OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTIVE AND HEALTHY HOLIDAYS
	Nevena Čurčić, Aleksandra Terzić THE COMPETITIVENESS OF VOJVODINA AS AN ADVENTURE TOURISM DESTINATION
	Maja Turnšek, Katja Kokot CULTURAL AND THEMATIC ROUTES AND EUROPEAN UNION PROJECT FUNDING IN SLOVENIA
	Dmitry Maslov, Albert Korolenko PARKRUN AS A CATALYST FOR HEALTH AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLES IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES
	Maksim Godovykh TRANSFORMATIVE ACTIVITIES IN LEISURE AND TOURISM
	Marcela Iturbe Vargas, Alejandra de María Hernández González, Katja Pandel UNIÓN JUÁREZ, CHIAPAS; AN EMERGING DESTINATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF A HEALTHY LIFE ENCOURAGED IN MEXICO FROM THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

14:00 – 15:30	Panel 4 – SUSTAINABLE TOURISM TRENDS Chair: assoc. prof. Dr Marko Koščak Conference Room: Vrelec
	Miha Bratec, Peter Kopic, Miha Lesjak HOW SUSTAINABILITY-ORIENTED ARE THE SMES FOCUSING ON CYCLISTS? EVIDENCE FROM CENTRAL EUROPE.
	Jerneja Lešnik, Borut Ambrožič, Matjaž Mulej EXPLORING THE URBAN JUNGLE: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN URBAN FORESTS THE CASE OF EXCEPTIONAL TREES OF MUNICIPALITY MARIBOR
	Borut Ambrožič, Jerneja Lešnik, Matjaž Mulej AUDIO BOOK: EXCEPTIONAL TREES OF MUNICIPALITY MARIBOR THE CASE OF SUSTAINABLE INCLUSIVE TOURISM
	Mojca Polak, Marjetka Rangus USING ACTOR-NETWORK THEORY (ANT) AND STAKEHOLD THEORY IN GASTRONOMY TOURISM RESEARCH
	Shyju P J, Nishant Kumar SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER'S ROLE IN DESTINATION IMAGE BUILDING; STUDY OF THE USER GENERATED CONTENT OF SELECTED SMIS ON VARANASI
15:30 – 15:45	Break
15:45 – 16:00	Conclusion of the conference Conference Room: Termopolis
Evening	Informal Social Evening in Reset Brewery in Brežice

Tuesday, May 28th, 2024	
9:30 – 10:00	Registration
10:00 – 11:30	Round Table: From Idea to Implementation: Strategic Approaches to the Development of Sports Offers and Infrastructure Using EU Funds <i>(will be held in Slovene)</i> Moderator: assist. prof. Dr Tomi Špindler Conference Room: Termopolis
	Dubravka Kalin, Ministry of Economy, Tourism, and Sports, Directorate for Tourism Peter Misja, Municipality of Podčetrtek Katja Čanžar, Institute for Entrepreneurship, Tourism, and Youth Brežice Dr. Miha Lesjak, University of Primorska, Faculty of Tourism Studies – Turistica Rok Gorjup, Terme Čatež d.d. Zdravko Kozinc, Iskriva Institute Vid Štuhec, ProVital
11:30 – 11:45	Break
11:45 – 12:30	Example of sports tourism offer: Tour of the sports infrastructure of Terme Čatež Meeting point: Hotel Terme Entrance
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch break
14:00 – 16:00	Brežice guided tour Meeting point: Parking in front of the Youth Center Brežice (MC Brežice)

Overall impression

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The conference successfully fostered a collaborative environment, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and best practices among participants. Attendees appreciated the diverse range of topics covered and the opportunity to network with professionals from different sectors. The event underscored the need for continued research and innovation in promoting healthy lifestyles through tourism. Additionally, we are confident that this conference will result in numerous publications not only in professional journals but also in scientific journals with impact factors. This will ensure that our project significantly contributes to the field of science.



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Photo: the venue



Photo: Participants

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Photo: Participants



Photo: Welcome speech by the Dean of the Faculty of Tourism at the University of Maribor, Dr. Marjetka Rangus

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Photo: Presentation at the panels



Photo: Presentation of findings after the panels

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Book of abstract

PANEL 1: SPORTS TOURISM

assist. prof. Dr Gregor Jagodič

1. TRADITIONAL SPORT GAMES IN CROATIA: INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO CREATIVE HERITAGE TOURISM INTERPRETATION

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Heritage tourism is increasingly recognised as a powerful means of cultural preservation, economic development, and community engagement. However, traditional approaches to heritage interpretation often fail to engage modern audiences effectively. In response, this proposal advocates for the integration of active tourism activities into heritage interpretation strategies to create more immersive and participatory experiences for visitors. Therefore, through this contribution, we seek to explore innovative methods of interpreting heritage sites through the lens of active tourism, with a specific focus on traditional sport games performed in Croatia. By incorporating traditional sport activities, visitors can interact with cultural and historical sites in dynamic ways that foster deeper connections and appreciation.

The paper will focus on select heritage sites in Croatia that possess unique cultural assets, offering opportunities for diverse active tourism experiences centred around traditional sport games, such as “Pljočkanje” in Svetvinčenat, Istria; “Olimpijada starih sportova” in Bizovac, Slavonija or “Pučko-pastirske igre” in Volavje near Jastrebarsko, Driving on wheels “Vožnja na kariće” in Šibenik etc. A more modern version of nature activities can be traced through scraping (škraping) etc.

Firstly, a thorough review of existing practices in heritage interpretation and active tourism will be conducted. This review aims to identify any gaps or opportunities for integrating sport activities into heritage interpretation strategies, specifically focusing on traditional sport games. By examining current approaches, we can better understand how to create more engaging and immersive experiences for visitors interested in experiencing traditional Croatian culture through active tourism. Secondly, interviews with DMO’s will be conducted to gather insights on the integration of active and



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creative tourism, particularly in the context of traditional sport games. These interviews will focus on understanding how incorporating such activities can enhance visitors' knowledge and awareness of heritage values and identity related to traditional sport games in Croatia. By speaking directly with managers, we can gain valuable perspectives on the potential benefits and challenges of this approach.

Overall, the research aims to shed light on the potential synergies between active tourism and heritage interpretation, with a specific focus on traditional sport games in Croatia. Through a combination of literature review and stakeholder interviews, we hope to uncover practical strategies for integrating active tourism into heritage sites to maximize educational and conservation outcomes while celebrating the rich tapestry of traditional Croatian culture.

Keywords: heritage tourism, interpretation, active tourism, cultural heritage, community engagement, sustainability, immersive experiences, participatory, innovation, collaboration.

2. UNLOCKING ACTIVE TOURISM ENGAGEMENT: LEVERAGING BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE IN INTERPRETATION STRATEGIES

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In recent years, the tourism industry has witnessed a surge in interest towards active tourism, with travellers seeking immersive experiences that promote physical activity and engagement with their surroundings. However, motivating tourists to actively participate in such experiences poses a significant challenge for destination managers and tour operators. This paper explores the potential of leveraging behavioural science principles in interpretation strategies to effectively motivate tourists to engage in tourism activities. Behavioural science offers valuable insights into understanding human decision-making processes, including the factors influencing individual behaviours and motivations. By integrating principles from fields such as psychology, sociology, and behavioural economics, destination managers can develop interpretation strategies that resonate with tourists on a deeper level, inspiring them to actively participate in tourism activities.

