

Sustainable tourism: tourists' behaviour and their impact on the place visited

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Abstract. *With more members of society increasingly becoming more affluent, greater ease of movement around the world, cheaper airline tickets, and intense competition on websites that offer accommodation, tourism has become more and more popular. Many places have become a destination for tourists, not only because of their tourist value but more often because of fashionable trends. This is consequently associated with increasing overcrowding in such places, and thus with the occurrence of the phenomenon termed overtourism. Potential salvation for such places lies in attempts to incorporate the*

concepts of sustainable tourism into their way of operating. However, for this to be successful, tourists must also understand the need to change attitudes and behaviors. Otherwise, it will be hard to do anything that achieves a true impact. The aim of this paper was to assess the attitudes of people from the countries of the Visegrád Group (i.e., the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary) towards sustainable tourism, with the emphasis on their understanding of the concept and incorporating it into their travel habits. The survey was conducted in the form of an online questionnaire administered to residents of these countries. The survey is part of a larger project on sustainable tourism and people's perceptions of this tourism in Europe. The results of the survey showed that the respondents understand what the concept of sustainable tourism means and what its assumptions are. However, this often does not translate into changing their behavior and applying these assumptions within their lives as tourists. Conducting similar research, however, can be a way to encourage respondents to rethink and change their behavior. At the same time, it is also necessary to help build scientific knowledge in the context of sustainable development and sustainable tourism in order to inform policies and decisions.

1. Introduction

Tourism is an important sector of service industries that has been constantly growing at an ever-increasing pace in recent years. There is a continuous growth in the number of tourists around the world, especially in the most popular tourist destinations (Heslinga, 2018). Major tourist-related investments and changes can be seen in areas such as transport, the hotel industry, catering, trade, and the production and sale of souvenirs. This creates new jobs, which results in the local community having the opportunity to earn money and live better, which is especially important in places with high unemployment. Tourists potentially bring income to the place visited, so that it can be cared for, developed, and new investments can be made (Gonzalez et al., 2018; Scheyvens, 2009).

However, the positive developmental outlook for the future was abruptly interrupted when the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the world. The years 2020

and 2021 have witnessed a freeze in many sectors, including the tourism industry. With restrictions in many countries, movement bans, and mandatory quarantine, the pandemic has taken its toll on the industry's business (Mroz, 2021). Kuqi et al. (2021) argue that tourism is the sector most affected by the pandemic, experiencing a rapid and steep decline in demand and an increase in job layoffs. This not only leads to lower revenues for the tourist destination but also for its residents. Consequently, adequate synergy is needed between tourists and tourist destinations. It remains to be seen to what extent tourists, businesses, and people who profit from tourism will be able to initiate a new cycle of sustainable tourist growth.

Almost everyone likes traveling, especially to relax and change habitual environments. Every year people look for new and interesting places to visit (UNWTO, 2018). The choice of destination is determined by various factors, such as the cost of the trip, its duration, and the interests of the traveler. Due to the increasing affluence of parts of society, wider access to modern means of transport, lower costs of travel, and simplified procedures for obtaining the necessary documents, traveling is becoming easier and more frequent (Pan et al., 2021; Japutra, Hossain, 2020; Baryshnikova et al., 2020).

People want to spend their time actively while exploring new places that they may have seen on television or read about online (Beeton, 2016). Information about interesting places that are worth visiting or various events can often be found on the Internet. People are naturally curious about the world, about other cultures, about other lifestyles, and the best way to get to know them is to travel. This makes tourism a significant element of globalization. Tourism has become one of the principal industries in the world, characterized by the largest and fastest growth (Gorica, 2007). According to Eurostat (Eurostat, 2021) the number of employees (full and part-time) in the tourism sector in European Union countries rose from 216 214.6 thousand in 2011, to 220 915.0 in 2015 and 232 612.9 in 2019. The overall growth rate in the sector has been in line with a 2011 forecast of 3% per annum (Hills, 2011). Although the COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted on the industry, it would seem likely that sooner or later rapid growth rates will be resumed.

Unfortunately, with the increase in the number of travelers, especially for tourist purposes, the phenomenon of *overtourism* has emerged. Well-known European examples of where the negative effects of overtourism are felt are cities such as Barcelona, Berlin, Lisbon, and Prague (Koens et al., 2018; Milano, 2017; Novy and Colomb, 2016; Ingaldi, 2020). With the growth of tourism, local stakeholders have started to loudly voice the need to counteract the problem of overtourism.

Overtourism should be considered from two perspectives: the right of tourists to travel and the right of residents to live in peace and dignity (Perkumiene and Pranskuniene, 2019). Without tourists, many tourist destinations would not survive since tourists are the main source of income. However, residents, tired of the influx of too many tourists, and often their strange or inappropriate behavior, may attempt to find other sources of income. Several studies have been exploring the relationships between the rights of tourists and residents from different perspectives (e.g., Juss, 2004; Dauvergne, 2004; Gilbert, 2014).

The solution that is proposed for many tourist destinations burdened with overtourism is developing ways of implementing *sustainable tourism*. The main idea behind this concept is to minimize the negative effect of tourism on the environment and local culture while helping generate employment opportunities and income for residents. The goal of sustainable tourism is to ensure that development brings a positive experience for local communities, tourism businesses, and tourists themselves (Peeters, Dubois, 2010; Larsen, Guiver, 2013; Canavan, 2014). For sustainable tourism to be properly implemented, it needs to be understood both by tourists and the local population. Only in this case is it possible to implement its underlying assumptions.

