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RISK MANAGEMENT IN TOURISM DESTINATION

Abstract: *The experience has shown that tourism is sensitive to undesirable and unexpected crisis situations that may have a long-term negative impact on the sustainability of tourism. The dynamics of the environment (relationship to the VUCA concept) has an impact on difficult predictability, which is reflected in the number of risks affecting the activities of organisations in a tourism destination. The paper focuses on mapping the state of risk management in tourism enterprises and on identifying the necessary conditions for the implementation of the risk management process in the practice of tourism businesses. The effort is to point out the necessity of a systemic approach to the issue of risk management, as risk analysis (as a basis for building resilience) is not used systematically in tourism and focuses relatively narrowly on risk as a set of negative impacts that individuals, companies or destinations should avoid.*

Key words: *crisis, resilience, risk, risk management, sustainability, tourism*

JEL Classification: *Z3, M2, J5*

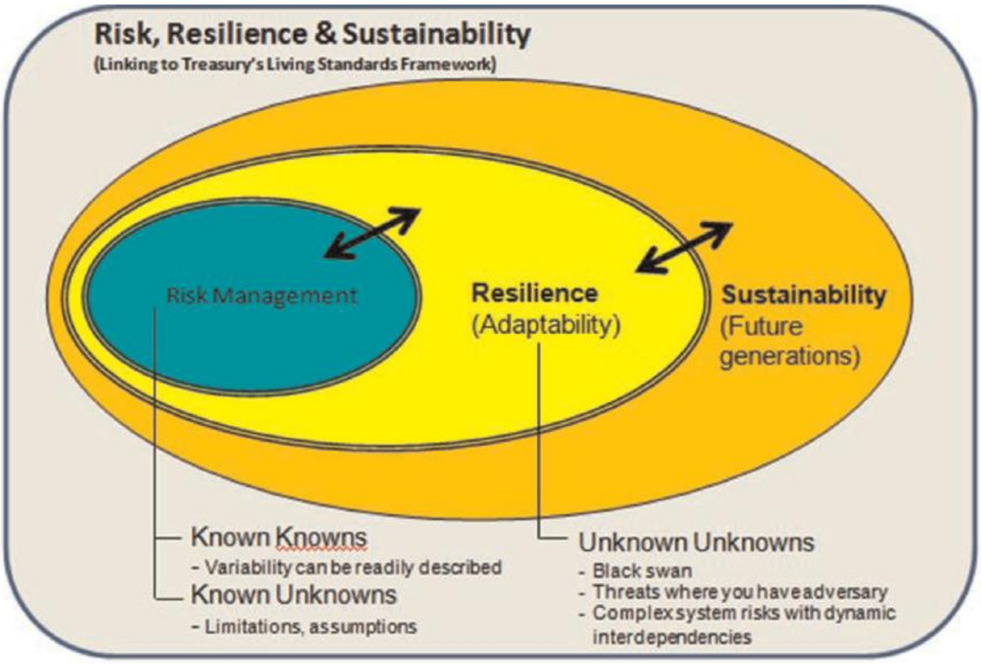
Introduction

Contemporary societal environment is very unpredictable. Similarly, unstable, dynamic and complex is business environment. We therefore talk about turbulent years characterized by high volatility or instability and even discontinuity. Since 90´s of the last century the environment is referred to as VUCA environment often called as "VUCA world" (e.g. Schick et al., 2017; Wakelin-Theron et al., 2019). VUCA is an acronym, which stands for Volatility (V), Uncertainty (U), Complexity (C) and Ambiguity (A). There are also numerous articles on business management done in turbulent environment (e.g. Kambil, 2008; Lawrence, 2013; Mack et al., 2016; Sullivan, 2012). Their authors generally agree on the fact that non-stability and non-predictability of the future development make long-term estimates very unreliable. Rising non-stability, however, does not necessarily carry along negative future development, or even potential disasters. In fact, it can also mean challenges to organization leaders.

The same is true in tourism, which in itself is very dynamic, mainly because it includes many interconnected industries. As a result, tourism is sensitive to crisis/undesirable situations that can have a long-term negative impact on the sustainability of tourism. Achieving sustainability in tourism is a continuous process that requires constant monitoring of the impacts of changes and, where necessary, the implementation of the necessary measures as a result of the risk management process (e.g. Arturas et al., 2015; COMCEC, 2017; Yang and Nair, 2014). The sensitivity of the tourism sector to unexpected situations is also evident in the current times marked by the energy crisis and the ongoing problems with the COVID-19 pandemic. These issues point to two main problems: 1. The significant vulnerability of the tourism sector to adverse events; 2. The tourism is not included in the crisis preparedness plans, even though regional governments and the state government talk about the economic importance of the tourism sector.

It is therefore desirable to seek new solutions using methods and procedures that are known in academia but are not commonly used in practice. These are mainly the concept of organizational resilience (e.g. Butler, 2017; Hartman, 2018; Cheer and Lew, 2018; Karoulia et al., 2015; Orchiston et al., 2016; Usher et al., 2017) and the process of risk management, which could systematize the approach of tourism to adverse events that threaten the regional sustainability of tourism. While resilience, sustainability and risk can be identified and analysed individually, it is necessary to analyse their interactions with each other as shown in Diagram 1 to fully understand their interactions.

Diagram 1: Relationship among risk, resilience and sustainability



Source: Blake (2013) In Saunders and Becker (2015, p. 76)

The scheme shows that sustainability is one of the target states of the system and there is also a natural connection between risk management and building the economic resilience of the region and the resilience of tourism organizations. While risk management reveals weaknesses and vulnerabilities, resilience seeks ways to recover and adapt to new conditions. This connection should be reflected especially in the methodological procedures for various levels of tourism management, with regard that one of the important specifics of tourism is the close cooperation between the public administration and the private tourism sector. Unfortunately, such methodological procedures do not exist in practice.

Due to the breadth of the issue, the paper focuses on risk management, which deals with an undesirable event before it occurs and monitors the symptoms that could lead to its occurrence. The aim of the paper is to map the state of risk management in tourism enterprises and to determine the necessary conditions for the implementation of the risk management process into the practice of tourism enterprises. For this purpose, at first the business environment of the tourism is characterized, including risks and disruptive events in the tourism industry. Furthermore, the issue of risk determination and management is briefly described.

Theoretical Background

Tourism business environment

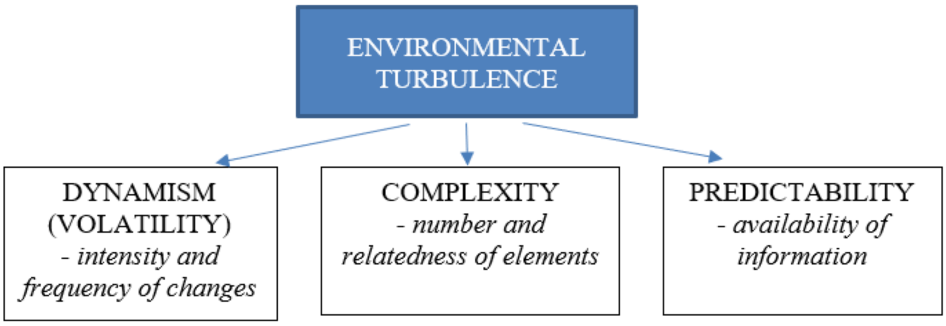
As mentioned in the introduction, tourism is sensitive to crisis/undesirable situations that may have a long-term negative impact on sustainability of tourism. The sustainability of tourism is significantly affected by the ability of tourism organizations to adapt to changing market conditions, use resources efficiently and provide innovative strategies for planning and further development (e.g. Business Excellence in a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous environment /BEVUCA/) (Saleh and Watson, 2017).

Companies in a VUCA environment must understand the individual parameters of the environment and respond to them accordingly. This places significant demands on activities that are primarily in contact with the environment, which are risk management and resilience-related business activities.