The paper is divided into chapters, begins by examining the concept of active tourism and its growing popularity among modern travellers. It then delves into the fundamental principles of behavioural science, highlighting key theories and frameworks relevant to understanding tourist behaviour. Drawing on examples from existing research and case studies, the paper showcases how behavioural

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science can use interpretation strategies aimed at motivating tourists to engage in active tourism. Furthermore, the paper explores various behavioural science techniques and interventions that can be applied in interpretation, including nudges, social proof, framing, and gamification. These techniques are analysed in the context of their potential to influence tourist decision-making and encourage participation in active tourism activities. The analysis is based on an extensive literature review, drawing upon research findings and case studies to provide insights into the effectiveness of these techniques in influencing tourist behaviour.

Finally, this paper provides practical recommendations for destination managers and tour operators seeking to enhance tourist engagement in active tourism. Ultimately, this paper underscores the transformative potential of integrating behavioural science principles into interpretation strategies, not only in enhancing tourist experiences but also in promoting sustainable tourism practices and fostering meaningful connections between visitors and destinations. Key word: behaviour, interpretation, active tourism, destination management.

3. SPORTS TOURISM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN – HOW WILL CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT ITS DEVELOPMENT?

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has a serious impact on society, the environment and the economy. While global initiatives have precise objectives to be achieved in the near future (e.g. reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 or reducing global energy-related carbon dioxide emissions to net zero by 2050), these efforts depend on numerous stakeholders, variables and conditions, and governments are not able to ensure the achievement of these targets within the set timeframe. In these circumstances, tourism and sport play a crucial role in ensuring acceptable conditions for the practice of tourism activities, and these two phenomena need to develop adaptation strategies to ensure their resilience and sustainability. Although winter sport destinations were the first to be affected by climate change, these changes are now spilling over into the summer season, prompting all stakeholders to reconsider their roles and responsibilities in relation to the environmental impact of the exchange of tourism goods and services. The aim of this study is therefore to identify the potential impacts of climate change on sport tourism in the Mediterranean region as well as adaptation strategies and management measures.

Method: Based on secondary research, an overview of the potential impacts of climate change on winter sports destinations (including skiing, hiking and trekking) is provided, leading into an overview of summer sports destinations (including paragliding, cycling and hiking). As these two types of destinations face different climate challenges, specific strategies that could be used to mitigate the impacts and adapt the tourism offer are identified based on the global reports on climate change (national tourism strategies, master plans and action plans, as those were highlighted as crucial in the Glasgow Report). The research is based on the case study method, as a qualitative approach ensures

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the most reliable conclusions given the specific study area, i.e. Mediterranean sports destinations. The destinations included in the study are Greece, Croatia, Spain and Cyprus. The aim is to provide a detailed comparative analysis of these destinations based on the narrative review.

Findings/discussion: While it is generally assumed that climate change will have a greater impact on winter sports destinations (especially their winter activities), summer destinations also face numerous challenges, as climate change primarily affects human health. The increase in air temperature, the spread of various diseases, heat waves, the impact on the tourist season and numerous other challenges will have a significant impact on the development of sports tourism in the Mediterranean in the coming period. Therefore, adaptation scenarios are of utmost importance to mitigate the effects of climate change and are explained in detail. The consequences for those affected are highlighted and future challenges are outlined.

Conclusion: The contribution of the paper is to identify different strategies to address the impact of climate change in sports tourism destinations. The claim that climate change has no impact on the Mediterranean region today seems illusory, but it would simply be deceptive not to take these very changes into account in the long term.

Key words: sports tourism, climate change, Mediterranean, adaptation strategies, sport activities

4. CHANGING LIFESTYLES THROUGH GENERATIONS: THE CASE OF MOUNTAIN TOURISTS

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Leisure time has become increasingly valuable in societies with surplus money but limited time, leading to a demand for new forms of recreation (Smith, 2006). Tourism and sports have flourished as a result (Ratkowski, Łapian, & Szumilewicz, 2011). Tourism, being a major leisure activity, significantly impacts natural environments and cultural heritage (Cushman, Veal, & Zuzanek, 2005). Understanding leisure, recreation, and tourism is key to comprehending the emergence of new lifestyles, which are socially constructed and influenced by culture and history (Kelly, 1997). Berčič et al. (2010) found that modern tourists engage in their healthy lifestyle through mountain hiking, as the number of hikers, mountaineers, and climbers continues to increase year by year. This also increases the role of sports tourism in the mountains.

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Mountains are visited by different generations of tourists. Generational studies are important for understanding psychological differences and behaviors. Cohorts develop through shared experiences, shaping values and behaviors (Moore & Asay, 2017). The rapid changes driven by industrialization, modernization, and globalization have created generational differences (Bejtkovský, 2016). Each generation perceives lifestyle and happiness differently (Abror, Sofia, & Sure, 2020), and these differences intertwine with experiences and activities in tourism (Lehto et al., 2008).

This study aimed to determine if lifestyles of mountain tourists differ based on generation, gender, and membership in a mountaineering organization. A quantitative approach was used with a convenience sample of 407 respondents in Slovenia, surveyed using a Likert scale questionnaire. The research was carried out on the example of sports tourists who spend the night outside their place of residence and visit a 1st category hut in the Slovenian mountains, with Baby Boomers representing 26% of respondents, Generation X 31.4%, Generation Y 25.8%, and Generation Z 14.7%. Three hypotheses were tested:

H01: There are significant differences in lifestyle among different generations of mountain tourists.

H02: There are significant differences in lifestyle between genders of mountain tourists.

H03: There are significant differences in lifestyle between members and non-members of a mountaineering association.

Factor analysis identified five lifestyle factors: 'Optimistic,' 'Trendy,' 'Calm,' 'Active,' and 'Thoughtful.' Kruskal-Wallis H test revealed significant lifestyle differences among generations, especially in 'Optimistic' and 'Thoughtful' dimensions. Spearman's rank-order correlation showed a moderate correlation between generation and lifestyle. Mann Whitney U test found no gender-based lifestyle differences but significant differences between members and non-members of mountaineering associations, particularly in the 'Active' dimension.

The identified lifestyle factors align with previous studies and highlight differences between generations. Younger generations exhibit more optimistic and thoughtful lifestyles. Also, mountaineering associations play a role in promoting active lifestyles among members.

Lifestyle is a crucial aspect of tourism behavior, influenced by generational differences. Understanding these differences is essential for developing targeted tourism strategies. Lifestyle can also be viewed from the perspective of sustainable development, as the concept of lifestyle is often seen as something that needs to be changed to achieve sustainable development. Modern tourists embrace their healthy lifestyle through hiking in the mountains, as the number of hikers, mountaineers, and climbers continues to rise year after year. Therefore, future research could explore lifestyle differences in other countries and seasons, offering insights for sustainable mountain tourism development.

Key words: Lifestyle, Generations, Mountain Tourism, Mountaineering



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5. TOURISM DEGROWTH PRACTICES: SHIFTING TOWARDS QUALITY AND WELL-BEING IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

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Degrowth is a political and economic theory that emphasizes shifting society's priorities from economic growth and production towards a society based on sustainability, well-being, environmental concern, and cooperation. In tourism, this concept is reflected through various considerations on current modes of operation or practices – towards greater responsibility and actual sustainability, from reduction and deceleration in terms of quantity and consumption to more thoughtful solutions emphasizing local added value and accountability towards all stakeholders within the tourism ecosystem. Through reflection and, consequently, transformation, degrowth aims to highlight the importance of all aspects of quality, including improving the environment in which we live and the lives we live.