It should be remembered that this will not only improve the condition of the natural environment or have a positive impact on local communities, although these are the most important premises for the implementation of sustainable tourism. There should also be an improvement in the quality of the various services offered to tourists (Ulewicz, Blaskova, 2018; Anttila, Jussila, 2018; Staniszewska et al. 2020; Kardas, 2016). High quality of services should translate into tourist satisfaction, and at the same time into an appropriate level of prices. Therefore, the income of the members of local community and of the specific place visited as a whole can increase (Zelga-Szmidla, Kapustka, 2019; Teplická, Hurná, 2020).

The following study aimed to explore the attitudes of people from the countries of the Visegrád Group towards sustainable tourism. The survey was conducted using the authors' questionnaire distributed through Internet forums and social networking sites among residents of these countries. The questionnaire included 15 statements concerning the organization of holiday trips and tourist behavior during such trips, rated on a five-point Likert scale, and 6 questions designed to test respondents' understanding of the basic problems of sustainable tourism. This survey was developed based on a previously conducted literature study. The findings themselves were also compared to other studies on similar problems that have been published in recent years.

2. Literature review

Year by year, the issues of tourism in the context of sustainable development are becoming an increasingly important aspect of research on both the tourism sector and the problems of sustainable economy related to the environment. Numerous in-depth studies in this field have been published over a period of several years. An exhaustive review of publications from the previous few decades is included in a paper published in 2013 (Nunkoo et al., 2012), which highlights an increase in both methodological sophistication and awareness of the theory behind the research. In the extensive literature on green tourism, publications dealing with the negative effects of excessive (and therefore harmful from the point of view of sustainable development) activity of tourists are worthy of note.

Among the most important papers in scientific journals dealing with this issue there are many examples whose authors adopted overtourism as the specific focus of their investigation. Some of these studies were conducted using a method like that presented in our paper, i.e., a questionnaire designed on the basis a literature review and previous experiences in studying the problems discussed (Muler Gonzalez et al., 2018). However, this is often the only similarity. Publications tend to focus on residents of tourist destinations rather than on tourists themselves, which represents an important difference in examining attitudes and behaviors that negatively impact on the environment. At the same time, the published research is not only useful for investigating solutions, but also helps formulate questions properly. The term overtourism itself is sometimes misused, or at least used in very different contexts (Koens et al., 2018). This should not be surprising, although there are often doubts as to whether it is related to a new line of research or simply used as another term for a long-known phenomenon (Capocchi et al., 2019).

Undoubtedly, the problem of overtourism has become of increasing importance in recent years, as it leads to discontent and conflict in terms of social relations, and, at the same time, resistance from activists aware of the potential threat and demanding action to reduce harmful effects of tourism (Milano et al., 2019). This is often linked to the notion of degrowth, understood to mean demands to limit the unfettered growth of the capitalist economy, which can be considered complementary to objections to overtourism (Fletcher et al., 2019). Therefore, regardless of the theoretical investigations, the problem is important from an economic, social, and environmental point of view. Moreover, by its very nature, it is also interdisciplinary. For this reason, it is important to clearly define precisely what the research involves at the stage of method description. Questions are usually asked based on the assessment of the effects of overtourism (or otherwise

harmful tourism), whether from the standpoint of tourists or residents. Analyses targeting local residents may have some specific assumptions, including those related to sustainability, for example, in the context of tourism area life cycle theory (Lee, Jan, 2018).

While from a social point of view the attitude of residents seems to be particularly important (it is also the one most often studied, even when the axis of tourist-resident relations is analyzed (Cheung, Li, 2019)), from the point of view of attitude formation and concern for sustainable development, observations of the attitudes of tourists seem to be underrepresented. Among the important research studies focusing on this topic (especially using a survey based on a large research sample), should be mentioned the analysis of tourists of one of the most popular destinations in Norway (Oklevik et al., 2019). An important conclusion drawn here is that tourist areas should cater for people who visit them in terms of length of stay, expenses, and intentions. This helps build a sustainable tourism economy, without severe restrictions, by creating one that is better adapted to economic, social, and environmental conditions. It offers a path for possible exploration that represents a more rational point of view, different from that of the often-critical residents or community activists who might see a problem but are unable to propose a constructive solution. Only the search for a kind of activity that considers both the needs of the environment and the attitudes and expectations of visitors, can result in the development of an effective strategy for sustainable tourism.

As can be seen from this review, research on tourist behavior and attitudes is among the most important issues concerning the tourism industry. Frequently cited publications in this area, directly concerning current problems, already appeared at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century. Obviously, this is related to the then growing interest of researchers in tracking the impact of the economy on the environment in the context of the idea of sustainable development. Even then, it was noted that while humans are inclined to adopt pro-environmental attitudes in their places of residence, when assuming the role of tourists, they tend to show much less awareness of and commitment to such problems (Barr et al., 2010). Subsequent analyses were devoted to this observation, including those leading to the conclusion that motivating visitors to behave pro-environmentally during holidays is not a simple task (Ballantyne et al., 2011a). This finding is significant because the growing environmental awareness within society may obscure the fact that a correct attitude suffers reduction during trips.

