THE BEHAVIOUR OF TRAVELLERS IN THE TRANSITION TO RESPONSIBLE TOURISM: THE CASE OF THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Ligita ŠIMANSKIENĖ [ID]*, Daiva LABANAUSKAITĖ [ID], Deimena MONTVYDAITĖ [ID]

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Klaipėda University, Klaipėda, Lithuania

Abstract. Changes in travellers' behaviour are among the most significant issues in the recent revolution of the tourism industry. The perception of perceived value and quality lead to rethinking priorities and choices while travelling. The purpose of the article is to analyse the expression of travellers' behaviour orientation towards the key elements of responsible tourism in the countries of the Baltic Sea Region. The findings of quantitative research, which has been carried out in the form of survey, reveal that the behaviour of travellers of the Baltic Sea Region confirms that responsible tourism has become a way of thinking. The transition to responsible tourism is primarily driven by tourism destination-related elements and the strength of the impact related to maintaining the quality of life of local people, redistributing the benefits of tourism for travel destinations, enhancing the value and distinctiveness of the travel destination product, and maintaining long-term attractiveness, within the capacity of the travel destination and efficient use of its tourism resources. It may be the direction towards more sustainable and responsible future of traveling.

Keywords: tourism, responsible tourism, the Baltic Sea Region, travellers' behaviour, travellers' attitude, COVID-19.

JEL Classification: L83, C91, C92.

Introduction

Relevance of the topic. For quite a long time, the development of tourism was based on economic goals – income generation, export of services, job creation. However, with the emergence of tourism monoculture and the negative consequences of tourism development in highly visited regions, increasing attention has been paid to integrating sustainable and responsible tourism concepts into tourism development programs, disseminating information to the public and putting them into practice. The transition to responsible tourism and the practical application of its principles are driven by both global forces, including the elements and goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2018), and the search for the optimal balance of tourism at national and local level – cities, protected areas, businesses, or communities, as well as the growing awareness of travellers.

Problem statement. The concept of responsible tourism has been extensively addressed in tourism research and practice, however, studies analysing tourists' contribution to responsible tourism have been neglected (Eichelberger et al., 2021). One of the essential conditions for effective implementation of the principles of responsible tourism is supportive behaviour of travellers, which includes not only the most active supporters of the concept of responsible tourism, but also expands to wider sections of society and becomes the dominant model of travel behaviour.

The Cape Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism (The Responsible Tourism Partnership, 2002) defines main characteristics of responsible tourism. At both the scientific and empirical levels, it is important to find out how visitors from different parts of the world support the principles of responsible tourism in the expression of their behaviour. The scientific problem of this research can be formulated by the question: which principles of responsible tourism are implemented in the behaviour of the population of the Baltic Sea Region in the context of transition to responsible tourism as a dominant concept of the travel industry?

The aim of the research is to analyse the expression of travellers' behaviour orientation towards the key elements of responsible tourism in the countries of the Baltic Sea Region.

The object of the research is the behaviour of travellers in the countries of the Baltic Sea Region.

Referring to this perception, firstly, this research aims to analyse the factors driving the transition to responsible tourism. Secondly, it focuses on answering the question

*Corresponding author. E-mail: *ligita.simanskiene@ku.lt*

of how the travel style of the modern traveller is changing and how these changes are consistent with the perceptions of responsible behaviour. Finally, the study figures out which principles of responsible tourism are implemented in the behaviour of the population of the Baltic Sea Region in the context of the transition to responsible tourism as a dominant concept of travel in a future.

Novelty of the research. The study not only helps to determine changes in travel style and behaviour, but also reveals how the behavioural and attitude elements of travellers in the Baltic Sea countries respond to the characteristics of responsible behaviour while travelling.

The methods applied in the research include analysis of literature sources, systematisation, synthesis, generalisation, and comparison in the theoretical part, and quantitative approach – a questionnaire survey – and data processing methods in the empirical research.

1. Theoretical background of the research of the behaviour of travellers in the transition to responsible tourism

1.1. Factors influencing the transition to responsible tourism

Due to the decades-long rapid growth rates achieved by the general indicators of the tourism industry, because of the social and economic significance, tourism was called the XX century phenomenon. However, the sharp increase in tourism has led scientists from different countries to start discussing the negative consequences of tourism development and the concept of over-tourism. The analysis of trends in the volume of tourism can be argued on the basic model of Butler (1980) of the tourism cycle, which is still widely used by researchers studying the phenomenon of tourism. There are six main stages in the tourism cycle: exploration, inclusion, development, consolidation, stagnation and decline or renewal, depending on the situation. Butler's (1980) model of the tourism cycle expresses the change in the scale of tourism over time with respect to the number of tourists and provides a critical threshold for tourism capacity.