Manifestations of VUCA environmental characteristics can be summarized in terms of turbulence, which can be described as unpredictable uncertainty for strategic planning purposes (e.g. Ramírez and Selsky, 2016). This uncertainty is not only in terms of data (a complete description of the environment is very difficult), but it is also an uncertainty in managerial work (manifested in the degree of understanding of changes and processes). The turbulence of the business environment can to some extent be understood as an interaction of external changes and internal (corporate) changes. At the same time, each company participates in a certain way (according to its size, technological ability, etc.) in changes in the external environment. The external environment affects each company as a kind of feedback (external change causes internal change and vice versa).

Environmental turbulence represents the dynamics of the environment. Vorhies (1998) defined environmental turbulence as rapid, unexpected changes in technology, competition, composition and customer preferences. According to Volberda and van Bruggen (1997, p. 137) *„turbulence is a complex aggregate of various dimensions related to change, and that some dimensions are more dominant than others."* Authors characterize three main dimensions that simultaneously affect environmental turbulence: dynamism, complexity, (un)predictability of change (see Diagram 2).

Diagram 2: Dimensions of environmental turbulence



Source: modified according to Volberda and van Bruggen (1997)

The reality of today - a turbulent environment necessarily requires companies to adapt to the external environment. An organization's ability to adapt to its external environment depends to a large extent on its knowledge and interpretation of external changes. In this context, there is talk of so-called environmental scanning, which is the process of obtaining information about trends, events and relationships in the external environment (MSG, 2020). It systematically creates a comprehensive view of the external environment.

Environmental scanning compares macro-environmental factors (PESTLE) and each factor is assessed in terms of the VUCA environment. For example, whether the selected factor changes over time (V), whether it is difficult to estimate the direction of development (U) or whether it interacts with other factors (C).

Note: The SWOT analysis approach can also be used in environmental scanning, which identifies opportunities and threats (follow-up to risk identification), weaknesses and strengths of the competition. The quality of the information obtained from the scan should make it possible to reconcile internal activities with external processes, for example the research Choo (2001) has shown a positive correlation between environmental scanning and better organizational performance.

Risks and disruptive events in tourism

A turbulent (VUCA) business environment requires companies to be able to respond to undesirable events due to internal and external relationships and interactions. Response to disruptive events is reflected in corporate resilience, which is the ability to be aware of its vulnerabilities (SWOT weaknesses) and reduce the level of vulnerability to expected and unexpected threats. The ability to change and adapt to a changing environment and the ability to recover in the shortest possible time in the event of a disturbing event is assumed (Erol et al., 2010). Undesirable events are usually the intersection of VUCA factor relationships and PESTLE environment. For each disruptive event, it is always necessary to know the possibility of occurrence and the impact of the event on the operation of the enterprise. Risk management deals with the assessment of the occurrence and impact of disruptive events.¨

There are many definitions of risk, although it is a relatively simple relationship between occurrence and impact. Because of the multitude of definitions of risk (e.g. Šotič and Rajič, 2015), it follows that terminology becomes a linguistic barrier because:

1. there is self-correlation - the same thing can be expressed in different words,
2. a sufficiently precise and general definition is practically excluded in natural language (each definition expresses certain preferences of the author of the definition).

Risk is therefore defined in various ways, for example as:

- harmful event, i.e. risk as an occurrence,
- expected damage, i.e. risk as a consequence,
- a condition for the occurrence of harm or crisis, i.e. risk as a potential adversity or potential threat,
- risk as a deviation from the planned target, it can be either a desirable, i.e. positive deviation, e.g. profit, or a negative/undesirable deviation, e.g. loss, (Váchal, Vochozka and et al., 2013).

In most cases, the classical definition of risk is used:

Risk = probability of occurrence x severity of impacts

But this definition has two problems:

- 1. the problem is to determine the probability of occurrence,
- 2. this definition does not capture the influence of VUCA factors in the PESTLE environment.

As far as the enterprise is concerned, risks are related to the business activities and the level of management, e.g. financial risks, production risks, supply risks, strategic risks, etc. Recently, a knowledge-based approach to different types of risk in a known-unknown relationship has become increasingly important - see, for example, the risk categories of Perera and Higgins (2017):

- Known risks: there are risks where the circumstances of the occurrence of the event are known and also the impacts of the events are known (e.g. traffic risks).
- Unknown risks: there are risks where the circumstances of occurrence are known but the impact of events (e.g. natural disasters) is difficult to assess.
- Unknowable risks: there are risks that cannot be identified in advance, the circumstances of the occurrence and the impact of the event are not known (e.g. alien invasion).

Thus, in tourism practice, there are risks related to tourism as an economic sector, risks at the level of the tourism destination, business risks (related to the decision-making of the entrepreneur/manager as an entity) and corporate business risks. The general risk categories of the tourism sector (see Table 1) are the primary outcome of the VUCA/PESTLE. When these results are also considered in terms of impacts on the region, including the impact on regional tourism institutions, general destination risk categories are formulated. At the corporate level, similar to the destination, or Destination Management Organization (DMO), there are two types of risks: external risks (destination risks, tourist consumption behaviour risks) and internal risks related to organisation, management and financial performance.

PATA (2011) presents an overview of key risks threatening tourism, respectively tourism enterprises (Table 1):

Table 1: Key risks for tourism and tourism companies

Risk Category	Example
Economic	Currency fluctuations, economic downturn, increase in interest rates, inflation
Health Related	Epidemics, pandemics
Psychological	Negative experiences from visitors, negative perceptions resulted from bad enterprise or references
Environmental	Environmental damage or pollution
Human	Political instability, terrorism, war
Natural Hazards	Earthquakes, volcano, storms, fires, tsunami
Professional Liability	Negligence, failure in professional advice, misrepresentation information, failure to deliver contracted services
Security	Terrorism, vandalism, theft, ICT vulnerability, lack of protection of visitors etc.
Technological	Crashes (airline, bus, cars, train), failure of IT systems, theft or corruption of data

Source: PATA (2011, p. 8)

Risk identification and management

Risk assessment/evaluation and risk management are well established in the company (as evidenced by the ISO standard ISO 31000:2009 (Risk Management). Following the guidelines of ISO 31000:2009 involves 3 main steps:

1. Setting the context: this step involves identifying the entire possible risk area and analysing the relevant possible effects, and then planning or mapping the entire management strategy.
2. Identification: after obtaining the context of possible business risks, risk management develops a process to identify the sources of problems, threats, or risks. Choosing a right method for identifying and analysing risks will help the preparatory and preventive steps work better. However, the chosen methods are influenced by cultural, organizational, political and many other factors. Determination of the control solutions follows the risk identification.
3. Assessment: The final step consists of several sub-steps: determination of probability and consequence descriptions, risk assessment index. Determining which consequences would result in an extreme risk or just a general low level of risk that created an appropriate control method. It is advisable to develop the risk management methods along with defining the level and consequences of the risks. The assessment process may involve a decision-making process, especially in the case of a high or extreme level of risk.

Risk management is based upon the capabilities of a management to anticipate changes in turbulent PESTLE environment with VUCA factors. Practitioners are often influenced by theoretical publications and have erroneous expectations of risk management. Risk management cannot in any case prevent the occurrence of all undesirable events, it can primarily warn. Risk management cannot ensure zero risk. On the contrary, risk management helps to consolidate corporate activities because it requires systematicity (regular monitoring of the external environment) and systemicity (it is evaluated in context).

Objective and Methods

The research methodology is based on procedures set by Peffers et al. (2007), which consists of the following six steps:

1) Problem identification;
2) Goal definition for theoretical solution;

3) Design and development;
4) Demonstration;
5) Evaluation;
6) Communication.