Similar premises were used when investigating the attitudes of tourists seeking wilderness experience, calling for actions that foster personal engagement to

encourage sustainable activities and practices. It was also noted that, depending on the impressions of visitors, these attitudes may persist for shorter or longer periods of time (Ballantyne et al., 2011b). Equally important for this type of tourist destination is to consider the potential for sustainable tourism in specially protected areas such as national parks (Cetin et al., 2018). Nevertheless, the problem of visitor attitudes affects virtually every type of destination, as they are all exposed to the effects of climate change. It is worth noting that the real attitudes and actions of tourists related to the needs of the environment are also important, although these are not easy to explore and interpret (Gossling et al., 2012). Therefore, analyses aimed directly at the identification of attitudes declared by tourists and their less frequently formulated expectations and motivations are extremely important for the future of effective actions aimed at reducing the harmful effects of tourism. In this respect, it seems reasonable to search for a balance between environmental and social concerns.

Years ago, the impact on society caused by the constant flow of tourists was already noted, and more in-depth qualitative research on their interrelationship was called for (Deery et al., 2012). This should not be underestimated, especially since it cannot be ruled out that the two dimensions are closely linked, especially in recent times. This, of course, does not exclude the use of quantitative methods, based, for example, on techniques related to big data, as is already being done both for tourist behavior (Miah et al., 2017) and by analyzing the effects of their presence, for example in the form of a carbon footprint (Henar Salas-Olmedo et al., 2018). Emphasizing the importance of qualitative methods should serve as a reminder of the need for in-depth analyses that are ultimately intended to lead to a better understanding of tourists' decisions and attitudes. This can be attempted through various means, including a systematic literature review (in scientometric terms (Fang et al., 2018)), but due to the evolving nature of this sector of the economy, empirical research seems to be the most effective approach. In this group, the survey or interview techniques are most popular. Furthermore, it is common among researchers dealing with these problems to focus on a geographic region, not necessarily a specific location, as there may also be similar locations in a larger area (Ali et al., 2018). There is no doubt that a survey or interview targeted on an essentially homogeneous group of tourists can lead to more consistent results, which in turn can later be used by local industries to improve both services and marketing and increase care for the environment. The transformation of tourist areas towards improving the comfort of young people, who are constantly using ICTs and the Internet, and therefore expect adequate facilities regardless of the type of tourist destination, is an important and developing issue (Femenia-Serra, 2019). One of the interesting directions of

contemporary trends is also the tourism networks organized according to Islamic rules (Al-Ansi, Han, 2019). The all-encompassing view of the tourism industry is indicative of the ever-increasing internationalization and globalization. Nevertheless, in order not to be harmful, any development must be accompanied by adequate environmental attitudes, something which is unanimously indicated by all significant contemporary published research.

In conclusion of this analysis of previous publications, it is worth noting that both the validity of the research and the empirical approach play an important role in them. The rapid evolution of the tourism sector, society in general, and, above all, questions related to the environment, makes it necessary to constantly supplement previous knowledge with conclusions concerning previously unknown or neglected aspects and conditions. Only by learning about the expectations and behavior, and thus the attitudes and choices, of tourists, is it possible to reliably draw conclusions about the current state and the near future of tourism. The available empirical studies are dominated by those concerning a specific aspect of tourism services or a given geographical area. However, analyses conducted on consumers in this sector can show greater cognitive usefulness than those conducted on providers of these services. At the same time, certain uniqueness of offers and attractiveness of given destinations, and diverse needs and expectations of tourists from a specific area, suggest the need for developing research based on a certain unification of populations. Therefore, the conclusions drawn will be more legible and possible to implement by eventual practical recipients of the research results. Efforts to learn more about tourists' attitudes should also continue so that measures can be developed to ensure that sustainable tourism increasingly reflects the realities of both the industry and consumer behavior, and that overtourism becomes less of a problem.

3. Materials and Methods

The overall study was designed to analyze the attitudes of people in different regions of Europe towards sustainable tourism. The research was part of a larger research project the authors were involved in. The authors started their research with the Visegrád Group countries, as they come from one of these countries and collaborate with several universities from other countries in the same region. Another aim was also to ascertain the difference between these countries and Western European countries. A great socio-cultural transformation has taken place in Central and Eastern Europe over the last 30 years. With the free-market economy and no restrictions on movement, more and more people are spending

their holidays in different parts of the world, although there are still many people who consider price as a determining factor. Therefore, further research in Western European countries and a comparison of the results of both phases of the research are planned to examine whether these differences are still observed between the various parts of Europe, also as regards sustainable tourism in general.

The study was divided into two parts. The first part was conducted in the form of an online survey. It was made available through various Internet forums and social networking sites. Over 2,500 respondents from the Visegrád Group countries participated. The survey was made available in English, which may have had an impact on its results, as it could only involve people with the necessary level of communicative competence in that language. However, this solution allowed the survey to be targeted to a wider range of respondents and to include the international community. The research using this tool was conducted in the period from January to November 2019. This part is presented in this paper.

Before conducting the survey, in November 2018 pilot studies were carried out on 30 respondents from Poland to check the correctness of the survey (the content of the questionnaire in electronic form), the correctness of response collecting process (form operation) and the manner of answering by the respondents (understanding the questions, especially in the second part of the survey). To avoid bias, these responses were not included in the final analysis.

The survey was divided into three sections. The first part included questions about the respondents' tourist preferences. Respondents were asked to rate the statements concerning tourism on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 (1 meaning "I totally disagree", 5 meaning "I totally agree"). The numbers of the statements were used in the subsequent analysis of the results to identify them more easily.