Degrowth (in tourism) can, among others, be equated with care for health and well-being – both for guests and locals, which brings about higher quality environments, living conditions, and tourism experiences. Although the pursuit of degrowth ideals – in terms of more free time and well-being – largely relies on individuals, the role and importance of community are decisive in ensuring and managing them; in the concept of degrowth, community, and communal aspects are essential elements that support the achievement of the aforementioned goals. Degrowth practices, therefore, strive for the health and well-being of individuals, including tourists, among other things, by striving for more free time, which also directly impacts tourism. In this article, through a review of literature on the topic of degrowth in tourism, we aim to examine and consider/evaluate (potential) degrowth practices and suggestions that can be implemented at the level of:

- individuals or tourists at the destination,
- providers of tourist experiences and activities, and
- in the governance structure system – of tourist destinations or decision-makers shaping tourism at the destination.

By analysing existing degrowth practices and suggestions, we will map degrowth tourism's state of the art. In this way, we will complement the collection of diverse conceptual approaches of authors, who, through their works and reflections in the field of degrowth in tourism, already offer some insight into practices and, above all, potential implementation options through various policies that promote sustainable – degrowth practices.

Keywords: degrowth, tourism, care, health and well-being, community

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PANEL 2: HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

assist. prof. Dr Andreja Trdina

1. MINDFULNESS-BASED PRODUCTS AS A PART OF THE WELLNESS OFFER IN THE SLOVENIAN NATURAL SPAS

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Mental health, mindfulness, and well-being are fields that are currently in the process of development as a part of the Slovenian tourist offer. In the last few years, people worldwide have been struggling with mental health issues, and Slovenia is not an exception due to its high suicide rate. The current challenges that the Slovenian tourism wellness industry is facing are the gap between increased demand and the breadth and diversity of the tourism offer itself. Most of the wellness offer is focused on the area of self-care (such as massages, saunas, facial treatments etc.) and perhaps not enough focus on improving mental health through specific relaxation techniques that are proven to enhance mental health. The reason behind our research is that we wanted to expose the importance of further development of the tourist wellness offer of the community of Slovenian natural spas because potential tourists want more mindfulness-based products in the future of the Slovenian tourism field. Tourism could play a significant role in improving the mental health of citizens. Lots of the research carried out in previous years points to the potential link and integration of mindfulness as a tourism segment in the case of both employees and guests/tourists. In Western societies, the practice of mindfulness is recognised as an important driver of lifestyle change, leading to an increasing number of mindful consumers and mindfulness-based products and services. There is now an opportunity for the tourism industry to embrace the mindfulness movement and trust in its ability to reflect on current issues and build a new path towards more compassionate and meaningful tourism for both providers and guests (Stankov, Filimonau and Vujičić, 2020). Kennell et al. (2022) point to a new global trend of millennials. They investigated the travel habits and the spirituality-seeking behaviour of millennials. They are currently focusing most on travel that includes elements of general spirituality and mindfulness. The hotel industry in particular is one of those complex work environments where employees need to be able to regulate their emotions well. Receptionists often find themselves in situations where they have to deal with unexpected problems followed by specific customer requests and this is where practicing mindfulness comes in handy (Wang et al., 2021). In the context of tourism supply, the trend towards mindfulness is mainly reflected in the increasing number of consumers who

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are interested in and increasingly seeking out products and services on this topic. Changes have also been detected in consumer behaviour, who choose their experiences in a conscious and mindful state, but also in the constant promotion of mindfulness-related experiences designed by the tourism industry (Stankov et al., 2022). Most people in our research emphasized that they do not know how to relax or take a break in their everyday lives, nor even during their vacations. To research this problem, we used a quantitative method. We analysed opinions and attitudes regarding mindfulness-based products using a survey based on a sample of visitors to Slovenian natural spas and other spas. It gave us an insight into the current situation, to what extent tourists are satisfied with the current offer of services, and if they are familiar with products that incorporate relaxation techniques. We gathered data by sharing an online survey via 1KA, which is an application that allows the use of online surveys. The service helps with the development, design and production of the online questionnaire, the implementation of the survey - publishing and collecting data on an ongoing basis - the editing and analysis of the data (1ka.si, b. d.). Our online survey was shared on our social media platforms. The data were collected using the snowball sampling method - also known as chain-referral sampling, where we can recruit further participants to the study through an initial and smaller sample. Participants who have already taken part in the research are referred and invited via social media to groups of people whose input would benefit the research. The method is primarily used to find more hidden or difficult populations that are not usually easily accessible to researchers (Mack et al., 2005).

At the end of our research, the data were visually interpreted using bar and pie charts with the help of Excell. Limitations of our study can appear especially in the area of the survey sample. Here, bias may arise due to the use of the snowball method. Precisely because our respondents were a like-minded group of people who tend to use relaxation and mindfulness techniques. If other researchers had used the same method, their own circles of people and their different needs would have led to different results from ours and, consequently, to different findings. Also, one of the potential limitations of the study is the time constraints that arise in carrying out the research. Our methodological limitations are the possible non-responsiveness of the remaining participants who could have taken part in our research, and the lack of knowledge or understanding of certain concepts that were used in the research process. Our sample includes 170 respondents, 54 men and 116 women. The leading group of respondents represents the age group between 18 and 35 years. Findings reveal that people do consider mental health as one of the most essential components of life. They primarily practice relaxation techniques multiple times per month or week. Respondents have heard about mindfulness but are mostly unfamiliar with this sort of tourism product in Slovenia. 83% of respondents claim that they would like to try out new tourism products that integrate relaxation techniques. They would also like to try out forest therapy, yoga, meditation, sound baths and workshops with experts in the mindfulness field. We also found that potential tourists are satisfied with the wellness offer in Slovenia spas, yet they also want more than just yoga and meditation in the wellness offer which means an opportunity to develop various mindfulness products that will further enrich and contribute to the offer of Slovenian natural spas. Slovenian spas have plenty of natural and forest areas, which is most certainly an advantage for further mindfulness tourism products and wellbeing tourism development, as this helps to facilitate the implementation of mindfulness practices, which mostly take place in the nature. The fact that most of the Slovenian spas are part of the Association of Slovenian Natural Spas is also a great help for upgrading the existing offer, which makes things easier from an organisational point of view. We have also found through our research that the majority of tourists visit spas to enhance their well-being and relaxation, so we consider

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Slovenian natural spas to be a good choice for experiences that include mindfulness. Most of the Slovenian tourism flow is occurring in Slovenian spas and is one of the most successful branches in the tourism sector - Slovenian spas are also obtaining titles and rewards such as: The best Wellness Centre and The best swimming pool complex. The advantage of developing experiences with a mindfulness element also lies in the renewed infrastructure of Slovenian natural spas and wellness centres, which gives tourists the opportunity to gain new experiences and experiences involving well-being and mindfulness. Above all, there is a sense of motivation and desire to do so on the part of the leading board, such as Iztok Altbauer, who is aware that the care for health has become ingrained in the consciousness of consumers in Slovenia and around the world, and is evolving into a lifestyle (Altbauer v Kovič, 2018). Our study's findings show that potential tourists want more guided group workshops with the help of experts. We suggested improvements to the existing offer of the spas, where it might be appropriate to offer more programmes, including or combined in a tourist package, as part of the marketing of Slovenian natural spas. It would be necessary to put together an integrated tourism product including mindful eating, workshops, additional activities such as services within the wellness centre, transport and accommodation all at the same place. Each programme, including workshops on breathing exercises, mindfulness exercises, forest and sound therapy, would allow the individual to be placed independently in a specific group according to their abilities.

Keywords: • 1. well-being • 2. spa • 3. mental health • 4. mindfulness • 5. wellbeing tourism

2. EXPLORING LIFESTYLE PATTERNS AND BEHAVIORAL SHIFTS AMONG STUDENTS: THE CASE OF VSGT MARIBOR 6-WEEK STUDY

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Introduction

This article presents the dynamics of student lifestyle choices, examining both healthy and unhealthy behaviours and the factors influencing behavioural changes. Drawing from recent research, the study investigates student lifestyle patterns and their well-being. By employing the framework of the Eight Pillars of Wellness and Wellbeing (emotional, physical, occupational, social, spiritual, intellectual, environmental, and financial well-being; here all pillars need to be cherished to have a positive impact on the quality of life), proposed by the National Wellness Institute, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted aspects shaping students' lives over the course of 6-weeks.