As the initial results indicated, references to ISO 31000:2009 (Risk Management) are not sufficient because individual tourism businesses in the same environment within a tourism destination perceive similar risks in different ways. Furthermore, risk management has a dual orientation. Firstly, risk management has to focus on corporate activities, and secondly, risk management has to focus on the tourist's consumer behaviour, i.e. how the tourist perceives the risks. Given the breadth of the issue and its complexity, the authors therefore focused on the first two steps of the methodology.

Ad1) Problem identification
By studying the literature, the authors found that the issue of risk management is neglected in tourism. This has been supported by a simple survey of seven entrepreneurs active in accommodation and gastro services (these were small entrepreneurs located in the Hradec Kralove region). The research was carried out at the end of 2021. The survey was performed in the form of mutual discussions to find out the opinion on the issue. There was no statistical analysis made at this point. Besides risk management problems, the orientation survey also mapped the level of managerial competencies and marketing skills. This type of survey was chosen as the most common type of qualitative research. It did not aim to describe the data set or verify hypotheses, but only to verify certain values – esp. What is the existing state of risk management in tourism enterprises in East Bohemia? Individual responses had to be assessed by problem analysis: What is the problem arising from companies' attitudes towards risk? What are the causes of these attitudes? etc.

The orientation survey was built on the question: "Have you ever implement process of risk management in your business practice?" The positive answer would be followed by other questions such as: "Would you be interested in further research on the use of risk management in your business?" (see steps 2 – 6 of the methodology). Since there were mostly negative answers, the author concluded that the vast majority of respondents did not know what risk management is and how to use it in practice. Respondents emphasized that they expect a helping hand primarily from the academic sphere.

Ad2) Goals definition for theoretical solution
The goal of the research is to map the state of risk management in tourism enterprises and to determine the necessary conditions for the implementation of the risk management process into the practice of the tourism enterprise. The output of the paper is the creation of a diagram of relationships that provides a comprehensive view of the risk management process in the context of a VUCA/PESTLE environment, which is a concept that is also not widespread in the corporate practice of tourism (see Šimková, 2021). The paper should also stimulate a discussion on risk management among the public and to indicate directions for further research in the field of implementing risk management into the practice of a tourism business.

Ad3) Design and development
Destination is the basic analytical unit in tourism (Žemla, 2016). From the system approach the tourism destination is a complex system that consist of variety organizations providing tourist services and products (esp. accommodation, food, transport, sport activities, animation services etc.), institutional subjects, natural resources (see, lakes, mountains, forests, volcanoes etc.). Various subsystems are interconnected through material, financial and information flows.

A destination is thus understood as a network of interconnected entities/elements. The network character of a destination has implications for the design of a risk management model that should take into account the different level of individual enterprises within the destination concerning:

- databases (the risk is related to historical business data and its organization)

- decision-making processes in which the effects of knowledge, information systems, corporate guidelines and standards, etc. are manifested.

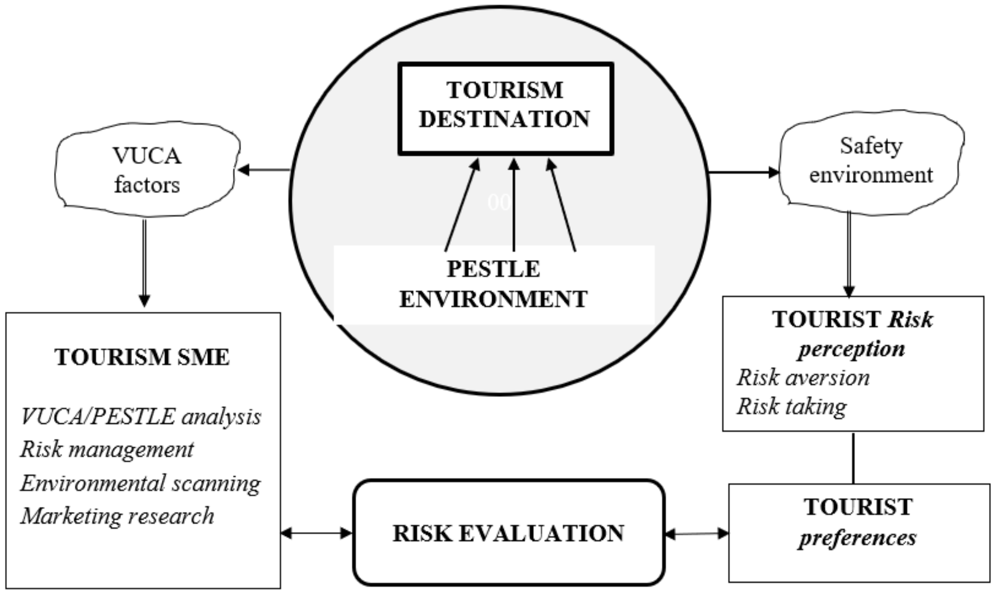
Before the actual design of the effective risk management model on the destination/tourism company level, it will be desirable to evaluate the existing theoretical risk management models and provoke a professional discussion. Only then the design a suitable model for practical use in tourism should be proposed (for a certain type of tourism business/destination). The design should also deal with the organizational context of risk management.

Ad4-6) Practical use of the proposed model, its evaluation and communication
These steps will be related to the selection of a specific company in selected destination for the subsequent research.

Results and Discussion

Based on an analysis of available information sources and authors own practice, a diagram of the relationships is outlined which should provide a comprehensive view of the risk management process in tourism in the context of a VUCA/PESTLE environment (see Diagram 3).

Diagram 3: Diagram of relationships within the tourism risk management process in the context of VUCA and PESTLE environments



Source: Authors own compilation

The diagram shows that risk management is not only concerned with business risk management, (risks affect business performance), but also the tourist's perception of risk needs to be addressed (e.g. Hasan et al., 2017). Tourists are also concerned about their health and safety in the destination in the context of Maslow's pyramid of human needs.

Risk perception in tourism

Risk perception describes a risk judgment that is intuitive rather than probabilistic. According to Montz et al. (2017) risk perception is a manifestation of the interplay of situational and individual factors. Situational factors relate to the biophysical and social environment, the individual factors express attitudes, beliefs and experiences. From the point of view of decision-making theory, risk perception can be defined as *"decision maker's assessment of the risk inherent in a situation"* (Cooper and Faseruk, 2011 In Zhang 2017, p. 35). Zhang's definition is more apt: *"Risk perception is an individual's beliefs about risk, which are based upon the information available, personal experiences, value systems and the social context"* (Zhang, 2017, p. 36).

In terms of risks in tourism, the following should be assessed:

- What is the perception of risks by tourists?
- What is the perception of risks by the management of tourism companies?

Tourist's perception of risks

Attitudes of experts and the general public towards risks are often contradictory, which also applies to tourism. As a layman, a tourist does not think probabilistically, but thinks dichotomously (usually in the sense of Yes / No). This means that the phenomenon either occurs or does not occur. The vast majority of tourists prefer safety to a certain acceptability of risk. However, some tourists may take a positive attitude to the expectations of adrenaline experiences. That is why they voluntarily take risks (an example is tourism adventure).

Jacoby and Kaplan (1972) organized perception-based risks into five groups: financial risks, performance risks, physical risks, psychological risks and social risks. In terms of tourism content, these risk categories can be characterized as follows:

- Financial risk: the risk of measuring the value of services offered versus the value of money spent on their purchase (note: however, the value of offered tourism services may not only be expressed in terms of money but also other values, experiences, emotions).
- Performance risk: risks when the quality of tourism services does not meet the expectations of tourists.
- Physical risk: risks of weather insecurity, theft, natural disasters, diseases, pandemics, etc.
- Psychological risk: risks of concern (concerns about the quality of products and services) or embarrassment (reactions from others) when buying tourist products and services.
- Social risk: damage to the social image and position of tourists when using certain tourism services.