As the volume of tourism increases, the negative impact on the visited area and local residents becomes more pronounced. According to Baksi and Parid (2020), conventionally, the growth of travel and tourism is not without collaterals posing threats to environment, society and the ethno-cultural fabric. It is clear that the development of tourism is encouraged taking into account the needs of tourists, with little regard for the impact on the area visited. Butler's (1980) model confirms the statement that the uncontrolled growth of tourism can disrupt the local microclimate.

Although problematic forms of over-tourism and their impact on local communities and the environment have been studied for some time, the term over-tourism in public and academic discussions about the negative consequences of tourism is relatively new (Peeters et al.,

2018). Peeters et al. (2018), analysing the phenomenon of over-tourism, made some key summary findings:

– Over-tourism is the result of tourism strategies aimed at increasing the scale of tourism, with the greatest impact on local people;
– – Many of the problems of over-tourism are related to the (negative) perception of the relationship between tourists, locals and entrepreneurs due to the excessive number of tourists at certain times in certain places;
– Over-tourism begins when one or more local ecological, physical, social, psychological or economic capacities are exceeded;
– Over-tourism can be associated with declining transport costs, rising revenues and the concentration of tourism in certain places at certain times;
– Over-tourism is also linked to rapid change. Because of the active instruments of social media and advertising, the number of tourists is growing particularly fast in some places;
– Over-tourism is often associated with urban, urban tourism issues, although a common phenomenon – rural, coastal, island, natural, cultural heritage sites;
– Various strategies are being developed in destination places to minimize the negative effects of over-tourism, but the main reason for the increase of tourism is rarely discussed;
– Tourist destinations may need to further optimize the benefits of tourism and consider the increasing scale of tourism.

The state of over-tourism is reached fairly quickly when the desire to generate high incomes on the basis of low service prices is established. The consequences are not only environmental impacts, but it also concerns the long-term human cost associated with the phenomenon (Weeden, 2013), which in turn reduces the attractiveness of the travel destination for visitors.

It should be noted that during the period of mass tourism, the gradual establishment of tourism monoculture in attracting extremely large numbers of tourists not only causes negative impact on the environment. It displaces locals, non-tourism businesses, affects the degradation of the natural environment, has negative socio-cultural and atmospheric holiday transformations of environment in tourism development, such travel destinations are no longer meeting the needs of some travellers focused on higher quality travel, and the consequences of this kind of tourism development can no longer be seen only within the tourism sector (Vellas & Blecheler, 1995).

Over-tourism rapidly reduces the emotional, experiential, and cognitive value of travel. The dominant segment of tourists in the visited area causes a rather strong socio-cultural impact – their behavioural stereotypes and consumption habits become dominant, which encourages businesses to adapt by shaping the supply of services (Johnson & Thomas, 1992). Such changes at the travel destination reduce the unique experience during the travel and encourage travellers to look for the new travel

directions, which in turn can mean either short-term travel destination popularity or travel destination positioning in the low-cost and mass services segment, which is not necessarily in line with the travel destination strategic development expectations.

As a counterweight to over-tourism, the concept of sustainable tourism has been developed, together questioning the issue of tourism responsibility. Baksi and Parid (2020) notice that the host community was relatively inert until the Cape Town Declaration (The Responsible Tourism Partnership, 2002) approached the sustainability issue from a different perspective, declaring that the host community and the visitors are identified to be engaged in symbiotic relationship with the shared responsibility. The concept of responsible tourism has been emerging in recent decades in response to the increasing pressures from the stakeholders in the society for corporate social responsibility fulfilment (Nguyen et al., 2019). Responsible tourism has its origins in the "White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa" (Government of South Africa, Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, 1996), where it has been described as "tourism that promotes responsibility to the environment through its sustainable use, responsibility to involve local communities in the tourism industry, responsibility for the safety and security of visitors and responsible government, employees, employers, unions and local communities". The importance of responsible tourism is still undeniable. With growing environmental concerns, climate change and the impact of development on people and places, the emphasis of responsibility and ethics in tourism are gaining an increasing emphasis (Ruhanen & Bowles, 2020). Considering the essence of responsible tourism phenomenon, Sica et al. (2021) state that responsible tourism provides a consideration how to improve the sustainability of tourism with the ambition to enhance the positive impacts of mainstream tourism, while reducing the negative ones. Dias et al. (2021) add that responsible tourism maximizes benefits for local communities and minimizes negative social and environmental impacts, helping people to conserve their cultures and habitats. Responsible tourism aims to assess the impacts of current tourism on improving positive points and decreasing negative ones. Further, it is related to the individuals who are responsible for making tourism more sustainable (Mohamadi et al., 2021). Karimi and Darban Astane (2021) claim that responsible tourism is a new approach which ensures that local communities have a fair share of benefits in developing tourism and it aims to create better tourism destinations and provides a more enjoyable experience for tourists. Responsible tourism practice promotes better for visit of tourists and enhances the quality of life of host communities in the destination by encouraging ethical consumption and production for all stakeholders (Sangkhaduang et al., 2021).