Method

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The study explores the concept of behavioural change and its implications for student health. It highlights the importance of interventions and strategies aimed at promoting positive lifestyle modifications among students. These include the proposed behavioural change method – an adopted version of a personal diary on the final sample of 18 students. The diary format has been applied and students have been journaling three of the selected pillars of wellness and wellbeing over the course of 6 weeks period.

Findings/ Discussions

Central to the present research is the framework of the Eight Pillars of Wellness and Wellbeing, which encompasses dimensions such as emotional, physical, social, occupational, intellectual, environmental, spiritual, and financial wellness. By addressing and applying the desired three pillars individually, students cultivated a balanced and fulfilling lifestyle conducive to optimal health and well-being. Among the self-selected exercises that students performed throughout the whole period of 6 weeks were the following: physical activity (light exercise such as walking), healthier food choices, an adaptation of sleep pattern of 8 hours and care for financial wellbeing and expenditures. 80% of the sample have positively evaluated their behavioral change in comparison to the previous lifestyle patterns.

Conclusion

Through a synthesis of empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks, this research offers insights into the intricate interplay between student lifestyle choices, behaviour change processes, and the eight dimensions of wellness and well-being. It underscores the significance of tailored interventions and comprehensive approaches in promoting healthier lifestyles among students, thereby enhancing their overall quality of life and academic performance.

Keywords: student health, student lifestyle patterns, well-being pillars, behavioural change

3. SPORT, RECREATION, AND WELLNESS OFFER OF TOURIST FARMS AS A BASIS FOR THE CONCEPT OF AGROWELLNESS

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In the paper, "Sport, Recreation, and Wellness Offer of Tourist Farms as a Basis for the Concept of Agrowellness," the researchers examined the provision of sport and recreation activities, healthy lifestyle activities, and wellness services at tourist farms in Slovenia. By conducting a systematic literature review, the authors introduced the concepts of rural sports tourism and a comprehensive approach to farm agrowellness. This study included observations of 36 tourist farms with lodging

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facilities in the Eastern Cohesion Region of Slovenia. Using a structured observation method, the researchers analyzed whether the natural resources of the countryside and farms provided the necessary conditions for the development of agrowellness. The observation form was used to assess the current state of sports and recreational activities, as well as healthy lifestyle activities/wellness services. A hybrid observation form comprising 38 closed and 18 open questions was used in direct locations. Statistically significant differences were identified in the development of sports and recreational activities according to the age of complementary activity operators in tourist farms, revealing that tourist farms managed by operators aged 50+ years exhibit a more advanced segment of the wellness offer. The findings indicate that the forms of wellness activities available on tourist farms are basic and closely aligned with nature and outdoor activities, as evidenced by the low score (2.44 out of 9) assigned to the assessment of the wellness services segment offer. The benefits of outdoor recreation and relaxation in natural environments do not necessarily depend on the presence of luxurious spa facilities. Slovenia provides a wide range of recreational sports opportunities, and agrotourism, which offers a slower pace of life and authentic experiences, is becoming increasingly popular. According to the findings, tourist farms with larger land areas and a greater emphasis on recreation rather than subsistence tend to provide better sports and recreational options. By combining sports, agrotourism, and wellness tourism, tourists can prioritize their health and well-being during their holidays. Farm tourism is a significant complementary activity in Slovenia that generates considerable income and contributes to the diversification of agricultural activities. The primary outcome of the study was that a wellness offer was present in the observed tourist accommodation farms, although it was not consistently designated as such. The rural environment in which tourist farms in Slovenia are located is inherently connected to well-being. The results obtained provide an excellent foundation for initiating the conceptualization of agrowellness, which would subsequently be integrated into the systematization of specific forms of tourism in rural regions.

4. THE PERCEPTION OF SLOVENIAN YOUTH ON SLOVENIA AS AN ACTIVE AND HEALTHY TOURIST DESTINATION

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Slovenia is branded as a green, active, and healthy tourism destination. Thus, tourists visiting Slovenia are encouraged to prioritise nature, take active vacations, and care for themselves. However, it is unknown whether the preferences and values of younger tourists are reflected in Slovenian advocacy for an active lifestyle and its image as an active and healthy destination. The research will explore the image of Slovenia as an active and healthy country, focusing on young people's perception of Slovenia. By focusing on the opinions of the Slovenian youth, we hope to evaluate the effectiveness of current measures, identify areas for improvement, and develop specific strategies to increase the attractiveness of Slovenia for youth and encourage younger generations to pursue an active lifestyle in their own country. Our research methodology includes a quantitative approach that uses a structured online questionnaire to collect data on young people's perceptions, preferences and recreational behaviour. Through a comprehensive analysis of views and opinions, we aim to uncover what factors influence how young people see Slovenia in terms of its recreational opportunities and its reputation as a tourism destination promoting an active and healthy lifestyle. By exploring the complex interactions between these elements, the study aims to provide valuable insights that can inform strategies to increase the attractiveness of Slovenia as a destination of choice for the younger population by fostering a deeper connection between young people and the country's natural beauty, active lifestyle offerings, and commitment to health and well-being. We believe that the results will bear practical implications for policymakers in Slovenia and stakeholders in the tourism sector and provide valuable insights for the development of future initiatives and marketing campaigns aimed at promoting Slovenia as a desirable destination for young people interested in living an active and healthy lifestyle. In summary, this research is about understanding how young people view Slovenia. By doing so, we hope to make Slovenia a top choice for young travellers and strengthen its position in the global tourism market.

5. EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF WELLNESS TOURISM ON HEALTHY HABIT FORMATION – FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

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The global increase in stress and chronic diseases is currently leading to heightened consumer awareness, prompting individuals towards a healthier lifestyle. Therefore, the new healthcare paradigm represents a shift from reactive approaches to health to proactive and holistic approaches that address or prevent the root causes of the problems, such as unhealthy lifestyles. Due to this, wellness tourism has gained significant traction in recent years as individuals increasingly seek opportunities to improve their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. However, there remains a gap in understanding how participating in wellness tourism programmes contributes to healthy habit formation and lifestyle changes among participants of such programmes. Individuals participating in health-promoting programmes typically engage in a comprehensive programme focused on fostering health-promoting behavioural modifications, encompassing areas such as physical exercise, dietary

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habits, and stress management, alongside indulging in typical spa services, such as massages, facials, body wraps and other spa treatments. This research aims to develop a comprehensive framework for assessing the effectiveness of health preventive wellness programs in fostering healthy lifestyle habits. Focusing on program- and individual-level factors, we seek to understand the nuances of habit formation within the context of wellness tourism. Specifically, we will focus on the hedonistic aspect of tourism, examining how enjoyment and pleasure derived from travel experiences impact participants' engagement with health-related activities. Additionally, we will explore the role of social support within the tourism context, investigating how interactions with fellow travellers and programme staff contribute to motivation and accountability in maintaining healthy behaviours. Furthermore, we will address the influence of wellness tourism establishments' physical and social environment in facilitating habit formation and lifestyle changes. The framework will facilitate the development of a quantitative research methodology, such as a questionnaire, to systematically measure the overall effectiveness of habit formation and elucidate interconnections among various contributing factors. By shedding light on these aspects, such research would provide insights into the mechanisms of wellness tourism that can effectively influence the level of developing healthy lifestyle habits among participants by addressing complex interactions between wellness program characteristics and participant attributes. The findings will contribute to the theoretical understanding of habit formation in wellness tourism settings and offer practical implications for developing and enhancing wellness tourism offerings worldwide.