Tourists have different levels of risk perception not only during their visit to the destination, but also long before and after the visit. Therefore, the examination of risk perception by tourists should be directly related to the marketing image of the destination. However, from a practical point of view, it is not clear who and how often should conduct research on the destination's risk, especially due to its cost and time.

The tourist therefore requires a feeling of security, which is the result of security, which can be understood as a set of organizational and technical measures that are supposed to induce a feeling of security.

The perception of environmental safety is explicitly based on the perception of risks, which is the result of the effects of "risk characteristics" (manageability, level of concern, etc.) and so-called influencing factors (age, social group, personal beliefs, disaster experience, etc.). Vulnerability, as a parameter of risk, is what makes a person deal with safety and security.

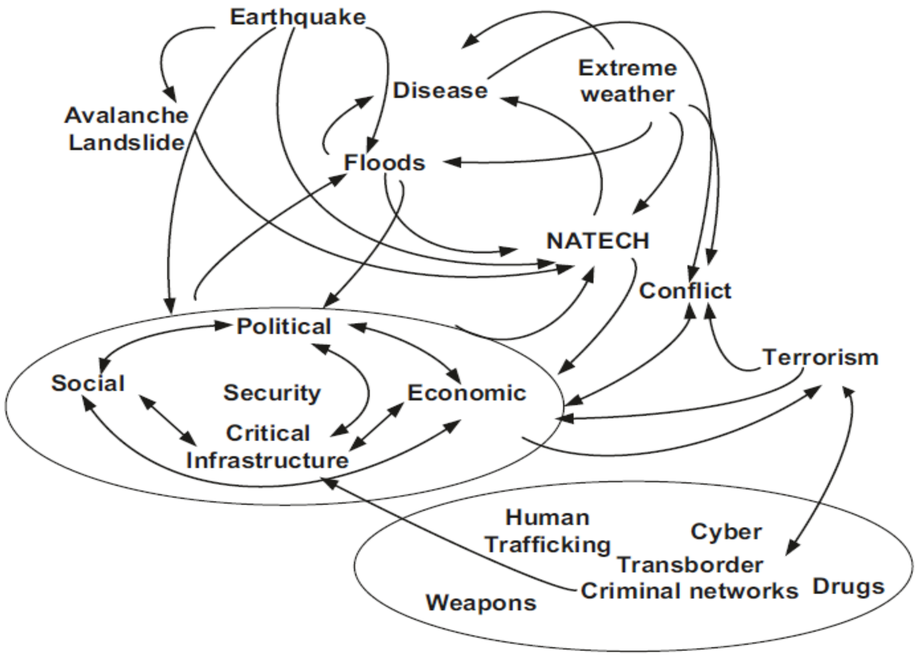
The aim of the tourism company is to create a safe environment for tourists in terms of health, personal safety and comfort (provision of services), but the obstacle to this goal are disruptive events.
According to Štětič (2010) when creating a safe tourist destination, keep in mind:

- safety of all tourists,
- safety of employees in tourism and other economically related areas,
- safety of the destination area,
- environmental safety,
- economic security of the destination, and

- creating a positive image of the destination in terms of security.

The above criteria are safety objectives, but do not indicate the safety of the environment. Therefore, the concept of security ecosystem is introduced (Masys, 2018), which shows the links between the individual elements in terms of security (see Diagram 4).

Diagram 4: Security ecosystem influence diagram



Source: Masys (2018, p. 11)

The diagram shows relatively complex relationships in the management of environmental safety, from which it can be concluded that tourism enterprises are not able to create a safe environment. This is usually created and ensured by other organizations and institutions. This means closer cooperation with security institutions and organizations.

Risk perception by tourism companies´ management

Attitude is an expression of managerial perception of risk (risk-taking or risk appetite e.g. Doel, 2022), which is subsequently reflected in risk decision-making. Risk decision-making assesses whether the decision could have unfavourable results (possibility of loss) and at the same time to what extent it is possible to have unfavourable results under control. Tourism management should understand that the traditional, technical approach to risk (probability of occurrence x consequences) does not allow a comprehensive understanding of the level of destination risks.

Risk management in tourism

Risk management is widely used in banks, insurance and industrial companies. Simply wherever there is a risk of accidents, malfunctions or other threatening/disruptive events. Therefore, it is appropriate to ask the following questions:

- What disruptive/threatening events can occur in tourism?

Note: There are definitely no extreme natural phenomena in the Czech Republic, the social environment is also more or less stable. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that even in a relatively safe country such as the Czech Republic, this event can paralyze the whole tourism sector for a long time.

Risk management is not only about external events, but also focuses on risk assessment of decisions within business activities. As a rule, there is a network of consecutive decisions in the company and there may be a risk of conflict between these decisions. Another question arises:

- Are the decisions so important that they require a risk assessment or an intuitive, non-analytical assessment?

From a practical point of view, a logical statement is offered: We have not yet needed risk management, and as far as the COVID pandemic is concerned, we have always moved through the difficulties (either on our own or with the help of the state). It turns out that business practice assesses the implementation of risk management in the ratio of benefits versus costs.

The implementation of risk management into practice of the tourism small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) should be the result of a discussion between academic sphere and tourism managers about the possible benefits of the risk management process. Risk should not be understood only as a connection with disruptive events, because business is always associated with risks in relation to opportunities in the business environment, i.e. risk appetite is assessed. Risk management can thus also be used to search for opportunities.

Most workers in tourism sector seldom remember a real threatening/disruptive event. The discussion must also explain the difference between a problem and a risk. If the management of tourism SME communicates something about its goals, it is also necessary to discuss what could endanger the goals. Other important questions arise in this regard:

- Which type of business from tourism destination would need risk management?
- Who should be involved in risk assessment and management in a tourism business?
- Who and how would deal with destination risk management?

At the destination level, it would only be possible to carry out a risk assessment at the destination, because the companies operating within the destination usually compete. In addition, it would probably be problematic for a company to reveal itself if someone else performed a risk analysis on its behalf. Nevertheless, it is necessary to have some overview at the destination level of the risk perception of the destination companies.

Conclusion

Diagram 3 is an expression of the authors' systemic view of risk management and the use of the risk management apparatus in the VUCA environment presupposes thinking in context. The analysis of academic literature and comparison with the reality of practice led the authors to the conclusion that risk analysis, which is the basis for building resilience, is not used systematically in tourism and focuses relatively narrowly on risk as a set of negative impacts that individuals, companies or destinations should avoid. It is therefore necessary to understand more thoroughly, first theoretically and then practically the various concepts of risk and uncertainty in tourism. At the same time, the following questions arise:

- If the sensitivity and vulnerability of the tourism industry is often mentioned, should organizational resilience not be implemented in the institutions that formulate the policy for the development and sustainability of tourism?
  (This applies in particular to the tourism departments at regional authorities and the Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic).
- Sustainable development has been talked about and published for almost forty years, but in practice this vision is not shared and the results are not visible. Is not now the time to think about transferring the theoretical concept of business sustainability into the practice of tourism companies?
- Which type of tourism companies are key to creating value for the customer (according to the Lean principle)? Travel agencies, tour operators, hotels, guesthouses, restaurants, cultural or sports facilities?
- Would it not be desirable to create a risk map of travel sites, or a map of vulnerabilities of tourism sites, in terms of economic resilience and crisis planning?

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APPLICATION OF THE METHODOLOGY OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING FOR EMPLOYEES OF HOTEL COMPANIES, BASED ON IMMERSION INTO THE VIRTUAL WORLD

Abstract: *This paper describes a research study of communication skills training for future hotel workers in an immersive environment. The research team developed a model of the hotel reception in a virtual environment, and proposed a methodology for three-phase training. The research involved 56 testers who provided detailed feedback. To improve the communication skills of the participants, it is necessary to repeat the simulations and analyze the individual aspects of the communication in depth.*

Key words: *Communication Skills, Higher Education, Hotel Employee Training, Virtual Reality*

JEL Classification: I23

Introduction

Virtual Hotel is an application for training the communication skills of hotel staff in order to alleviate the concerns and risks associated with the spread of COVID-19. Using virtual reality, the employee puts on a head-mounted display and finds himself in a model of a virtual hotel, in which a simulation of critical communication situations based on pre-prepared scenarios takes place. In the environment, the user has the opportunity to move freely and interact with active objects, such as the telephone.