1. I choose places that are popular with tourists.
2. I go on vacation from July to August.
3. I look for the most comfortable accommodation possible.
4. I look for accommodation close to tourist attractions.
5. I use the services of travel agencies.
6. I like to spend time during my vacation in luxury.
7. I prefer to travel by plane.
8. I don't like trains/buses.
9. I choose the best restaurants.
10. I choose franchised restaurants (e.g., McDonald's, KFC).
11. I like visiting trendy tourist destinations.

12. I like visiting places that are promoted on social media by famous people.
13. I like looking into every nook and cranny, even the forbidden places.
14. I like crowds.
15. Residents of tourist destinations should welcome tourists with open arms because they bring in money.
16. The visited place should pay for cleaning and removal of garbage left by tourists.
17. Tourists have priority.
18. Tourists during vacation time are entitled to have a good time, even at night.
19. I will pay almost any price for the opportunity to visit a unique place.
20. I will pay almost any price for the opportunity to purchase unique memorabilia.

The statements were structured in such a way that responses of 5 in most cases mean that respondents do not consider sustainable tourism when choosing their holiday destination and when traveling. Respondents were not informed of this fact so as not to influence their responses.

The second part of the questionnaire was to check the extent to which the respondents understand sustainable tourism. The structure of the questions and possible answers was quite different from the previous part of the survey. They were asked 6 closed questions to which they were requested to answer: 'Yes', 'Neither yes nor no', 'No', 'I don't know'. A symbol was added next to the questions, which was used in the subsequent analysis of the results. The letter P was added to ensure that these symbols do not interfere with those used in Part 1 of the survey.

1. Do you identify agritourism as an element of sustainable development in the context of human impact on the natural environment, while meeting the social, economic, and environmental needs of both present and future generations? (P1)
2. Do you think that agritourism is not only a chance for the economic revival of rural areas but also a form of promoting ecological thinking and greater respect for the environment? (P2)
3. Do you think that sustainable tourism also includes the development of the production of foods with higher ecological parameters and traditional food? (P3)

4. Do you believe that sustainable tourism consists in maintaining the integrity of the landscape, cultural values, and attractiveness of the village and surrounding area? (P4)
5. Do you think that sustainable tourism also means promoting the protection of the natural environment while taking into account economic and social aspects? (P5)
6. Do you think that development of sustainable tourism is a determinant of the development of infrastructure supporting green solutions in transportation, energy production, waste, sewage and water management, and services for tourists? (P6).

The third part of the questionnaire was respondent data (gender, age, education, place of residence, and status). It allowed for statistical analysis of the structure of the sample of respondents.

The use of a five-point Likert scale in the first part of the questionnaire allowed for analysis of the survey results for the reliability of the responses. The Cronbach's alpha test and the standardized Cronbach's alpha were used, and the results of the analysis were interpreted according to the assumptions presented in Hair et al. (2003). It is assumed that a Cronbach's alpha index over 0.7 means that the collected data is suitable for further analysis. This analysis was the first part of the questionnaire. A scale analysis was conducted to see which ratings were most frequently given by respondents. The results of the assessments were then analyzed, i.e., basic statistics and percentages of each assessment were calculated.

The second part of the questionnaire was also analyzed. Due to the specificity of the possible responses, it was not possible to compile the results in a similar way as in the first part. The percentages of each assessment were calculated and presented in the form of a cumulative bar graph, which clearly highlighted the differences in responses.

In the questionnaire, respondents were also asked to indicate whether they wished to take part in further research in the form of a face-to-face interview. About 8% of the respondents declared their willingness to do so, and eventually 26 people from the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia took part in the interview. This part was intended to find how the respondents define the concept of sustainability and sustainable tourism in particular, but also whether they apply their principles in their lives during holidays. This was the second part of the

overall project. The results of the face-to-face interview were also analyzed, but they represent a separate study and are not presented in this paper.

4. Results

There were 2569 respondents to the survey. For formal reasons, 62 questionnaires were rejected as they were incomplete. Subsequently, 2507 questionnaires were further analyzed (Table 1).

	Number	Percentage
Observations, including:	2569	100.00
valid	2507	97.59
excluded	62	2.41

Table 1. Data analyzed (own study).

First, the structure of the sample of respondents was analyzed to see what the statistical profile of the respondent was. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2. The majority of the respondents was male (58.3%). Most respondents came from Poland (45.6%), followed by Slovakia (24.7%). Perhaps this is due to the authors' country of origin and thus better (direct) dissemination of the survey.

The most frequent respondents were aged 21-30 years (32.4%), followed by those aged 31-40 years (21.9%), and 41-50 years (19.4%). Perhaps these are the groups of people who travel the most and organize their vacation time on their own. The lowest percentage was recorded for those over 70, which may be due to two reasons. The first reason is digital exclusion. People of this age often do not use computers or the Internet, although this situation is slowly changing in the countries of the European Union. The second reason, especially in the Visegrád countries, is that people over 70, living on a pension, can rarely afford the luxury of a distant holiday.

Analysis of the social status and education reveals that the respondents were mainly people who were employed (59.6%) and self-employed (21.8%), mostly with higher (42.3%) or secondary (31.3%) education levels. These are groups of people who are more likely to be able to afford to travel.