KEYWORDS: wellness tourism, habit formation, health promotion, framework development.

6. POLITICAL COMMITMENT, POLICIES, AND INTERVENTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA'S PHYSICAL (IN)ACTIVITY

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Physical health promotion policies and practices are prevalent in South Africa to reduce levels of inactivity in the South African population because of the rising prevalence of obesity, inactivity, and non-communicable disease (NCD). This is also in recognition of South Africa's effort to domesticate the recommendation of the World Health Organization (WHO) Global strategy on diet, physical activity and health policies in its legislative framework.

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Thus, the WHO Global Strategy for Diet, Physical Activity, and Health were reflected in South Africa's practice and project "Vuka South Africa -(Move for your Health) campaign to promote physical activity (PA) amongst South African citizens. In view of this, the paper discusses aspects related to South Africans' physical activity in terms of South Africa's health promotion and Healthy Lifestyles campaign in South Africa (e.g.'Vuka South Africa -(Move for your Health' campaign South Africa). It analyses the political commitment to implementing national plans for physical activity and its role in creating awareness of physical activity. It discusses how initiatives, policies and programs to increase population-wide participation in physical activity and factors that strengthen or undermine PA.

Data was obtained from triangulation of observation, interviews, policy analysis and reports. Findings suggest that the national, provincial, and municipal governments are in charge of providing physical activity health promotion services. A higher understanding of PA's role in health promotion was the main goal of VUCA -the Move for Health campaign while the promotion of PA was hinged on healthy lifestyles messages of good diet, tobacco control, responsible sexual behavior, and fighting alcohol misuse were the campaign's five key foundations. Regular walks ranging from two to five kilometers were part of the programs and activities in carefully chosen areas. This effort was partnered by governmental and non-governmental organizations, the commercial sector, and higher institutions through the use of a multi-sectoral strategy with public awareness with the long-term goal of raising the population's engagement in physical activity that improves health. Nonetheless, physical activity in many South African communities is limited largely by access and disparities become even more evident when considering the built environment's impact on physical activity and wellness. Keyword: World Health Organization (WHO), Legislation, healthy lifestyle, VUCA, Global strategy on diet, physical activity and health policies

PANEL 3: ACTIVE LEISURE

Chair: assoc. prof. Dr Saša Zupan Korže

1. BLOCKCHAIN IN ACTIVE LEISURE TOURISM: A BIG QUESTION MARK?

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Purpose: Since the rise of popularity of the blockchain technology in the cryptocurrencies' domain, several scholars, consultants and practitioners have searched for possibilities to use it for tourism applications. In the last few years, the hype around this technology in public has slowly waned, but not so much the interest of the researchers. However, there has been not researched yet, if and how

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applicable this technology might be in different types of tourism. The aim of this paper is to synthesize the advancement in research and in applications of blockchain in tourism, to give a critical reflection on both, as well as to open a discussion of applicability of blockchain in active leisure tourism.

Research design: The data were collected using the method of integrated review of relevant existing literature of scholars and practitioners, supplemented by data collected by participant-observant method. Findings are based on content analysis and are presented mostly in a descriptive way.

Findings: In the early research stage, studies mostly emphasized the technical features of blockchain technology and its advantages: immutability, its decentralized structure, no tourism intermediaries and no agents' fees, transparency and traceability of transactions, risk reduction, etc. Advocates of blockchain mostly claim that these advantages (apart from disintermediation) have a great potential in tourism: in better property management, bookings, baggage tracking, payments, digital travel identity, in infrastructure cost reduction and even for increasing revenues. Unfortunately, few of these advantages have been empirically proved. Moreover, it is evident that the existing research mostly overlook the diversity of tourism and the fact that above mentioned advantages of blockchain might have different applicability in different types of tourism, while different segments of tourists and different suppliers in them have their own specificities. Thus, blockchain might be more applicable for business tourism, while both – business tourists and suppliers of services for this segment – might be more technologically equipped and skilled than tourists and suppliers in other types of tourism. Moreover, it is questionable if in some types of tourism activities, e.g. in active leisure tourism, blockchain is actually element of tourism services that can enrich tourist's experience. It seems that in this tourism type the practitioners' view on blockchain is closer to the reality than "mythical" advantages. For practical use, distributed databases of records seem to be quite complicated compared to traditional ones and – more importantly – more resource consuming. Besides, practitioners are unsure of economic benefits, concerned on lack of regulations and standards, security issues, and unimpressed with payment system. Therefore, the above-mentioned considerations are reflected in the modest number of blockchain applications in tourism industry, and none come from active leisure tourism.

Conclusion: Blockchain might have a potential in certain types of tourism services, but not in all at the same dimension. Thus, its usage is particularly questionable in certain types of tourists' activities, e.g. in active leisure tourism, where technology does not seem to enrich the tourist's experience. The study gives a call for further empirical investigation.

Keywords: Blockchains, Digital Tourism, active leisure tourism, "Do-it-yourself" Services, tokens, smart contract

2. LITERARY ROUTES AS OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTIVE AND HEALTHY HOLIDAYS

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Literary routes offer a unique and enriching opportunity for active and healthy holidays. Combining the joy of reading with the benefits of physical and mental activity, exploring literary routes can be a fulfilling experience for both the mind and body. The phenomenon of literary tourism is understood as travel or movement to a destination due to an interest in some form of literary association with that destination (Potočnik Topler, 2020). These routes take travellers on a journey to places where literature authors were born or lived or through landscapes that have inspired them providing a chance to immerse oneself in the world of literature while enjoying the beauty of nature. Cultural and historical paths represent physical infrastructures for supporting this sustainable and slow form of tourism involving walking across territories (Fistola, 2018). Walking or cycling along these routes allows travellers to stay active and engage in low-impact exercise while taking in the picturesque surroundings. Literary routes provide a unique way to combine fitness with cultural exploration. In addition to promoting physical health, literary routes also offer mental and emotional benefits (Andersen et al, 2024). Reading and engaging with literature has been shown to improve cognitive function, boost creativity, and reduce stress. By following in the footsteps of famous literary figures and exploring the settings of their works, travellers can deepen their appreciation for literature and gain a deeper understanding of the stories that have captured the imagination of readers for generations. On the other hand, literary routes often lead travellers to charming villages, historic landmarks, and cultural attractions. This way, visitors avoid commercialized cultural shows and gives an opportunity to tourists to get an authentic experience as well as give a chance to local communities to improve the economic gain (Yang et al, 2010). For tourism, stakeholders literary routes give an opportunity to develop new products focused on health and wellness enriched themed activities and events that promote literary heritage of the area. Modern technology enables people to be active and join literary tours online as well. There are identified quite a few variates of online tours (Popodopoulou, 2023). Virtual travel is one of the most common and universal tasks performed inside virtual environments (Nilsson et al, 2018). Numerous VR walks APPs have been developed throughout last years. APP providers have done VR walks that keep active the participants and being acquainted with literature trails in their homes or offices. For some of them this can be a part of the healing program (Cho et al., 2013) for some just a part of their daily activity and for some of them, this could be an invitation and motivation to join this walk in person on their next active holiday as well. Literary routes present a unique opportunity. By exploring the landscapes and settings that have inspired literary masterpieces, travellers can enjoy the benefits of physical activity, mental stimulation, and cultural enrichment. Whether it is a leisurely stroll through the city's streets or the rolling hills or a bike tour, literary routes offer a rich and rewarding holiday experience that is sure to leave a lasting impression.