The aim of the research was:

1. to verify the suitability of the technical solution of the virtual hotel and fine-tune the model into a functional and user-friendly form, usable in the practice of hotels in the training of hotel staff and in the practice of schools in which hotel students are prepared,

2. to verify the suitability of the three-phase model of virtual training and obtain data for fine-tuning the training methodology to the optimal form

A methodology has been created for effective training, according to which lecturers and training participants will use the application. In this sense, the methodology is an irreplaceable application manual of the created model of the hotel section, processed by virtual reality technology. The methodology is based on a theoretical framework for the implementation of training in a virtual environment, including inspiration from other projects and initiatives in the field of virtual reality. Our aim was to find similar projects in the available literature that use virtual reality in education, in university education, or directly develop communicative skills using virtual reality. The methodology was created on the basis of the theoretical study of professional literature and practical experience of project implementation team members from previous projects related to virtual reality - especially from experience with training future teachers in Virtual Classroom, where it was verified in practice, and continuously improved in a three-phase training model [1].

A number of research studies have addressed the use of immersion or immersive technologies to practice communicative skills [2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10] and there is also a significant number of publications on using virtual reality in the hotel industry [11, 12, 13] According to Naul and Liu (2019), the basic issues addressed in this context are immersion, involvement, and motivation [2]. Dieker, Rodriguez, Lignugaris/Kraft, Hynes, and Hughes (2019) emphasize careful preparation of a virtual training scenario in studies focused on simulations designed to train health professionals [3]. González-Martínez, Martí, and Cervera (2019) list three factors that ensure the effectiveness of simulations in a real environment: (a) realism, (b) drama, (c) challenge. By combining these factors, it is possible to create effective and learning-supporting simulations even in a virtual environment [6].

Verkuyl, Lapum, Hughes, McCulloch, Liu, Mastrilli, Romaniuk, and Betts (2018) complement work in a virtual environment with consistent feedback and 3 types of reflection: (a) self-debrief, (b) assessment by a supervisory authority (facilitator-led in-person debrief), and (c)) assessment by authorities in a virtual environment (facilitator-led virtual debrief) [4]. Dieker, et al. (2019) appeal to the cyclicality of the simulation (possibility to repeat the simulation after providing feedback). The task of the supervising person is to discuss in detail the situation with the participant [3].

Metusalem, Belenky, and DiCerbo (2017) believe that the most appropriate way to practice social communication is to play roles where participants play situations similar to those they may encounter in the real world [9]. As in the practice of public speeches, they then have their performance evaluated by an expert, and ideally also by classmates, and then they carry out a self-assessment on the basis of a video recording. According to Hazel (2011), it is especially important that the feedback is provided immediately after the performance [10].

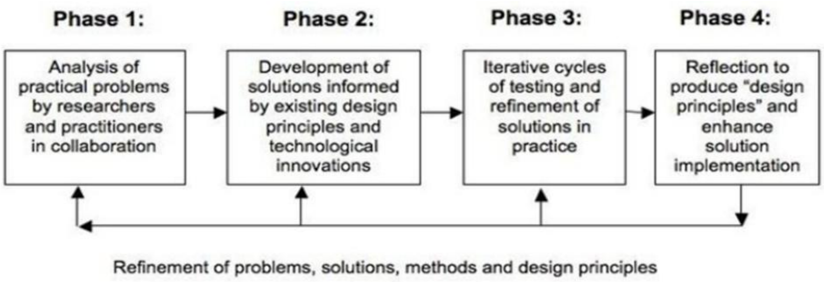
The results of research using another model of virtual hotel developped by Israel, Tscheulin, Zerres (2019) emphasized that virtual reality technology offers high usability for the potential customer. Virtual reality offers a completely new form of product visualisation which could extensively change the presentation of hotels in the future (Law, Buhalis, Cobanoglu, 2014, Guttentag, 2010). Some big hotel chains (e.g. Hilton, Marriott, Thomas Cook, Best Western) are already starting to use virtual reality for hotel presentation. However, the use of virtual reality in professional development of hotel employees is the concept quite new.

Materials and Methods

Based on the study of professional materials and previous experience, a Virtual Hotel model and a methodology of three-phase training of communication skills was created. The model was gradually improved and refined in 2021 and 2022, based on testing by research team staff, as well as feedback from testers from hospitality students and employees of co-operating hotels/experts from practice in design-based research [14, 15, 16, 17]. The research and development was also used for pilot verification and fine-tuning of the training methodology, which was tested mainly in 2022 by hotel workers and students of the hotel industry and related fields.

The design-based research consists of 4 phases [17]:

Figure 1 - Design-based research



Source: Reeves (2000)

Phase 1. Analysis of practical problems by researchers and people in practice

The proposal to create a virtual hotel and implement virtual trainings in an immersive environment was based on the practical experience of the experts of the implementation team, who for a long time encountered the insufficient equipment of hotel students with communication skills. Theoretically focused subjects in which students reflected on general aspects of communication or traditional practical methods of practicing communication skills involving role-playing games did not have a sufficient impact. Communication skills are also proving crucial in the recruitment and training of future hotel staff, and the need to find new tools for educating new staff has been identified.

Phase 2. Development of a solution with a theoretical framework

Psychological and pedagogical knowledge of communication theory, immersive learning, and the possibilities of using virtual reality as a specific form of experiential learning and learning by doing have become the theoretical framework for the development of problem solving. Various methods and procedures were used in the actual development of the solution to the problem. These include, in particular, a detailed didactic analysis, the design of a virtual scene according to the appearance of a real hotel, the choice of controls and functionalities of the system, the compilation of scenarios, and the methodology of virtual training.

Phase 3. Evaluation and testing of solutions in practice

In particular, through action research and lively ongoing discussion with experts in pedagogy, psychology, the use of technology in technology education (with a focus on virtual reality) and the hotel industry (including hoteliers and front-office staff from practice), the suitability and effectiveness of prototypes of Virtual Hotel have gradually improved. The partial elements of the system were tested and optimized in an effort to use the most modern, and at the same time, available, technical means. In order to implement a broad cross-validation of the effectiveness of the developed solutions, various testing methods and tools were combined.

Phase 4. Documentation and reflection on the production of "design principles"

The reflection stage is an essential part of research through development, which confirms its legitimacy. At this stage, we returned to the original research problems, and discovered whether the solution created, tested, and evaluated is really the solution to these problems. The reflection was based on the data obtained in the third stage, and put into context.

Technical issues related to the project were solved mainly by experts from the Czech Technical University in Prague, didactic and psychological aspects of virtual training and the corresponding methodology was guaranteed by the team of the Faculty of Education of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, and the content side of the preparation of hotel students and front office staff, the staff of the University of Hospitality Management in Prague, in co-operation with experts from the Perfect Concept Hotel company, prepared a discussion with experts from practice.

The initial 3D model of the hotel reception was created using photogrammetry, and the use of Neos VR was assumed, to simplify network connectivity for connecting multiple users. However, for technical reasons, the Neos VR platform was eventually abandoned, and the Unity game engine was used for further development. The hotel reception scene itself uses Steam VR, which ensures compatibility with most currently used HMDs. The reception model also includes the entire front office part of the hotel, which improves the integrity of the experience. The created model also contains many interactive objects (e.g. computer, property management system, door keys) to increase the realism of the simulation.