The last characteristic was the place of residence. The majority of respondents came from cities with a population of over 300 thousand (34.1%) and from cities with a population between 201 and 300 thousand (26.7%). Therefore, it can be stated that the most typical statistical respondent is a young male Pole aged 21-30, employed with higher education, living in a city of over 300 thousand inhabitants.

Characteristic	Option	Percentage
Gender	female	41.7
	male	58.3
Nationality	Czech Republic	17.3
	Poland	45.6
	Slovakia	24.7
	Hungary	12.4
Age	Up to 20	7.6
	21-30	32.4
	31-40	21.9
	41-50	19.4
	51-60	14.8
	61-70	3.7
	Over 70	0.2
Social/professional status	pupil/university student	11.2
	employed	59.6
	unemployed	4.2
	self-employed	21.8
	pensioner	3.2
Education	primary education	1.2
	lower secondary education	6.5

	vocational education	18.7
	secondary education	31.3
	higher education	42.3
Place of residence	rural areas	8.1
	city with up to 50 thousand inhabitants	9.4
	city with 51 to 100 thousand inhabitants	11.3
	city with 101 to 200 thousand inhabitants	10.4
	city with 201 to 300 thousand inhabitants	26.7
	city with over 300 thousand inhabitants	34.1

Table 2. Respondents' characteristics (own study).

In further analysis of the results, Cronbach's alpha and standardized Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were used to assess the reliability of the questionnaire (Table 3). The Cronbach's alpha test resulted in a score just below 0.8, and the standardized Cronbach's alpha was well above this value. According to Table 2, these scores mean good (Cronbach's alpha) and very good strength of association (standardized Cronbach's alpha). According to Table 1 and previous assumptions, such results indicate the reliability of the study, so the results were further analyzed.

	Cronbach Alpha	Standardized Cronbach Alpha	No of items
Questionnaire Part 1	0.793	0.831	20

Table 3. Cronbach's alpha coefficients: questionnaire Part 1 (own study).

In analyzing the responses given by the respondents, the scale statistics were first evaluated. Table 4 illustrates what the mean, variance, and standard deviation would be on a scale composed of all five items analyzed (a Likert scale of 1-5 was

used). It can be observed that the adopted scale can take values from 20 (if the respondent chooses the lowest possible value for all items, i.e., 1) to 100 (if the respondent chooses the value of 5 for all values). The mean was 51.14 on this scale, which is about the middle of the scale and indicates a rather indifferent attitude of respondents towards sustainable tourism.

Mean	Variance	Standard deviation	No of items
51.14	133.306	11.546	5

Table 4. Scale statistics: questionnaire Part 1 (own study).

Next, the mean and standard deviations were calculated for the scores of each item and each group of items (Table 5). The mean for all responses was 2.56, indicating that respondents either disagree or are indifferent to the statements. Therefore, it can be concluded that, in general, respondents only partially consider sustainable tourism assumptions when deciding where to travel and during the trip itself. The standard deviation for all responses was 1.21, which, for the variable studied, implies considerable variation in responses.

The highest mean was recorded for statement 4: I look for accommodation close to tourist attractions. In this case, the mean was 3.86, i.e., almost 4, which means that the respondents agree with the statement. It seems likely that the cost of accommodation or crowds of tourists are not important for them. The important thing is that the location should be close. It can be concluded that, when choosing accommodation, tourists consider their convenience more than sustainable tourism objectives.

In many cases, the mean was close to 3, indicating respondents' general indifference to the statement and to sustainable tourism itself. This means that in the case of these statements, the respondents are not guided by their convenience, nor do they pay attention to making a choice during their holidays considering only their own interests, but at the same time they do not behave coherently with the assumptions of a sustainable development and sustainable tourism. On the one hand, this situation can be positively assessed, because the respondents are not guided only by their own good or their comfort, and do not behave too selfishly. This does not mean, however, that they base their choices and the course of holidays solely on the good of the visited place, its inhabitants, or also other tourists. It should be emphasized that sustainable tourism is not only a given

place and its inhabitants, which should be considered in various respects, but also the rights of other tourists.

The lowest value was recorded for statement 17: Tourists have priority. Its mean was 1.32. It can be concluded that the respondents are aware of the right of the local community to live peacefully and that tourists should respect the rules of the place. A few statements were rated below 2 on average, which is very positive because also in these cases respondents on average disagree with the statements. This means understanding the need to consider sustainable tourism when traveling.

In the case of statements for which the average score was below 2, it can be said that the respondents consider the rights of visitors and inhabitants during their vacations, they understand that this is the home of ordinary people who deserve peace and respect, and the place itself should not be destroyed.

Statement 5: I use the services of travel agencies and its low rating (i.e., not agreeing with a given statement) is not entirely consistent with the assumptions of sustainable development. The operation of tourist agencies allows the employment of a community living not only in the visited places (e.g., residents), but also where tourists come from. Partly, the use of travel agencies leads to groups of tourists who travel together using one common mode of transport, which may have an impact on the environment.

Statement 10: I choose franchised restaurants (e.g., McDonald's, KFC) and its low assessment means that the respondents either use their own food (e.g., preparing meals on their own), but also can use local restaurants, getting to know the cuisine of a given town, which results not only in supporting local companies, but also willingness to learn about the culture of a given place.

Many respondents disagreed with statement 14: I like crowds. This means that many respondents prefer to visit less popular places with fewer tourists and therefore easier access to local attractions. From the point of view of sustainable tourism, this is good for such places as it permits earning money from tourism, but without a heavy tourist burden.