Keywords: literary tourism, literary routes, active holidays, movement, health

3. THE COMPETITIVENESS OF VOJVODINA AS AN ADVENTURE TOURISM DESTINATION

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Vojvodina is part of the wider area of the Pannonian Plain with a characteristic plain relief and a moderately continental climate. The hydrographic network is branched, and the plant and animal life is characterized by great diversity. Nature protection was achieved in the Fruška gora National Park, then in 16 special nature reserves, nine nature parks, three landscapes of exceptional characteristics, two protected habitats and a large number of nature monuments. In such a natural environment, conditions have been created for the development of adventure tourism, both for hard and soft adventures. Adventure tourism fosters sustainable development and its participants and policymakers comply to sustainable environmental practices. They are aware of the fact that without a preserved natural environment, the destination will lose its competitiveness, and consequently tourists.

The goal of this research is to determine the weak and strong points of the adventure tourism system in Vojvodina through the application of value chain analysis. The analysis requires the mapping of a value chain, various detailed research and analysis, checking findings with stakeholders, and recommendations for future actions. The research defined 14 different criteria that were grouped into seven dimensions that served as the basis for a semi-structured interview. Respondents were chosen according to the principle of a representative sample: a sample of experts. Experts are holders of the offer of adventure tourism. Their knowledge and experience are very important in evaluating all the criteria that make up the application of value-chain analysis. The analysis systematized and interpreted the positive and negative aspects of adventure tourism obtained according to the respondents' answers. The respondents rated the quality and quantity of activities, the natural environment, the level of service and the expertise of managers the best.

The plain area is usually not interesting enough for the development of adventure tourism, nor do tourists expect to find an exciting adventure. However, numerous forms of adventure tourism have been developed in Vojvodina, which are intended for both young tourists eager for adrenaline sports, as well as older tourists and seniors with content adapted to those age groups. The products of adventure tourism in Vojvodina can be selectively balanced and adapted to tourist demand segments of different ages and physical abilities, which makes the competitiveness of destination more important.

Keywords: adventure tourism, competitiveness, value-chain analysis, balanced products



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4. CULTURAL AND THEMATIC ROUTES AND EUROPEAN UNION PROJECT FUNDING IN SLOVENIA

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Slovenia is covered with a high density of cultural routes, heritage trails, tourism trails or thematic trails. Although there is no official information with regards to the exact number, according to information from Tourism Association of Slovenia, there are more than 700 thematic trails in the country, including a rich diversity, from vine and gastronomy routes to historic trails, pilgrimage routes, forest learning paths etc. These routes often, but not necessarily, interconnect cultural heritage with hiking and/or cycling and can span on highly diverse distances, from local paths to trans-European routes. The latest national tourism strategy pointed to the need for setting up a register and further support for the development and maintenance of the existing tourist infrastructure of themed trails and a continuous all-Slovenian project of inventorying, marking, the establishment of a maintenance model and digitisation of thematic hiking and cycling trails.

Stoffelen (2018) claims that thematic routes receive a strikingly high share of the funds spent on tourism in the European Union co-financing schemes. Yet the long-term sustainability of purposive setting up thematic trails is uncertain. According to Timothy and Boyd (2015) this is more common for the “purposive cultural routes”, referring to heritage trails that were not necessarily original paths or travel routes but have been intentionally developed and assembled for modern recreational and touristic use.

This research focuses on the role of European project funding in setting up cultural, cycling or hiking routes in Slovenia. We identified and analysed information on projects that were financed in European public calls from the beginning of the EU financing perspective in 2004 until year 2022 and included at least one partner from Slovenia, were finalised, and mentioned that at least one of the project outputs would be a creation or a support to a thematic route (either tourism, cultural, educational or sports-related).

A total of 93 projects were identified, which financed setting up or support of 61 thematic routes. This result supports the thesis that routes are a common measure of European support to tourism and cultural heritage. History-themed routes were by far most-commonly funded, comprising 42 % of all projects. However, the online salience analysis of the 61 routes, taken as a proxy measure of their long-term viability, showed that less than half of the total 61 tourism routes (44,2 %) have their own official website, and only one third appear on various other tourism websites (32,8 %) or have their own Facebook page (27,9 %).

We discuss the meaning of these results for future management of cultural routes and heritage conservation at the local destination management level, the national policy on routes management and the European project funding for cultural heritage and tourism support.



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Key words: Cultural routes, heritage trails, destination management, hiking, cycling, heritage conservation

5. PARKRUN AS A CATALYST FOR HEALTH AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLES IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

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Parkrun is a format of running events in the parks that brings together hundreds of thousands of people around the world for a weekend run in the fresh air. Parkrun allows people to experience the simple pleasure of sport, outdoor social recreation and is an ideal starting point for people looking for active and healthy lifestyle. The main principle of parkrun is running for fun, not for rewards. No winners and losers. The first organized event took place in 2004 in London's Bushey Park, and by 2008 it acquired its real name – parkrun, an online platform for runners, and having conquered most British parks, went beyond the country. Today, more than 7.5 million users are registered on the parkrun.com platform, of which about 5 million people have finished at least once at one of the 2000 locations in 22 countries. Parkrun is very democratic. It does not require special equipment, sports training or any material costs. A study conducted at the UK's Loughborough University found that runners taking up parkrun for the first time were primarily motivated by a desire to lose weight or improve their fitness. Those who regularly participate in parkrun have new motivations: to beat their personal best, to achieve a certain number of runs, to enjoy being outdoors, to meet friends or spend time jogging with family, to make new acquaintances while participating in the races as a volunteer.

The growing popularity of parkrun has aroused the interest of the scientific community in the parkrun phenomenon. Since 2016, the Parkrun Research Board has been operating at the Advanced Wellbeing Research Centre at the Sheffield Hallam University (UK), which supports research related to parkrun. The most common and clear conclusion of parkrun studies is that parkrun is useful for maintaining physical fitness: weight loss, prevention of cardiovascular diseases, rehabilitation after illness, compensation for the effects of aging. Parkrun helps stabilize mental health, in particular helps relieve anxiety and improves work-life balance. Researchers also note psychological changes in the runner's personality: parkrun participants note that they experience a sense of achievement, self-improvement, increased self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as finding meaning in life.

The authors of the paper, using qualitative meta-analysis, open data on parkrun, actual parkrun studies, consider the phenomenon of parkrun through the prism of the following issues: the importance of the local running community, tools for involving people in running and an active lifestyle, cross-sector partnership of parkrun organizers with sports and health sectors, parkrun tourism, opportunities for the development of new forms of parkrun.



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Parkrun's mission of making the world a healthier and happier place is not only about parkrun events, but also through initiatives that promote the health and well-being of people and the sustainability of local communities. Therefore, parkrun as a subject of scientific analysis is becoming more and more interesting and relevant for researchers.

Keywords: Parkrun, Running, Active Leisure, Health Lifestyle, Physical Activity, Well-being

6. TRANSFORMATIVE ACTIVITIES IN LEISURE AND TOURISM

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Introduction

Transformative activities have the capacity to bring significant changes in people. Notable among these activities are leisure, sport, tourism, and self-improvement endeavors, as well as connecting with nature, volunteering, and exploring offbeat destinations. Despite existing research, literature on holistic frameworks for transformative experiences and the complex multi-stage process of people's transformation following leisure and tourism activities remains scarce. This presentation seeks to provide insights into the dimensions influencing transformative experiences, addressing the "where," "when," "with whom," and "why" questions. It suggests avenues for future research, encompassing diverse aspects of this intricate subject and opportunities to measure the effects of transformative activities on individuals' self-changes.