A *methodology for the application of training the communication skills of hotel employees using virtual reality tools* was created for training in Virtual Hotel. This document specifies the individual phases of the training, and deals with important aspects of the development of communication skills of the target group in an immersive environment. The methodology is designed to directly correspond to the current possibilities and limits of the created Virtual Hotel model, and lead to the effective development of communicative skills of students and participants in lifelong learning in the hotel industry.

Table 1 shows the focus of the individual stages of three-phase training.

Table 1 - Three-phase training model

1.	**Initial introduction to the Virtual Hotel environment**	self-reflection discussion introduction to the implementation of the 2nd phase
2.	**Virtual training** **(immersion into a specific situation)**	self-reflection feedback discussion record analysis
3.	**Virtual training** **(repetition of a specific situation)**	self-reflection feedback discussion record analysis

In 2021, continuous testing focused mainly on the quality of immersion in the virtual environment and the technical solution of virtual resources, and in 2022, on the implementation of training according to the prepared methodology, i.e. verification of the training, involvement of individual actors, and overall solution of the training situation. The numbers of testers, their ages, genders, roles (student, hotel worker), and their previous experience of working in a hotel and with virtual reality are given in Table 3.

Table 2 - Characteristics of respondents

Total number of testers	56
Men	28
Women	28
Aged 16-25	41
Aged 26-50	11
Aged 51 and over	4
Number of student testers	39
Number of hotel staff testers	17
Previous experience working in a hotel	21
Previous experience with VR	21
Cyber sickness felt in the past	5
Cyber sickness during training	1

The same number of women as men took part in the research, and the largest group of testers consisted of students under the age of 25. A total of 21 respondents had previous experience with working in a hotel, as well as with virtual reality. Prior to training, previous experience with cyber sickness was reported by 5 test subjects, but during training it manifested itself in only one person.

Results

The following text is an overview of the feedback provided by 56 testers aged 16-59 years who tested the Virtual Hotel model at various stages of research, or participated in pilot training as trained persons (i.e. direct participants who are placed in a certain communication situation), or bystanders who provide feedback to the trainee (students, participants in further education, hotel professionals, experts in the use of technology in education, practitioners who work directly as front-office employees). On the one hand, the testers provided instant oral feedback to the research team, immediately after the training in an immersive environment, and detailed written feedback in the form of filling in printed questionnaires with open-ended questions. Their content analysis pointed out the following aspects of the application of the methodology.

In the current form of the hotel reception, a very strong immersion can be achieved; the participants of the training are surprised by the realism of the scene, and its natural feel. The feeling of the application depends to a large extent on the previous experience of testers with virtual reality. To some, the Virtual Hotel model seems technically advanced, while some expected higher image quality or application control.

Table 3 - Representative selection of answers to question Q6

Were you able to immerse yourself into the situation, or did something disturb you, making it difficult to immerse yourself in the virtual environment and the situation as a whole?
I was disturbed by my poor handling of the joystick control. The reception should be better equipped, there could be other people in the lobby No Yes, I was able to get used to it without any problems Yes, nothing disturbed me I could not hear the opponent I was able to immerse myself into it Problem grasping objects I managed it, and nothing disturbed me Inexperience with virtual reality Twisted figure, otherwise it was good I was immersed in it Nothing disturbed me Just poor image quality, otherwise nothing. No problem

The avatars are less natural, for which it is not yet possible to have more elaborate facial expressions and movements due to the computing power of the device. Some testers had difficulty controlling the application and individual actions during training (e.g. grabbing a document by an avatar). However, most testers got on very quickly with the environment, they completed the entire training without major problems. The quality of 3D glasses almost completely eliminates cyber sickness - only one of the tested people had to stop training due to cyber sickness. Difficulties are mainly caused by handling the motion controllers, which is not an ideal simulation of real motion. Sometimes, the difficulties are caused by the real space in which the participants move. For the comfort of the participants, it is necessary to ensure relative quiet, so that the participants from all sides are not disturbed by the conversations of bystanders.

Within the Virtual Hotel, control is solved in an alternative way, similar to computer games, and during training it is clear that trained people must focus more on the movement and control of objects on the stage (e.g. ID card, certificate of infectivity, etc.) than would be common when using ordinary objects. Problems with grasping objects are, of course, reflected in communication, where the trained person usually has to concentrate for some time on controlling the objects using the controls, and only then resolve the communication with the client. Sometimes, it happens that the trained person shows unnecessary unnatural stress from not being able to easily manipulate objects. Sometimes, due to this, the immersion is interrupted, and the trained person begins to verbalize his failure, and therefore emerges from immersive communication. For this reason, it is appropriate that the scene be as simple as possible to control the controller - i.e. rather minimize the manipulation of objects and focus more on verbal communication.

Table 4 - Representative selection of answers to question Q7

How did you like the environment of the virtual hotel? Did your feeling approach that of the feeling when you found yourself in a real hotel?
The reception should definitely have a computer with at least a few functions Yes, but an impersonal environment Yes, the environment is consciously approaching the real situation Yes, it was quite realistic The environment is nice, but it is far from that of a real hotel Yes, I would imagine more characters, with more noise, queues, navigation, etc. Almost, yes No After a long adaptation, it would certainly come close to the feeling of a real hotel Yes, the environment is beautiful It needs more detail Mega cool I was intrigued

In the original model of Virtual Hotel, music was used, which is common in hotel receptions. However, during communication training, this music was a disruptive factor that made it difficult to concentrate, so it was decided not to use background music during training. When the music was completely turned off, some participants in the research pointed out the unnatural sound environment of the virtual hotel - music is a typical soundstage. At the reception, the noise of clients' conversations in the lobby is also very common.

When testing, the space for the movement of the trained persons needs to be large and empty enough for the persons with the head display to feel safe. It is advisable to set aside an empty classroom or a separate part of it for testing, and to place the supervisors who monitor and then evaluate the training in a separate space. However, in order to provide good feedback, the assessors need to see the trainees, either directly or on a screen. It is also appropriate that, at the same time, a projection of the image that the trained person sees in the main display is realized for any additional persons.

The three-phase training model implemented according to the above methodology is considered by trained and associated persons to be a suitable model, in which a shift in communication skills can be seen with consistent application of the model and appropriate training. If trained people have only a one-off opportunity to work with virtual reality, they often express that they were worried about controlling the avatar, sharpening the image, and other technical complications. This greatly affected their communication, on which they could not concentrate enough. Conversely, if participants were forced to train many times in one communication situation, the training would become boring. It is therefore good to work with the use of a three-phase model, and it is possible to build on it by implementing other scenarios, which we train in two phases - we implement the first and second training. If the trained persons also participate in the training in the role of associate participants with other trained persons, it is appropriate to include different challenges for each trained person in the form of specific behaviour of individual clients (e.g. a client who speaks another language, but does not speak much, etc.). Thereby, the whole training session gains another dimension, when the training is very interesting and exciting for both the trained persons, and the people sitting in.

The testers stated that the whole training is a great experience for them, which leads them to think about communication situations, and allows them to discuss with the teacher and other participants how to behave in different communication situations. They also proactively provided a range of ideas on how to further improve the current model, and make the scene more realistic. Some topics are inspiring; some of them run into current technical possibilities.

Overall, most respondents appreciated the Virtual Hotel as an interesting idea, and as an opportunity to use virtual reality in the education of hospitality workers.

Discussion

Virtual Hotel is an opportunity to provide participants with training in specific skills and standardization of training, so that it is the same for everyone, and which the participants would not encounter in real practice. In addition, the virtual environment is also a safe environment, without the risk that misconduct will have real world consequences. [4]

Before starting the training, it is advisable to tell the participants the basic rules. Above all, it is necessary to warn the trained person to get used to the situation as much as possible, and not to try to literally “jump” out of it, out of the script. It is also necessary to emphasize to the participants so that they do not try to slip into communication clichés and make fun of the whole training, but rather to try to really get into the situation, and choose real questions, answers, and comments accordingly. Scenarios need to be prepared in detail in advance, as their realism has a great influence on the participant’s role [18]. In a virtual hotel, therefore, it has its justification to work with a branched scenario proven in other previous studies [19, 20].