Statement 19: I will pay almost any price for the opportunity to visit a unique place, and statement 20: I will pay almost any price for the opportunity to purchase unique memorabilia, and their low assessment also deserve special attention. The respondents disagreed with these two statements. Even though in many cases the respondents are educated people in employment from larger cities, they do not want to spend a fortune on the chance to choose a place or souvenirs.

They want to have a good time, visit a new place, but not at all costs. Perhaps from the tourism enterprise's point of view, this is not good, as it means customers are reluctant to spend large sums of money. However, from the point of view of tourists themselves, and as a society, it is a financial saving that can be used in other ways.

Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
1	3.16	1.103
2	3.14	1.455
3	3.05	1.541
4	3.86	1.070
5	1.92	1.343
6	2.30	1.540
7	3.19	1.449
8	2.27	1.388
9	2.62	1.260
10	1.97	1.262
11	3.19	1.352
12	2.46	1.348
13	3.32	1.253
14	1.68	1.116
15	2.35	1.299
16	3.35	1.144
17	1.32	0.773
18	2.32	1.275
19	1.89	1.157
20	1.76	1.282

Table 5. Item statistics: questionnaire Part 1 (own study).

Next, the percentages of ratings given to each statement were calculated, which allowed for the analysis of the structure of the responses (Table 6). It can be noted here how substantially the respondents differed in their answers. What should be emphasized is that for several statements no rating of 5 (completely agree) was recorded. This was the case with statement 1: I choose places that are popular with tourists, statement 9: I choose the best restaurants, statement 17: Tourists have priority, and statement 19: I will pay almost any price for the opportunity to visit a unique place. However, it is difficult to assess the extent to which respondents are driven by the idea of sustainable tourism. The fact that the survey was conducted among people from the countries of the Visegrád Group should be considered here. These are countries with a lower economic status than countries in Western Europe. In a number of cases, social status and travel cost may determine to some extent where and how people travel.

Statement	Percentage fraction of answers				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	16.22	5.39	24.32	54.07	0.00
2	24.93	5.43	23.41	22.14	24.09
3	29.73	5.44	16.28	26.93	21.62
4	5.93	5.62	16.39	42.31	29.75
5	62.16	10.81	5.41	16.22	5.41
6	54.05	2.70	16.22	13.51	13.51
7	24.38	5.43	16.11	35.17	18.91
8	48.65	5.48	24.32	13.48	8.07
9	32.43	8.11	25.38	34.08	0.00
10	59.21	2.78	21.62	13.48	2.91
11	18.92	2.70	32.43	29.73	16.22
12	40.54	8.17	18.92	29.73	2.64
13	16.22	5.42	21.59	43.24	13.53
14	70.19	2.82	18.92	5.41	2.67

15	43.24	2.73	35.14	13.51	5.38
16	10.81	8.17	29.74	37.74	13.54
17	83.78	2.70	10.81	2.70	0.00
18	43.24	5.68	29.72	18.64	2.72
19	59.46	5.46	21.62	13.46	0.00
20	70.23	2.73	16.23	2.67	8.14

Table 6. Percentages of answers to individual questions: questionnaire part 1 (own study).

Part two of the questionnaire was further analyzed, although the specificity of the possible responses in this section made it impossible to conduct as thorough an analysis as in the first part. Only the percentages of each response were calculated and presented as a cumulative bar graph (Figure 1).

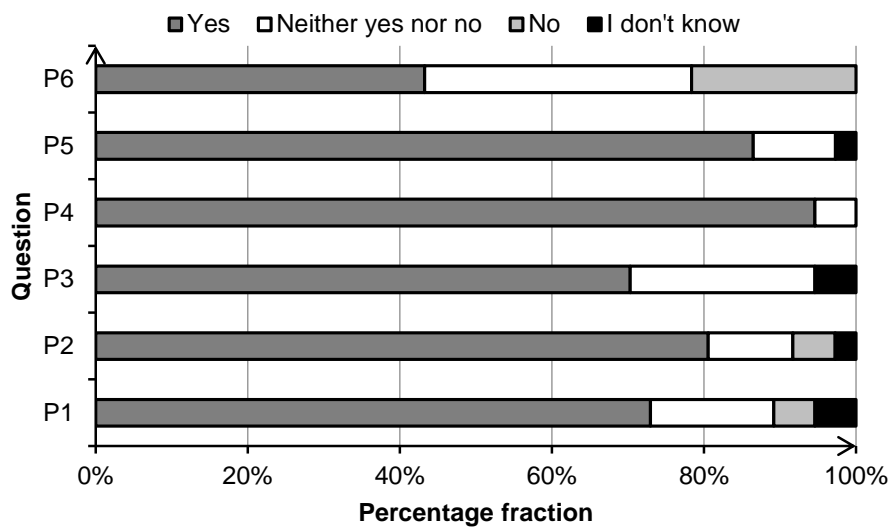
The analysis of Figure 1 and the first part of the questionnaire reveals several interesting elements to note. For all questions, 'Yes' was the predominant answer, meaning that most respondents agreed with the statements. Most 'Yes' responses were recorded for items P4 and P5. In these two cases, no negative responses were observed.