Weeden (2013), citing Goodwin and Pender (2005), Stanford (2008), singled out the main distinguishing features of responsible tourism:

– It is about travelling in a better way;
– It is about taking responsibility for the impacts that our actions have socially and economically on others and on their social, cultural and natural environment;
– It embraces a quadruple bottom line philosophy to contribute to and enhance local communities, cultures, environments and economies and minimize negative impacts in these areas, as well as it benefits as all those involved;
– It is a form of tourism that is considered less damaging to the social environment of destinations, and more beneficial to tourists and destination economies.

In the "White Paper on the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa" (Government of South Africa, Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, 1996) there are named key elements of responsible tourism: avoiding waste and over-consumption; using local resources sustainably; maintaining and encouraging natural, economic, social and cultural diversity; being sensitive to the host culture; involving the local community in planning and decision-making; assessing environmental, social and economic impacts as a prerequisite to developing tourism; ensuring communities are involved in and benefit from tourism; marketing tourism that is responsible, respecting local, natural and cultural environments; monitoring impacts of tourism and ensure open disclosure of information.

Key elements of responsible tourism respond to the in-depth tourism that Chen et al. (2009) describe it as a relatively new style of travel that meets the need of travellers to use information and communication technologies to acquire the necessary knowledge and information, to gain a positive learning and entertainment experience while traveling, and to promote industrial growth and regional economic development. The above-mentioned authors distinguish three features of in-depth tourism, which are very close to the principles of responsible tourism: greater perceived benefit or value for customers; resources of regional origin and the competencies of local tourism service providers are assessed; the use of new technologies and the dissemination of information through the provision of innovative services. This type of tourism is a holistic solution, combining the learning and entertainment experiences of travellers. In the case of both in-depth and responsible tourism, the tourism product is transformed into an "experience product", which acquires the transformation of their experience into memories and guides them in further travel planning decisions.

The transition to responsible tourism model may mean a reduction in visitor flow in certain tourism destinations. The revenue generated by it is not necessarily offset by the new value and higher price of the tourism product, therefore it may take longer for the tourism industry to support the tourism concept. In places of interest, suffering from excessive tourism, residents in particular support the concept of responsible tourism and agree that environmental protection is more important than tourism development (Dolnicar & Long, 2009).

Many destinations and destination organisations are now encouraging responsible tourism and focusing on becoming more sustainable (Ho & Tan, 2021). Various scholars agree that minimizing the burden on the environment purely product-oriented approaches, increased awareness-building in traveller education, or effective management of nature-based companies and destinations (Dolnicar & Long, 2009) is not enough to succeed in implementing the transition to the responsible tourism concept. A change in travellers' behaviour, in line with the values orientations of responsible tourism, is crucial to the success of responsible tourism.

1.2. Changes in a travel style and traveller behaviour in transition to responsible tourism

The definition of responsible tourism key elements presupposes the definition of responsible tourist. Said (2018), citing Debicka and Oniszczuk-Jastrzabek (2014), states that responsible tourist aims to enjoy the culture, the customs, the gastronomical offer and the tradition of the local population in a respectful way and always tries to contribute to the development of responsible and sustainable tourism.

The implementation of the responsible tourism concept in the process of tourism development aims at the dominance of pro-environmental behaviour, which was defined as actions taken by an individual or a group that benefit the natural environment, enhance environmental quality, or promote the sustainable use of natural resources (Larson et al., 2015). Other authors (Kang & Moscardo, 2006; Steg & Vlek, 2009; Puhakka, 2011; Lee et al., 2013; Chiu et al., 2014, Kim & Thapa, 2018; Wang et al., 2018) define responsible behaviour as a consequence of environmental attitudes, as it reflects tourists' understanding of the impact of their behaviour on the environment, contributing to environmental preservation and acting by the norms in the destination, appreciating the life-styles and cultures of host residents, improving the welfare of residents, being environmentally responsible for the destination, striving to reduce environmental impacts.

The principles of responsible tourism, value orientations and expectations regarding the behaviour of travellers have been formulated relatively recently. Realizing that it takes time for conceptual behavioural attitudes to become a part of everyday travel behaviour, it is appropriate to summarize the insights of researchers from different countries to what extent these processes are already advanced.