Methods

The propositions presented are grounded in a literature review spanning various disciplines, as well as the author's quantitative and qualitative studies on the process of travel transformation and discussions with experts from diverse fields. Additional data were collected online through semi-structured interviews with individuals who had previously experienced transformative tourism-related experiences, informing the discussion on key questions of transformation and supporting the propositions for future research. A web-based survey was distributed to a sample of people who had previously had transformative experiences. Several data analysis techniques, including descriptive statistics, frequency analysis, content analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, etc., were utilized.

Discussion and Conclusions

The transformative process involves cognitive and affective triggers, leading to self-reflection, self-changes, and subsequent actions. The Transformative Experience Diagram is introduced as a guide to explore the "where," "when," "with whom," and "why" of tourism-related transformation. This process results in positive changes in individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, manifesting in altered personality traits. Activities characterized by active leisure, self-improvement endeavors, connecting with nature, and exploring unconventional routes are identified as the most transformative. A promising direction for future research involves developing a typology to categorize

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the most transformative activities. Transformative experiences are notably concentrated at the beginning and end of activities, with greater prevalence among experienced tourists. However, the most experienced tourists do not report significant personality changes after transformative travel experiences. Therefore, it might be valuable to discuss the U-shape of transformative experiences. The relationships between transformative activities and resulting self-changes can be moderated by prior experience, socio-demographic characteristics, and various personal and contextual factors, warranting exploration in future studies.

The transformative process involves cognitive and affective triggers, leading to self-reflection, self-changes, and subsequent actions. Transformed individuals express intentions to actively pursue acquiring new knowledge, aiding others, making life-changing decisions, and engaging in positive activities. Longitudinal studies are deemed valuable to explore the sustainability of positive changes and the duration of tourists' willingness to participate in these activities. The proposed framework has the potential to guide tourism researchers in shaping the direction of future studies on travel transformation. Beyond conceptualizing tourist transformation and introducing research instruments, this presentation has the potential to shape tourism management practices toward designing experiences that cause tourists' transformation and positively impact the personal growth and well-being of travellers.

Keywords: transformation, tourism, leisure, sport, framework

7. UNIÓN JUÁREZ, CHIAPAS; AN EMERGING DESTINATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF A HEALTHY LIFE ENCOURAGED IN MEXICO FROM THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

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In the third decade of the 21st century, the need to take care of the environment to preserve environmental and socio-cultural resources under principles of sustainability, including economic ones, prevails in world society. In addition to this, more and more, the practice of a lifestyle linked to these principles has been put into the social debate, where body, soul and spirit are in balance together with nature and it be evident in all facets of life, one of them being leisure and entertainment from travel.

In this sense and after the ravages caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, experts have pointed out as a priority, the practice of tourism in natural spaces, which is responsible and sustainable, so there are

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emerging destinations that are beginning to emerge to offer an interesting combination that, at the same time as promoting the enjoyment of nature, seeks to promote active leisure activities that favor health.

Such is the case of Unión Juárez, Chiapas, a municipality in the southeast of Mexico whose environment is suitable for enjoying many activities as walks along different trails where you can also appreciate indescribable natural views from its viewpoints, bird watching is encouraged, you can access to waterfalls and rivers and climbing one of the largest volcanoes in the Republic, the Tacaná volcano, 4,092 meters high above sea level.

Nowadays the local community has proposed to promote tourism as a priority economic activity, based on the experience they have captured with travelers from France, Japan, Germany and Mexican nationals themselves who like to climb to the top of the Volcano that shares a border with Guatemala; from where you can breathe pure and clean air, enjoy the local gastronomy, live in environments with overnight stays in the open air - in tents - and carry out physical endurance activities that reiterate the need to move towards a healthy way of life. So, the interesting thing is also to contribute to generate a sustainable tourism in that region.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to analyze the practices that are carried out in the tourist tours of Unión Juárez and the perception of tourists about these practices as a mechanism that promotes healthy living. A mixed method is used that combines qualitative and quantitative techniques, interviews and surveys, service providers and visitors. It will be applied between the months of April and July of this year and it is estimated that examples of good practices linked to customs of native peoples such as the Mam culture will emerge that, in addition to an economic boost through tourism, are capable to generate a social and personal awareness to increase healthy and sustainable activities both from the local population and to be replicated in emerging tourist destinations of nature.

Key words: Nature tourism, healthy living, active leisure.

PANEL 4: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM TRENDS

Chair: assoc. prof. Dr Marko Koščak

1. HOW SUSTAINABILITY-ORIENTED ARE THE SMES FOCUSING ON CYCLISTS? EVIDENCE FROM CENTRAL EUROPE.

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The paper surveys the attitudes and commitment towards sustainability among SMEs specialising in cycling tourism. Cycling tourism, as emphasized by Weed (2014), has the potential to reduce motorized transportation and promote sustainable development. Crotti et al. (2022) suggest integrating greener transportation in urban areas to support long-term cycling tourism viability, while Gazzola (2018) highlights its potential in boosting sustainable tourism in remote regions. The European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) and the World Cycling Alliance (WCA) link cycling to 11 of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (European Cyclists' Federation, 2021). Ciascai et al. (2022) note that cycling tourism connects with communities of cyclists exploring lesser-known areas, requiring less space than car infrastructure and reducing pollution. Electric bikes can replace motorized trips, and cycle tourists often use public transport over planes, enhancing environmental sustainability (EuroVelo, 2023). Han et al. (2020) predict significant changes in cycle tourism, incorporating electric bicycles and sustainable practices to address environmental and societal issues. Projects in Northern Italy, as studied by Gazzola et al. (2018), show how cycling can promote sustainable tourism in rural areas, despite some visitors using planes or cars. Crotti et al. (2022) emphasize the need for cycling tourists to use greener transportation modes, while Pröbstl-Haider (2018) highlights collaborative planning and well-maintained trails. Meschik (2012) stresses the importance of strong tourist infrastructure, regional attractions, and scenic terrain for sustainable cycle tourism. Weed (2014) notes that adopting sustainability practices in tourism can positively impact cycling tourism by reducing reliance on motorized transportation through green certifications. Although literature on cycle tourist sustainability certificates is limited, our paper aims to fill this gap by exploring the specific relevance of environmental sustainability to cycling tourism.

Although there is limited discussion on sustainability certificates, studies indicate growing awareness for their implementation (Weed, 2014; Crotti, 2022). The results of the survey conducted in autumn 2023 (N = 776) found that only 15% of respondents are certified as sustainable/green providers, with most believing it contributes the least to environmental and societal preservation. Most certified providers in our research are from Slovenia, followed by Germany and Austria, while Czechia, Poland, and Slovakia have the fewest sustainable service providers, followed by Croatia and Hungary.

Despite this, 92% are open to implementing sustainable practices, with interest ranging from 75% to 100% across all participating countries. Only participants from Germany, Slovakia, and Czechia showed slightly higher disinterest levels, while all survey respondents from Hungary expressed interest in green practices.

Survey respondents found waste separation the easiest sustainability measure to adopt (M 3.43), followed by water-saving initiatives (M 3.27). Conversely, they viewed CO₂ offset (M 2.4) and green certification (M 2.56) as the most challenging to implement. Waste separation was also seen as the most beneficial to the environment (M 4.58), followed by renewable energy and water-saving programs. Green certification was considered the least significant contributor to sustainability (M 3.35).



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Overall, the results expose the „paradox“ in which tourism SMEs are interested into sustainability certification. However, they also believe the certifications contribute little to sustainability...

2. EXPLORING THE URBAN JUNGLE: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN URBAN FORESTS THE CASE OF EXCEPTIONAL TREES OF MUNICIPALITY MARIBOR

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Introduction

Urban forests, often overlooked in the hustle of city life, hold a unique charm and offer a sanctuary for both nature enthusiasts and city dwellers seeking break from the concrete urban jungle. In recent years, the concept of urban forest tourism has gained momentum within the ideas of active leisure. However, the challenge lies not only in guiding tourists through these urban oases but also in ensuring their sustainability for future generations to enjoy.