The smallest number of 'Yes' responses (over 43%) was recorded for item P6. However, many respondents were not sure of their opinion in this case and answered, 'Neither yes nor no' (over 35%). This item had the highest number of negative responses (over 21%). However, such a situation may have been influenced by the question itself, which is long and may seem difficult to understand, and only slightly more than 42% of the respondents declared a higher education level.

It can be concluded from the answers given in this part that the respondents understand the idea of sustainable tourism, although the first part of the survey revealed that they do not fully follow its principles in everyday life. It should be remembered that the research involved mainly educated and employed people from larger cities, who by now realize that to survive, to be able to continue living on our planet, it is necessary to take care of the natural, social and economic environment, and thus act in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. In the case of tourists, these are the assumptions of sustainable tourism,

which will not only allow them to enjoy the visited place, but at the same time allow for the proper development of this place, the well-being of its inhabitants, without unnecessarily interfering with their lives and destroying the natural environment.

Figure 1. Percentages of answers to individual questions: questionnaire part 2 (own study).



5. Discussion

The findings presented should be related to other studies in this field recently published in journals. Indeed, some of the studies on sustainable tourism and overtourism show different perspectives, both of tourists and the local community and its representatives. In their research, Aall and Koens (2019) demonstrated that, in terms of social sustainability, there is a conflict between the quality of various aspects of the life of residents and urban development in favor of the tourism industry. Furthermore, there is also a conflict between local people, with their desire for good local environmental standards, and visiting tourists, leading to several local environmental problems related to overtourism. Researching these problems is of great importance for the development of solutions. It is also

important that the tourists themselves understand that, in addition to their right to leisure and sightseeing, they must also respect the right of the local communities to a peaceful and normal life. In this respect, it can be said that both the Aall and Koens' study and the research presented in this paper show that tourists' understanding of what sustainable tourism means can have a positive impact on the place visited and its residents, as well as on tourists' enjoyment of their vacation.

In their study, Neuts and Vannestew (2020) referred principally to the point of view of the local community. They state that there is a concern in many places that tourism has become unsustainable. To promote a dynamic blend of visitors and residents, development strategies must consider the preferences of residents, particularly their right to live normal lives. Residents place high value on green space and improved commercial facilities and the prevention of overcrowding. The research identified the need to accommodate individual differences in preferences and to reconcile the potentially conflicting goals of cities both enhancing local livability and creating an attractive environment for visitors. At the same time, it should be remembered that tourists, by choosing to visit a place, spend money, helping create new jobs. This makes the question highly complex to analyze. Additionally, it should be remembered that both the residents and the tourists are responsible for the conditions of the place visited, and the comfort of living in and visiting it. Tourists need to understand their impact and that they must learn to live with the local community, a fact that also receives some confirmation from the results of the research presented in this paper.

A study by Liao and Chuang (2020) addressed tourists and their expectations of tourism, with an emphasis on package tours. The most important characteristics that tourists consider when choosing package tours were 'attractiveness', followed by 'accommodation', 'length of stay', 'price', 'cuisine', 'transport', and 'season'. Therefore, they were not really interested in whether this way of spending holidays can be called sustainable tourism, which is also in line with what emerges from our research. Only by keeping in mind the principles of sustainable tourism when choosing a destination for traveling, can tourists enjoy their vacation without causing harm to others and their environment. As with the results presented in this paper, the opinions expressed on selected factors related to sustainable tourism, which were included in the analyzed survey, showed that tourists approach them in different ways, but are slowly beginning to understand the problems related to overtourism and excessive impact on the lives of residents, because it also affects their comfort while travelling. A similar approach was presented by Katahenggam (2019). This author conducted research on tourists'

perceptions and preferences in Singapore's cultural heritage districts. The study found that demographic and geographical factors influence tourist preferences and that many tourists, also from other countries, are guided by these factors.

Ciocan et al. (2020) referred to rural tourism (agritourism), an area that has great growth potential. Currently, agritourism constitutes only a small part of tourism in general, but in recent years, its share has been growing regularly. Rural areas attract many tourists who appreciate this way of spending leisure time due to the picturesque landscapes and cultural habits nurtured for generations. They allow tourists to immerse themselves in the local environment, in nature, and help them understand what kind of life the local community has. It can be said that this way of spending a vacation has some elements of sustainable tourism. This perspective has been extended by the results presented in this paper, especially in the second part of the survey, where the respondents were asked about their knowledge concerning sustainable tourism, with particular emphasis on the questions marked P2, P3 and P4.

Leonte et al. (2016) also reported on tourists choosing agritourism destinations. They argued that rural tourism and agritourism, with high rates in rural areas, is a major factor with direct implications for local development and for meeting the consumption needs of tourists. According to the authors, the advantages of agritourism include better use of rural areas and natural conditions, excellent protection and development of cultural heritage and rural traditions, creation of new jobs, meeting the requirements of recreational tourism and traditional cuisine, offering specific products and menus based on local recipes, and contributing to the development of infrastructure. There are also several economic reasons that justify the implementation of socio-cultural initiatives in rural areas that can contribute to increasing the income of rural residents and thus the sustainable development and efficiency of the local economy.

Other interesting research results concerning sustainable tourism and agritourism were published by Ungureanu (2008). In this research, this author referred to tourism in Romania, with a strong emphasis on rural areas, which are particularly attractive in this country, especially from the point of view of folklore and preservation of the purity of the ancient culture. The author's concern was more about maintaining this culture for future generations than about the needs, attitudes, and behaviors of tourists themselves.