Changes in the behaviour of travellers are inseparable from the dominant orientations in economic development. The expression of responsible consumption and ecological orientation in human behaviour has been strengthened with the development and implementation of circular economy and green economy models. Changes in business organization and lifestyle, changing value orientations of individual groups of society, as well as structural and qualitative changes in the tourism industry

have led to changes in tourist needs, expectations and behaviour patterns. Various theories have demonstrated the associations among social norms, values, attitudes, behavioural intentions, and actual behaviours in implementing the concept of responsible tourism (Cheng et al., 2018). Changes in tourists' psychographic portraits and travel styles are among the most significant changes in the tourism industry in recent times, with tourists becoming more experienced and informed, more independent, and able to organize their travel independently, which in turn increases the demand for alternative tourism products.

Summarizing the results of research conducted in various countries, the following changes in the style of travel, observed in the tourism market, can be distinguished (Faracik, 2008; Rudnicki, 2010; Ratten, 2010; Fachè, 2000):
- More and more tourists are abandoning organized tourist trips because group travel does not cover all tourist travel needs;
- Travellers are characterized by greater individualism, desire to spend their free time differently and stay in an authentic environment;
- Priority is given to the experience combination "3E" – entertainment, emotion, self-education;
- The aim is to discover new places that are still little known to the mass tourist; to feel the pleasure of changing the place/contrast; to get acquainted with people of other cultures, their customs, traditions, to experience new adventures and thus move away from everyday life or the monotony of life.

The discussed changes in travel style are related to the change in travellers' attitudes and their expression in behaviour, in line with the principles of responsible tourism. Researchers from various countries note that some modern travellers focus on the value content of their tourism product when choosing travel, opting for longer trips, abandoning consumption-for-consumption solutions, being more sensitive to the environment, the culture of the area visited, and integrating more into the area, and not to change it, which has a positive impact on the regional economy, ecological protection, cultural continuity, social development. Therefore, it is appropriate to analyse the extent to which the pattern of responsible behaviour is prevalent in individual countries or groups of countries.

2. Methodology of the research of the behaviour of travellers in the transition to responsible tourism

To analyse the expression of travellers' behaviour orientation towards the key elements of responsible tourism in the countries of the Baltic Sea Region, the quantitative survey of the Baltic Sea Region countries representatives has been carried out. The survey consisted multiple choice, Likert scale and ranking questions. The respondents of the survey have been selected by snowball sampling method (Naderifar et al., 2017). The survey has been carried out in 2021 May. Microsoft Excel software has been used for processing and systematizing of the research data. The

research involves eight Baltic Sea Region countries, that are the members of the European Union: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden (European Commission, 2009). The sample size of the research has been calculated using Paniotto's formula (Kardelis, 2002):

$$n = \frac{1}{\left(\Delta^2 + \dfrac{1}{N} \right)}, \qquad (1)$$

where *n* – sample size; *N* – population size; Δ – permissible error.

According to the calculations using this Eq. (1), the

Table 1. Demographic factors of the research respondents (source: compiled by the authors)

Demographic factors	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	262	63.13
Male	153	36.87
Rather not to say	0	0.00
Age		
29 below	188	45.30
30–39	88	21.20
40–49	75	18.07
50–59	46	11.08
Above 60	18	4.34
Country		
Denmark	22	5.30
Estonia	4	0.96
Finland	14	3.37
Germany	222	53.49
Latvia	6	1.45
Lithuania	9	2.17
Poland	104	25.06
Sweden	34	8.19

sample size of 400 respondents has been chose. The survey questionnair has been filled by 415 respondents.

The research encountered with the limitations of the survey data distribution. The respondents of the survey have been selected by snowball sampling method, focusing on the size of the whole sample that has been calculated for each country, therefore no proportions by the age categories for separate countries have been derived. In response to the age, respondents have been distributed randomly. The survey also did not include travel intensity criteria. The respondents have been interviewed as ordinary travellers, without questioning their travel habits, i.e., destinations, frequency, company etc. These limitations could be the direction for deeper analysis or for the further research investigating traveller behaviour.

The research involved 415 respondents. 262 females and 153 males participated in the survey. The biggest part of the respondents – 188 people – belonged to the age group below 29 years. The questionnaire, according as the proportions of the sample size formula calculation, was filled by the respondents from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden. The demographic characteristics of the research respondents are shown in the Table 1.

Analysing the expression of travellers' behaviour orientation towards the key elements of responsible tourism in the countries of the Baltic Sea Region, the respondents were asked to identify which definition of responsible tourism in their opinion expresses the essence of responsible tourism the best. Table 2 reveals which definition respondents preferred the most.