During the virtual reality performance, there were the evidence that positive attitude towards using technologies is crucial for the adoption of recent technologies in hospitality and tourism as mentioned also Cheng and Cho (2011) in their research.

According to Bertrand and Bouchard (2008) we found that if the user is convinced that the use of the virtual reality could lead to a positive effect, the willingness to use the application increases.

The more realistic the scene is, the better immersion the participant feel and the efect of the training is better (the same result as in the study of Buhalis and Law, 2008).

The trained people had the biggest communication problems with the use of parasitic words and unwritten expression. Some participants showed less alertness in more complicated situations or with technical problems, and conversely, some trained people are able to communicate in virtual reality with insight and a sense of humour during the first training.

For the trained persons, but also for the participants, the feedback provided by the teacher and the discussion that will develop over the individual communication situations is of great importance. It is excellent if people with direct experience in the hotel industry also take part in the training. It is only necessary to select experienced mentors for this role, who will not be too strict, so as not to discourage participants or dishonour them even in case of “childish” mistakes. It is advisable to work with practitioners who have experience in training new staff in hotels.

It is therefore necessary to set aside enough time for virtual training and work with small groups of participants of up to 10 people. The actual immersion into the virtual environment must not take too long - the ideal time is around 5 minutes. If the training is longer - for example, around 10 minutes or more, and the trained person is not very successful in communicating smoothly without any problems, the stress of the trained person will increase greatly, which will lead to a total rejection of this type of training.

Some participants expressed concern about technology which is according to findings of

Conclusion

The pilot verification of a three-phase immersive training of communication skills for students and hotel staff in the reception environment of a virtual hotel confirmed the suitability of the chosen procedure and the usability of the model in the preparation of future front office staff. Realistic graphic design of the virtual environment helps deep immersion and high-quality 3D devices minimize the risk of cyber sickness. The current generation of university students is interested and motivated to improve their communication skills in virtual reality, and consider this option to be effective and suitable for the practical part of teaching at the university.

Teachers who have the opportunity to try training in Virtual Hotel in their teaching agree that this method has great potential for opening up a variety of practical topics of working in a hotel during teaching, for reducing the initial stress of students working at the hotel reception, and for improving students’ communication skills in specific practical situations. The view of HR and hotel staff responsible for the recruitment and training of new staff is similar. They find Virtual Hotel an interesting innovative option for preparing staff for communication within the hotel reception. Training based on communication of two living people enables maximum fluency of communication and training of prompt reaction in various standard and non-standard situations.

It is advisable to give enough space for feedback and expression to the participants of training in the virtual hotel. It is possible that they will provide feedback that will not be completely correct professionally, but even these mistakes can be used by the teacher, and they can work with them - to put everything into perspective. It is important to give space to different perspectives on the communication situation. With this type of training, it is not possible to evaluate the trained persons too strictly, as there is always a need for a large degree of empathy and helpfulness on the part of the evaluators, and an effort to provide very nice and fundamentally positive feedback.

The level of immersion is crucial for to avoid cybersickness and to better adoption of the virtual reality tool by participants of the training. User expectations are very high these days, the technical side and user-friendliness of the entire application play a significant role.

Future research work could open the questions of different communication styles, verifications of more detailed guidelines for trainers and go deep into the standards of giving feedback to trainees. And here is also the big question of the use of artificial intelligence in virtual reality training which must be developed.

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THE MANIFESTATION OF POLITICAL VIEWS AND THE DISCRIMINATION OF CUSTOMERS IN THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR: BRIONI HOTEL CASE AND BEYOND

Abstract: *The goal of this article is to investigate legal aspects of the conflict between the right for equal treatment and the manifestation of political beliefs by the entrepreneurs on the basis of the recent constitutional review of the widely criticized case of hotel Brioni and the consequent wide critical legal and public discourse. Based on the case study the present article provides for assessments of the legal limits of freedom of speech and the problems of political neutrality in enterprising and demonstrates the need for a critical holistic approach involving complex understanding of all relevant factors, such as the social context, the form of contested behavior and the character of target customer. The application practice, legal interpretation and the state policy towards the issue of discrimination, however, has not been fundamentally distorted by the hotel Brioni Constitutional Court decision and the Czech hospitality sector does not currently show any serious signs of discriminatory treatment related to nationality.*

Key words: *discrimination, compelled speech, equal treatment, consumer protection, boycott, collective guilt, human dignity, fundamental human rights*

JEL Classification: *K38, K42*

Introduction

The hospitality business includes global services targeting the wide range of clients. The hospitality services are by definition dealing not only with clients of different nationalities, but importantly of the variety of political opinions, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and other specific sets of values characterizing particular groups of customers. This fact is significantly determining the extreme sensitivity of hospitality services to any form of discrimination, double standards or other forms of differentiated treatment of any group of customers. The non-discriminatory treatment of customers is one of the essential basic standards of the hospitality services. It is required not only by the professional ethics, but it is legally enforceable. At the same time, however, the entrepreneurs' rights for manifestation of political views constitute a vital part of the freedom of speech concept.

The hospitality service sector provides for the specific opportunities for the manifestation of the political views by the service providers. The customers, however, are at the same time protected against unjustifiable discrimination based on the e.g. prejudice, hate speech or application of the collective guilt principle. The consumers´ dignity and freedom have to be specifically respected with regard to their race, religion or political beliefs, but also with regard to their nationality and citizenship (SHELTON, 2013).

The legal system of a democratic society is based on the complex equilibrium of fundamental human rights, which are frequently contradictory in their individual application. None of the fundamental rights is absolute and their limits are delineated by the legislation and by judicial decision-making including the constitutional review (FREDMAN, 2017). The optimum balance between e.g. free speech, the equal treatment and non-discrimination is not easy to find. The recent case of hotel Brioni illustrates the complexity of the issue and generate vivid public and political debates. Regarding this well-known case of this nature, in which the Constitutional Court backed the refusal of a hotel to accommodate Russian tourists after the Russian occupation of Crimea in 2014, there exists a potential danger that the 2022 Russian aggression against Ukraine will revive the problems. The Hotel Brioni case (CONSTITUTIONAL COURT, 2019) provided for the widely criticized legal findings in this respect.

Normative Regulation

The standards of professional ethic of the business are providing for the need of a tolerant and friendly environment in the hospitality services in day-to-day business. Especially at the level of international chains and other global hospitality services providers, the Corporate Social Responsibility principles are applied not limited to the minimum legal requirements. This involves the ban of any kind of customers´ discrimination and the environment of tolerance. In the light of the above, however, the role of legal regulation is nevertheless still dominant. The anti-discrimination legislation is supported by the case law providing for the interpretation of the generally formulated principles (KVASNICOVÁ, 2015). The decision-making process provided by the judiciary and the governmental controlling organs supports the evolution of legal standards and the landmark decisions influence the extralegal regulation of the particular sector of business.

Legal regulation of the anti-discrimination represents the minimum standards of behavior required and enforced by the state. Anti-discrimination rules are embodied in the wide range of legislation including labor law, consumer protection law, administrative law, etc. (ŠAMÁNEK, 2017). The core principles, however, are granted by the constitution order of the Czech Republic, according to which: *"Fundamental human rights and freedoms are guaranteed to everybody irrespective of sex, race, color of skin, language, faith, religion, political or other conviction, ethic or social origin, membership in a national or ethnic minority, property, birth, or other status"* (CHARTER OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS, 1993, Article 3).

The above provision provides for the solution of the past legalistic disputes contesting the absence of the explicit discrimination criteria of citizenship in the text of the Anti-Discrimination Act. The solution is based on the universally respected principle of priority of constitutional norms in the case of controversy. The discrimination based on the criteria of citizenship falls into the category of protected status according to the Charter and should be therefore fully applied in the protection of the fundamental human rights.