Wu et al. (2019) presented an approach to building a hierarchical framework for sustainable tourism. They included socio-economic, socio-environmental, and eco-efficiency aspects in their study. They also showed that tourism businesses

face conflicts in balancing economic growth with environmental impact. Their study proposed rewarding employees for promoting green processes, creating new green trade linkages with society, and establishing green organizations to increase competitiveness and profitability. These kinds of initiatives should affect the satisfaction of both tourists and the local community.

Tekalign et al. (2018) investigated tourists' preferences for tourism activities designed by local stakeholders in one of the oldest protected parks in Ethiopia. Despite many attractions, the local community benefits little from tourism, often coming into conflict with park managers. The study was designed to increase stakeholder involvement in sustainable tourism planning and revealed a mismatch between the preferences of tourists and the activities planned by the host community to engage them in tourism. To be implemented efficiently, planning and development of sustainable tourism must consider the differences in perceptions between host communities and tourists. Only then can tourism be considered sustainable.

Furthermore, a study by Cheung and Li (2019) was designed to show the tourist-resident relationships in terms of sustainable tourism. The researchers argued that all tourist destinations seek to increase the number of tourists, while less attention is paid to balancing the increase in the number of tourists with the resulting irritants for the local community. They mentioned overtourism, which poses a potential threat to many popular tourist destinations around the world. The authors suggest that decision-makers in such places should keep in mind that the deterioration of the visitor-resident relationships due to excessive tourism may lead to a significant hysteresis effect that will persist far beyond the original stimulus.

The research presented in this paper complements that of the previous literature cited, showing at the same time the topicality and validity of the investigations into sustainable tourism. It focuses on a highly significant interested party, the tourists, who decide where to go, what to visit and what to spend their money on, but often forget that a given tourist place belongs primarily to the inhabitants who live there. It must be said that many tourists are indifferent to these problems of unsustainable tourism and that they rarely take them into account when choosing their vacation destinations and during the vacation itself. They do not consider how their behavior affects the place they visit and the local community. And if they do, they are involved to an insignificant degree. This is one of the reasons why sustainable tourism is a difficult problem to address. At the same time, what emerges is that there is at least an increasing understanding of what sustainable tourism and overtourism mean.

6. Conclusions

With the ever-increasing number of tourists, many popular tourist destinations become crowded while sightseeing becomes more and more difficult and burdensome. Large numbers of tourists also cause difficulties for the local community and disturb their everyday life. Through their failure to respect specific rules and conform to certain standards of behavior, tourists damage the places they visit, drop litter, and negatively affect the environment. The excessive number of tourists leads to the phenomenon termed overtourism, which negatively affects tourist destinations.

However, it is important to remember that tourists increasingly create new jobs for the local community. The large amount of money they spend becomes income for the place visited and its residents. On the one hand, it should be remembered that a given tourist destination is a home for its residents and a part of the natural environment or cultural heritage, but on the other, it often has no chance for development without tourists. Therefore, the concept of sustainable tourism is of vital importance. The research presented in this paper showed that many people understand this concept and know what impact tourism has on the local community and the environment. However, too many tourists still do not consider sustainability principles in their behavior during their trips, concentrating their attention on their own expectations and rights without thinking about the place visited and the consequences of this behavior.

The present study is certainly not without limitations. Although the design of the questionnaire was based on a literature review, it was developed specifically for this study and may have been influenced by the subjectivity of the authors. Only selected papers were used for both the literature review and the discussion of the results and comparison to other studies. It was impossible to include all the papers available on the subject, and the authors were guided solely by their experience in selecting references. Although the survey topic was popular, the questionnaire was not completed as frequently as the authors had hoped, hence the smaller research sample size. To make it easier to reach respondents, the questionnaire was made available through various social media platforms and using the authors' closest professional contacts, which can be reflected in the structure of the sample of respondents. This may have led to the exclusion of people without or with limited access to the Internet. Moreover, the structure of the sample could have influenced the understanding of the questions and the answers given by the respondents, which were sometimes surprising for the authors. The last element may be due to the features of the research area (countries of the Visegrád Group). Perhaps respondents from other countries, especially those with

different approaches to environmental protection and sustainable tourism, would answer differently. However, this last limitation opens opportunities for future research in other European countries and comparative study.

Nevertheless, it is important to continue this type of research, not only to see if tourists incorporate the assumptions of sustainable tourism in their behavior and habits and if they know what the phenomenon of overtourism is. Such research, principally based on as wide as possible respondent participation in the survey, can stimulate reflection and raise awareness, helping at least some people to change their attitudes. Even small steps can gradually contribute to improvements. Moreover, research conducted thus far can be the basis for further studies in the context of sustainable development and sustainable tourism, help build scientific knowledge on this subject and constitute a means of understanding more fully this complex question and making more informed decisions in the field of proper tourism management.

The authors intend to continue their research, making use of their cooperation network and extending the research to other European countries, thereby allowing for a broader and more detailed analysis of the problems studied. This will also allow the results to be used for a comparative study between different regions of Europe to see to what extent the behavior of tourists from different European countries differs. Conducting an in-depth statistical analysis will allow examination of the relationship between the answers to the survey questions and the individual characteristics of the respondents in terms of individual respondent groups.

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Authors' contributions

Both authors contributed to the conception and design of the study; material preparation, data collection and analysis; writing of the first draft of the manuscript; commenting on previous versions of the manuscript; reading and approval of the final manuscript.

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