According to the survey results in the Table 2, respondents gave the priority to the definition, which states that responsible tourism requires that stakeholders – operators, hoteliers, governments, local people, tourists etc. – take responsibility and take action to make tourism more sustainable (The Responsible Tourism Partnership, 2002; D3). This definition was chosen by the majority of respondents, 212 persons, what is 51.08% of the whole sample. The priority for this definition was given by the respondents from

Table 2. Respondents' opinion on responsible tourism definition (source: compiled by the authors)

Responsible tourism definition	Frequency (N, total)	Percentage (%)								
		Total	Denmark	Estonia	Finland	Germany	Latvia	Lithuania	Poland	Sweden
(D1) RT is about making better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit.	99	23.86	36.36	25.00	14.29	25.23	0.00	44.44	13.46	41.18
(D2) RT is any form of tourism that can be consumed in a more responsible way.	104	25.06	31.82	50.00	28.57	25.23	0.00	11.11	21.15	35.29
(D3) RT requires that stakeholders: operators, hoteliers, governments, local people, tourists etc. take responsibility and take action to make tourism more sustainable.	212	51.08	31.82	25.00	57.14	49.55	100.00	44.44	65.38	23.53

Finland, Germany, Latvia and Poland. The definition, saying that responsible tourism is any form of tourism that can be consumed in a more responsible way (D2) took the second position with 25.06%. It was dominant in the choice by Estonia respondents. The definition arguing that responsible tourism is about making better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit (The Responsible Tourism Partnership, 2002; D1) took the third position with the remaining 23.86%. However, respondents from even three countries – Denmark, Lithuania and Sweden – chose this definition as the most appropriate.

The next part of the questionnaire was created to evaluate travellers' behaviour orientation towards the key elements of the responsible tourism. Respondents were asked to express their acceptance for the elements of responsible tourism. The five-points Likert scale (Allen & Seaman, 2007) were used. Table 3 illustrates the results of the respondents' acceptance of each element, expressed as the mean and standard deviation.

Table 3 reveals respondents' acceptance of the responsible tourism key elements. The results are split into five sections. The first three sections disclose respondents' behaviour in response to the three main responsible tourism dimensions: economic dimension, socio-cultural dimension, and environmental dimension. The fourth section reveals respondents' self-positioning in the responsible tourism in general. The last section illustrates attitude towards tourism transformation. Looking at the first economic dimension, which includes four statements, as the respondents evaluate each statement in number from 1 to 5, the average meaning for the whole dimension, is 3.77 points. That means travellers of the Baltic Sea Region agree with responsible tourism economic expression, stating that they are concern how tourists support local economy (E1.1, 3.34 points), they prefer to buy local products or services (E1.2, 3.96) and are willing to pay more for local products or services if it contributes to local economy (E1.3, 3.82). Respondents also agree that travel experience is better if they can support local economy (E1.4, 3.98). As the standard deviation averagely fluctuates around 0.99, that means respondents had quite similar opinion, which did not vary far from the average meaning. The next, socio-cultural dimension was evaluated with 4.28 points on average, what is the highest point of agreement comparing all three dimensions of responsible tourism. These results reveal that respondents quite strongly agree with the socio-cultural elements of responsible tourism. While traveling, respondents of the Baltic Sea Region respect indigenous people (E2.1, 4.46), respect local customs and traditions (E2.2, 4.47), they are concerned about the well-being of the hosts (E3.3, 3.93) and in general agree that travel experience is better if the destination preserves its cultural heritage (E3.4, 4.25). The average standard deviation of 0.77 reveals that the answers of the respondents evaluating these statements were quite unanimous. The third dimension of responsible tourism that was evaluated by the travellers of the Baltic Sea Region is environmental dimension. The average evaluation of the statements of this dimension is 3.87 points. Respondents prefer travel that specifically designed to cause as little damage to environment (E3.1, 3.92), do not purchase products known to cause pollution (E3.2, 3.69), are willing to pay more for a travel if it is guaranteed the money goes to preservation of local environment (E3.3, 3.70) and agree that travel experience is better if they do not make harm for the environment (E3.4, 4.18). The standard deviation, averagely fluctuating around 0.95, means that respondents had quite similar opinion with the little distribution of the choices. Looking at this situation from the different countries' perspective, it was revealed that in the context of the three main responsible tourism dimensions, socio-cultural elements dominated in all Baltic Sea Region countries. Analysing each dimension separately, economic dimension was highly evaluated by respondents from Poland, Finland and Germany. Socio-cultural dimension gained the highest result from Poland, Finland and Estonia. Environmental dimension had the strongest agreement from respondents from Poland, Finland and Estonia as well.

The research also includes respondents self-positioning in responsible tourism in general. In this section the average meaning is 3.93. Respondents expressed the agreement to participate in responsible tourism travel (E4.1, 4.24), as well as the agreement to pay more for responsible tourism (E4.2, 3.65). Travellers of the Baltic Sea Region concur that when choosing tourism service company, it is important that the company practices responsible tourism policies (E4.3, 3.74). When describing themselves as a responsible travellers (E4.4), respondents agreed with the statement, giving for it averagely 3.81 points. When asked if they support responsible tourism (E4.5), respondents were even more assured, with the average value of 4.24 points. Standard deviation of this section of statements, which is 0.88, confirms that all respondents had quite similar opinion on these issues. Analysing this section from the perspective of separate countries, Poland, Finland and Germany tend to relate themselves with the most responsible behaviour in response to the responsible tourism.