Guided tours through urban forests offer participants a chance to learn about the flora, fauna, and ecological processes thriving amidst the urban landscape. These tours may include educational walks led by knowledgeable guides, birdwatching expeditions, or even tree-climbing adventures, providing diverse experiences for tourists of all ages and interests.

Method

The study explores the theoretical concept of urban forest guiding. It highlights its value and proposes a theoretical framework for sustainable urban communities based on education, community engagement and sustainable infrastructure. Further, it presents several case studies worldwide (Singapore, Tokyo, Košutnjak and Portland) where urban forest walks have been explored and applied as a way of sustainable urban development promotion. Finally, the article presents the unique walk, applied in the city of Maribor that has been established within the ForestWell project, led by Vocational College for Hospitality and Tourism Maribor, Slovenia.

Findings/Discussions

The paper presents Forest urban walk among the most Exceptional trees of municipality Maribor as a case for promoting sustainable urban development. The walk has been designed as a green infrastructure within city of Maribor. The walk has been designed as part of the greater ForestWell project that promotes urban sustainability through the promotion of urban forest wellness, forest culinary and urban tourism.

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Conclusion

Urban forests represent invaluable green infrastructure within cities, offering numerous benefits to both the environment and human well-being. By embracing sustainable tourism practices, cities can harness the potential of urban forests to attract visitors, promote environmental education, and conserve biodiversity for future generations. Through collaborative efforts with project as ForestWell and its local partners, we can ensure that urban forests continue to thrive as vibrant and resilient ecosystems amidst urbanization.

Keywords: urban forests, sustainable urban tourism, well-being, green urban infrastructure, active leisure

3. AUDIO BOOK: EXCEPTIONAL TREES OF MUNICIPALITY MARIBOR THE CASE OF SUSTAINABLE INCLUSIVE TOURISM

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Introduction This paper investigates the role of audiobooks in promoting sustainable and inclusive tourism, focusing on the unique case of exceptional trees in Maribor, Slovenia. Maribor, renowned for its rich cultural heritage and breathtaking natural landscapes, has embraced a novel approach to showcase its exceptional trees, not merely as botanical wonders but as catalysts for sustainable tourism development.

Method Through qualitative analysis of audiobook narratives and interviews with stakeholders, this study examines how the integration of technology and storytelling fosters inclusivity and enhances visitors' experiences. Moreover, it explores the socio-economic impacts of this innovative tourism strategy, shedding light on its potential to empower local communities and preserve ecological diversity.

Findings/ Discussions

Findings underscore the significance of leveraging digital platforms to create immersive, educational, and accessible tourism opportunities while advancing sustainability goals.

Conclusion

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The case of Maribor's exceptional trees serves as a compelling example of how audio-guided experiences can foster environmental stewardship, cultural appreciation, and social equity in tourism destinations locally and worldwide.

Keywords: sustainable tourism, inclusive tourism, trees, city guided tours, audio book

4. USING ACTOR-NETWORK THEORY (ANT) AND STAKEHOLD THEORY IN GASTRONOMY TOURISM RESEARCH

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The involvement of people in various forms of gastronomic tourism, according to research, shows similarly high levels of satisfaction among individuals as in other quality forms of spending free time. Gastronomic tourism within the value chain offers many development opportunities for the local, regional and national economy, but it is necessary to take into account all the pillars of sustainable development and the coordinated action of its stakeholders in order to be recognised as a sustainable form of tourism (UNWTO, 2017).

In recent years, gastronomic tourism has received a lot of attention from researchers, as it has established itself not only as one of the most widespread propulsive forms of tourist offer, but also as a powerful generator of local integration and entrepreneurial development (Rangus, Petek, Gačnik, 2023). We can therefore approach its research in several ways. In this paper, we will therefore compare the explanatory power of two theories, the ANT (Actor-Network Theory) theory and the stakeholder theory, and check the appropriateness of their use in gastronomic tourism research. A systematic review of scientific literature from two databases, will help analyzing articles that use these two research approaches and evaluate their findings in connection with the functioning of gastronomic tourism. The search limiting criteria will be the articles published between 2019 in 2023 that used followed search keywords: ANT Theory, Stakeholder Theory, gastronomy tourism, hospitality.

ANT Theory is often interpreted as a tool for translating relationships and forces between human and non-human actors within a social phenomenon (Latour, 1986). Human and non-human actors in the gastronomic landscape represent a network of relationships that co-influence the construction of physical evidences, customs, traditions and business models within it. In this case, the network does not have a stable form, but is dynamic all the time and without clearly defined boundaries. The strength of relationship between them is diverse and without a clear hierarchy, and distinctly fluid. By using the ANT theory in the research of gastronomic tourism, we do not expect to find answers to



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questions about why gastronomic tourism works, but to present the ways how gastronomic tourism works within the actors, which can be perceived with the tools of the ANT theory.

Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 2004) by placing an ethical insight into the functioning of relationships and power relations within the study of business phenomena from the perspective of stakeholders, brings answers to which academics from the field of economics often did not pay attention or did not pay enough attention to them. In the field of gastronomic tourism, the stakeholder theory thus addresses everyone who is involved in a business relationship and has the opportunity to make decisions, while at the same time other stakeholders have been empowered in this relationship by making a business promise.

Placing the theory of ANT and the theory of stakeholders in the landscape of gastronomic tourism can also serve us as a research tool with which we will be able to identify key actors or stakeholders and recognized the characteristics, effectiveness and robustness of the connections and relationships between them.

With this, we will create the conditions for further discourse on the importance and complexity of relationships in gastronomic tourism.

5. SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER'S ROLE IN DESTINATION IMAGE BUILDING; STUDY OF THE USER GENERATED CONTENT OF SELECTED SMIS ON VARANASI

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Social media platforms emerged as a favourite pastime activity of youngsters in recent times. Generation Z spend considerable time in social media and many of them make attempts to create content and share it for public view. Prior researches demonstrate the significant role of Social Media Influencers (SMI) in highlighting destination features. The SMIs explore their creative skills and use various techniques to increase viewership and followership. Instagram, one of the most favourite social media platforms of SMI in India plays a highly influential role in tourism promotion. The present research was conducted in Varanasi, a popular tourist attraction in India, which draws a large number of domestic tourists and international tourists. The city boasts of vibrant cultural heritage and religious traditions. Followers of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jain traditions visit the numerous religious sites located in the city to fulfil the rituals and undertake pilgrimages as part of the century's old practices. The city also hosts monks of different sects which itself present a unique visual narrative to social media users. The SMIs capture the daily life of people set in motion along the riverside, special occasions marking religious importance, festivities, food and shopping which draws the attention of people who use Instagram.

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The main objectives of the present study are, (a) to examine the SMIs and social media engagement of youth in demonstrating destination experience in the context of Varanasi, (b) to analyse the usage of images, actions and sound to capture the attention of the followers or viewers. The study employed a participatory research design. Nine students participated voluntarily to study the SMIs (>10000 followers) post content on Instagram for a period of 10 days (March 01 to March 10, 2024). Data on SMIs and their posts were monitored separately and information related to the user, and the content were noted in a format designed for this purpose. Popular themes were identified from the collected data. The findings of the study present insights on key destination attributes and themes projected by the SMIs on Varanasi, creativity and innovativeness applied in the content design and popular leisure activities. The study presents three important findings. conceptualisation of religious leisure (reliesure), participatory role in experiencing leisure opportunities, creative use of digital technology to market their post and the creation of digital identity in the virtual world.

Key words: social media influencer, destination promotion, reliesure, digital identity, Instagram