In the questionnaire of the survey, there was also a section, evaluating respondents' attitude towards tourism transformation. The respondents were asked if the direction, where the Europe as well as the whole world goes, inspired by the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2018), Green Deal (European Commision, 2019) affected their attitude towards tourism. As nowadays tourism sector suffers from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, that changed the functioning of the whole tourism industry and forced to look for a solution for the sector to survive (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2020), this angle was also introduced into the survey. It is believed that pandemic situation brings a paradigm shift to new normal responsible tourism (Markose & Vb, 2020). "Sustainable tourism" and "Responsible travel" is claimed to be the new mantra post the COVID-19 (Mondal & Samaddar, 2021). Summing up the answers of the statements in this section of the survey, respondents evaluated it by 3.77 points on average. It was agreed that the depletion

Table 3. Respondents' acceptance of the responsible tourism key elements (source: compiled by the authors)

Elements	Mean (total)	Standard deviation (total)	Mean							
			Denmark	Estonia	Finland	Germany	Latvia	Lithuania	Poland	Sweden
1. Economic dimension	*3.77*	*0.99*	*3.53*	*2.81*	*3.91*	*3.75*	*3.54*	*3.56*	*4.05*	*3.40*
(E1.1) While travelling, I am concern how tourists support local economy	3.34	1.12	3.09	2.25	3.64	3.18	3.67	3.33	3.90	2.76
(E1.2) While traveling, I prefer to buy local products or services	3.96	0.85	3.59	3.25	4.14	3.85	3.67	4.11	4.38	3.65
(E1.3) While travelling, I am willing to pay more for local products or services if it contributes to local economy	3.82	0.98	3.64	2.50	3.79	3.96	3.17	3.33	3.83	3.41
(E1.4) Travel experience is better if I can support local economy	3.98	0.88	3.82	3.25	4.07	4.01	3.67	3.44	4.08	3.79
2. Socio-cultural dimension	*4.28*	*0.77*	*4.11*	*4.38*	*4.43*	*4.21*	*3.67*	*4.25*	*4.47*	*4.29*
(E2.1) I respect indigenous people while traveling	4.46	0.71	4.32	5.00	4.43	4.43	3.67	4.44	4.58	4.44
(E2.2) I respect local customs and traditions while traveling	4.47	0.65	4.23	4.25	4.64	4.41	3.67	4.67	4.69	4.44
(E2.3) While travelling, I am concerned about the well-being of the hosts	3.93	0.81	3.91	4.00	4.21	3.82	3.33	3.78	4.15	3.97
(E2.4) Travel experience is better if the destination preserves its cultural heritage	4.25	0.77	4.00	4.25	4.43	4.17	4.00	4.11	4.46	4.32
3. Environmental dimension	*3.87*	*0.95*	*3.86*	*3.94*	*3.93*	*3.87*	*3.42*	*3.67*	*3.98*	*3.70*
(E3.1) I prefer travel that specifically designed to cause as little damage to environment	3.92	0.99	3.77	4.50	3.86	3.86	3.50	3.78	4.21	3.56
(E3.2) I don't purchase products known to cause pollution	3.69	0.96	3.73	3.75	3.86	3.67	3.00	3.22	3.75	3.82
(E3.3) I am willing to pay more for a travel if it's guaranteed the money goes to preservation of local environment	3.70	0.93	3.68	3.00	3.50	3.86	3.17	3.00	3.65	3.21
(E3.4) Travel experience is better if I don't make harm for the environment	4.18	0.83	4.27	4.50	4.50	4.07	4.00	4.67	4.31	4.21
4. Self-positioning in responsible tourism in general	*3.93*	*0.88*	*3.84*	*3.55*	*4.06*	*3.88*	*3.50*	*3.82*	*4.19*	*3.67*
(E4.1) I am willing to participate in responsible tourism travel	4.24	0.72	4.14	4.00	4.43	4.16	3.83	4.44	4.40	4.24
(E4.2) I am willing to pay more for responsible tourism	3.65	0.90	3.50	2.75	3.64	3.67	3.17	3.33	3.90	3.15
(E4.3) In choosing tourism service company, it is important that the company practices responsible tourism policies	3.74	1.04	3.32	3.25	3.71	3.71	3.17	3.44	4.19	3.03
(E4.4) I describe myself as responsible traveller	3.81	0.83	3.82	3.75	4.00	3.69	3.33	3.78	4.13	3.56
(E4.5) I support responsible tourism	4.24	0.71	4.41	4.00	4.50	4.15	4.00	4.11	4.33	4.38
5. Attitude towards tourism transformation	*3.77*	*1.12*	*3.24*	*3.40*	*3.66*	*3.86*	*2.97*	*3.44*	*3.90*	*3.42*
(E5.1) The depletion of the world and SDG, Green Deal strategies changed my attitude towards tourism	3.63	1.25	3.23	3.50	3.43	3.67	3.17	3.22	3.79	3.50
(E5.2) The depletion of the world and SDG, Green Deal strategies encouraged me to prefer more responsible way of travelling	3.62	1.07	3.09	3.50	3.57	3.79	3.17	3.11	3.90	3.29
(E5.3) The COVID-19 pandemic changed my attitude towards tourism	3.61	1.25	2.86	2.75	3.57	3.74	3.00	3.56	3.77	3.03
(E5.4) The COVID-19 pandemic encouraged me to prefer more responsible way of travelling	3.63	1.24	2.77	2.75	3.57	3.79	2.67	3.33	3.81	2.91
(E5.5) Today's tourism is inseparable from saving the environment for future generation	4.27	0.83	4.23	4.50	4.14	4.32	2.83	4.00	4.23	4.35

of the world and Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2018), Green Deal (European Commision, 2019) strategies changed respondents' attitude towards tourism (E5.1, 3.63) as well as encouraged them to prefer more responsible way of travelling (E5.2, 3.62). In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has changed the functioning and development of the whole tourism industry, respondents were asked if the pandemic had influenced their attitude towards tourism. The results revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic changed the attitude of travellers of the Baltic Sea Region towards tourism (E5.3, 3.61) as well as encouraged them to prefer more responsible way of travelling (E5.4, 3.63). This section included one more important statement, expressing respondents' attitude towards tourism transformation, claiming that today's tourism is inseparable from saving the environment for future generation (E5.5). This statement was evaluated with 4.27 points on average, what means that travellers of the Baltic Sea Region quite strongly agree that tourism needs to operate, and tourists need to act in more responsible way in order to save the environment for the future. Standard deviation of this section was a little bit bigger comparing to other evaluated sections of this part of the research, with the meaning of 1.12, however it is not an exclusion, the answers of respondents still arranged near the average. Analysing situation from the angle of separate countries, there can be seen the same countries – Poland, Finland and Germany – that give the most value for responsible

tourism in response of tourism transformation, moving towards the more responsible future in general.

Summing up the results of this part of the research, in the context of the three main responsible tourism dimensions – economic, socio-cultural and environmental – the elements of the socio-cultural dimension were evaluated with the highest respondents' agreement. The most valued elements were respect for indigenous people and local customs and traditions while traveling, as well as the statement that travel experience is better if the destination preserves its cultural heritage. Evaluating the self-positioning in the responsible tourism, the most stood out statements declared that travellers of the Baltic Sea Region are willing to participate in responsible tourism travel and they support responsible tourism. Analysing attitude towards tourism transformation, travellers of the Baltic Sea Region state an agreement that today's tourism is inseparable from saving the environment for future generation. Looking from the perspective of the separate countries, the results of the research lead to the assumption that in the scope of the Baltic Sea Region, considering behaviour and attitude aspects, responsible tourism is the most appreciated by Poland, Finland, Estonia and Germany travellers.

The survey also included the ranking of the responsible tourism benefits. Seven main features of the responsible tourism, that are stated in the Cape Town declaration (The Responsible Tourism Partnership, 2002), were given for the respondents to sort them according to the

Table 4. Responsible tourism benefits ranking (source: compiled by the authors)

Responsible tourism benefits	Frequency of the 1st place (total)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Frequency of the 1st place							
				Denmark	Estonia	Finland	Germany	Latvia	Lithuania	Poland	Sweden
(B1) RT minimises negative economic, environmental and social impacts.	90	3.91	2.25	0	1	2	48	6	4	22	7
(B2) RT generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities, improves working conditions and access to the industry.	44	3.82	1.83	2	0	1	24	0	1	14	2
(B3) RT involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life changes.	34	3.97	1.69	2	0	1	22	0	1	6	2
(B4) RT takes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world's diversity.	59	3.7	1.83	1	1	2	28	0	0	20	7
(B5) RT provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues.	63	3.87	1.92	5	0	1	36	0	1	14	6
(B6) RT provide access for people with disabilities and the disadvantaged.	47	4.52	2.1	6	1	1	28	0	1	6	4
(B7) RT is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence.	78	4.22	2.21	6	1	6	36	0	1	22	6

importance, given 1 for the most important and 7 for the least important feature (Table 4).

Evaluating the results of the research part where respondents were asked to rank the benefits of the responsible tourism, it can be seen that the most valuable responsible tourism benefit is the fact that responsible tourism minimises negative economic, environmental and social impacts (B1). 90 respondents put this statement into the first place. The first position for this benefit was given by the majority of respondents from Germany, Poland, Sweden, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. The second position in the rank was taken by the fact that responsible tourism is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence (B7). The first place for this statement was given by 78 respondents. The majority of respondents from Poland, Denmark, Finland and Estonia put this benefit into the first place in their choice. The fact that responsible tourism provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues (B5) could be ranked for the third position, as 63 people totally gave this statement the first place in their ranking. Evaluating from the scope of the separate countries' decisions, the majority of respondents from different countries gave the priority for the other benefits, leaving this one aside. However, in general view, this statement still takes the third position. Looking at the mean of the given number for each benefit, the first position was taken by the feature with the average closest to the 1. It is the statement that responsible tourism takes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, and to the maintenance of the world's diversity. However, the numbers of standard deviation, that takes the interval between 1.69 and 2.25, shows that opinions of the respondents were not unanimous and have been fluctuating at around two positions from the average. To summarize, travellers of the Baltic Sea Region appreciate responsible tourism the most for its ability to minimise negative economic, environmental and social impacts, for its positive role in the relationship between tourists and hosts and for providing more enjoyable experiences through a greater understanding of local cultural, environmental and social issues.

Concluding the results of the survey of the behaviour of travellers in the transition to responsible tourism, it was revealed that travellers of the Baltic Sea Region agree with the key elements of responsible tourism. It was confirmed that respondents' behaviour and attitude links to the transition to the responsible tourism. It was also approved that today's tourism is inseparable from the questions how to save the environment for future generation and the results of this survey revealed that travellers of the Baltic Sea Region understands that the changes in tourism are needed and it is already happening as the behaviour of travellers is getting more responsible. Evaluating the behaviour of travellers from the perspective of the separate countries, the results of this research lead to an assumption that in the scope of the Baltic Sea Region, considering behaviour and attitude aspects, responsible tourism is the most accepted and appreciated by the travellers from Poland, Finland, Estonia and Germany.

3. Discussion

The Baltic Sea Region travellers see responsible tourism as a phenomenon, that requires the involvement of all the stakeholders (operators, hoteliers, governments, local people, tourists etc.) to take responsibility and take action to make tourism more sustainable. Minimising negative economic, environmental and social impacts is the most appreciate aspect of responsible tourism according to the Baltic Sea Region travellers. The research disclosed that responsible tourism is the most appreciated by the travellers from Poland, Finland, Estonia and Germany. Baltic Sea Region travellers belonging the 40–49 years age group and travellers from the group of 50–59 year expresses the strongest support for the responsible tourism.

Conclusions

The transition to the responsible tourism is primarily driven by tourism destination-related elements and the strength of the impact related to maintaining the quality of life of local people, redistributing the benefits of tourism to travel destinations, enhancing the value and distinctiveness of the travel destination product and maintaining long-term attractiveness, within the capacity of the travel destination and efficient use of its tourism resources.

The wealth of travel experience and orientation to responsible tourism led to the changes in travel style and traveller behaviour. Modern travellers are increasingly focusing on travel content, on the value content of their tourism product when choosing travel, they are opting for longer trips, abandoning consumption-for-consumption solutions, being more sensitive to the environment, the culture of the area visited, and integrating more into the area, not changing it, which has a positive impact on the regional economy, ecological protection, cultural continuity, social development.

The research revealed that travellers of the Baltic Sea Region understand responsible tourism as the phenomenon, which requires that stakeholders – operators, hoteliers, governments, local people, tourists etc. – take responsibility and take action to make tourism more sustainable. The analysis of the distribution of respondents' answers revealed the following commonality of the approach to the responsible tourism:

  – The analysis of the self-positioning in responsible tourism revealed that travellers of the Baltic Sea Region are willing to participate in responsible tourism travel and they support responsible tourism.
  – Travellers agree that today's tourism is inseparable from saving the environment for future generation.
  – Travellers of the Baltic Sea Region appreciate responsible tourism the most for its ability to minimise

negative economic, environmental and social impacts, for its positive role in the relationship between tourists and hosts and for providing more enjoyable experiences through a greater understanding of local cultural, environmental and social issues.

– Evaluating the acceptance of the elements of responsible tourism, in the context of the three main responsible tourism dimensions – economic, socio-cultural and environmental – the elements of the socio-cultural dimension gained the highest travellers' agreement.

In the scope of the Baltic Sea Region countries, considering behaviour and attitude aspects, responsible tourism is the most appreciated by the travellers from Poland, Finland, Estonia and Germany, belonging the 40–49 years age group and the 50–59 years age group. It was revealed that the behaviour and attitude of travellers of the Baltic Sea Region confirms that responsible tourism has become a way of thinking.

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