The role of the Constitutional court in interpretation of legal norms is exclusive. The decisions of the Constitutional court are generally binding and all decisions are published in full in the official collection of laws including the individual dissenting opinions of judges. The grounds of dissent opinions constitute a valuable source of information, the alternative assessments and argumentation of a significant potential affecting the future application of law. The dissenting opinion in the Hotel Brioni case reflected strong arguments utilized in the later criticism of the decision by professional community including the president of the Constitutional Court.

The 2014 Hotel Brioni alleged discrimination case commences a large social debate over the limits of the freedom of speech of entrepreneurs with the respect to the customers´ dignity and the collective guilt. The significant impact of the case is present in majority of all legal and political polemics up to now. The hospitality service provider´s refusal to accommodate citizens of the Russian Federation as the political manifestation of protest against the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea became well known not only in the legal and hospitality business community. The service provider, in the given case, conditioned access to the hotel services for the citizens of the Russian Federation by signing a written statement expressing their personal condemnation of the Russian aggression.

The original Supreme Administrative Court verdict in this case favored the non-discrimination principle over the unregulated right for manifestation of political views (SUPREME ADMINISTRATIVE COURT, 2018). The consequent constitutional review of the case, however, resulted in the largely surprising and widely criticized decision justifying the service provider´s behavior. (CONSTITUTIONAL COURT, 2019). The decision is profoundly controversial providing the justification of the variety of political activism potentially resulting in the different treatment of customers based on their citizenship and political preferences (WINTER, 2020).

Materials and Methods

Proportionality Tests in Hard Cases

Discrimination cases frequently fall into the specific category of "hard cases", in which not only the written legal norms, but importantly also the generally recognized legal principles and policies have to be applied by courts (DWORKIN, 1977). Regarding the immanent controversy of applied principles, the decision-making authorities analyze and assess such principles in the process of determination of the desirable balance. In the consumers´ discrimination cases of the discussed type the two main principles are primarily assessed:

- freedom of expression in the manifestation of political views
- right for non-discrimination based on the criterion of citizenship

The above principles represent the important guarantees of the liberal democracy embodied in the constitutional order of the country. The hierarchy of principles, however, is not *a priori* determined. The role of the decision-making authorities is to assess the importance of the relevant principles of the case and provide for such priorities (SHEERAN, RODLEY, 2013).

The method of a proportionality test used in discrimination cases involves examining whether:

- a certain group of consumers was favored over another group of consumers
- the consumers were in a comparable situation
- the favoring was justified and fulfilled the criteria of reasonability and justification, i.e. pursued a legitimate aim
- the means used were proportionate to the aim in question

The application of the method requires not only complex legal expertize but also large general experience in assessments of the overall social context.

The utilization of the proportionality test by the Supreme Administrative Court at first resulted in the conclusion, that the different treatment of tourists by Hotel Brioni was generally motivated by a legitimate aim - the exercise of the constitutional freedom of expression (CHARTER OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS, 1993, Article 17). The court, however, adjudicated that the choice and exercise of particular means was not proportionate and adequate for the fact that the legitimate aim could have been achieved by other means rather than forcing the Russian customers to sign the written declaration condemning the Russian aggression against Crimea. The particular form of treatment was found not only humiliating and breaching the principles of personality protection, but potentially jeopardizing the safety of tourists in the light of repressive practices of the Russian political regime. For the above reasons the Hotel Brioni treatment was found discriminatory at first (SUPREME ADMINISTRATIVE COURT, 2018).

The subsequent constitutional review of this judgement, however, resulted in a largely surprising contradictory conclusion (CONSTITUTIONAL COURT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC, 2019). The differentiated treatment of Russian tourists in question was not found discriminatory by this final decision. The grounds of the final decision were based on the assumption that the freedom of speech, including the right to express the political views, would prevail over the customers´ non-discrimination rights in the given case. The actual form of manifestation, according to the court, was not relevant for assessment of the case.

The decision, adopted by two judges, was widely criticized by professional community, including the president of the Constitutional Court, and by the representatives of hospitality business as well. The critics of the decision focused primarily on the lack of detailed proportionality test involving the analysis of the particular form of the political protest. The absence of respect to the principles of anti-discrimination legislation and to the concept of the consumers´ protection was contested at the same time.

The president of the Constitutional Court publicly called on state institutions, including the inspections and the courts, not to respect the decision, to continue in punishing similar discriminatory forms of behavior and make the overruling of the decision by future Constitutional Courts´ plenary session possible. At the same time, he called for the review of the case by the European Court of Justice for the fact, that applied legal rules and standards were primarily based on the implemented anti-discrimination and consumers´ protection EU laws. (ČESKÁ TELEVIZE, 2019).

Results

Political Neutrality in the Hospitality Enterprising

The entrepreneurs constitute the integral element of the civic society. Their political views are importantly reflecting individual and group interests. Businesspersons legitimately participate in political, social and cultural activities, philanthropy, lobbying, support of various political subjects, etc. The political activity of entrepreneurs in the above sense is not contested neither by the ongoing public debate nor by the present article. Manifestation of an individual philosophical, religious or political views directly targeting the customers of businessperson, however, falls into the significantly different category. The manifestation of the free speech in this respect has to be balanced not only with the specific "consumer protection" rights, but primarily with the constitutionally guaranteed fundamental human rights (CHARTER OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS, 1993, Article 3). The respect to human dignity, equal treatment and other social values are of main importance. Any form of public shaming, hate speech or ostracism are thus in the immense breach of aforementioned principles.

The right to express individual social preferences, however, can be effectively manifested by a variety of forms not breaching the democratic values. The Constitutional Court confirmed in this respect, that i.e. the choice of the field of enterprising, the form of the business or character of particular services is a legitimate and effective instrument for expressing the personal preferences of the entrepreneur in the hospitality services without *a priori* discrimination of certain group of customers (THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT, 2019). In the absence of general customers´ pre-requisites (other than legally required, such as e.g. minimum age), the target group of customers is naturally selected by the character of services rendered. This can be easy illustrated by examples such as vegan restaurants, soccer clubs pubs, art coffees, national cuisine oriented restaurants, etc.

The personal beliefs and preferences can also be emphasized by variety of means including visual elements, such as the decoration of the facilities, the use of symbols, e.g. typically the country flags at the entrance of hotels, soccer club symbols, portraits of celebrities at the premises, and so on. At the same time, the decoration of facilities should not be *a priori* interpreted as support of the political view. A thorough analysis of the context is always necessary. The complexity of this principle can be illustrated for instance by the recent case of the family picture of the soldier of Wehrmacht in uniform with a swastika at an Austrian family mountain guesthouse, which was not qualified as illegal Nazi propaganda by court (AFP, 2019). The significance of the case is underlined by the fact that both the Austrian and German society is extremely sensitive to the reminiscences of any Nazi movement. The case in question, however, was based on the detailed assessments of the form, context and especially intentions, which are of the highest importance for the fair decision-making.

In the contrast to the above, the Czech Constitutional Court deliberately ignored the context and the detailed assessments of the form of the manifestation of the political views by the entrepreneur in the Hotel Brioni case. The Court provided for the explanatory statement based on the assumption that the content of the manifestation itself is of relevance, not the form. The Court endorsed the priority of this principle even if, in the given case, the particular form of the behavior in question was not found "optimal" (CONSTITUTIONAL COURT, 2019, par.29). By the justifications of the deliberate absence of the context and the assessments of the forms of behavior, the Constitutional Court *de facto* denied the importance of a proportionality test. The refusal to take into the consideration the particulars of the individual case for the sake of unconditional "content" of behavior regretfully opens the door to the legal fundamentalism categorically prioritizing *a priori* selected value. The assessments of the optimal balance of human rights, respect to context and the actual form of behavior are fundamentally missing in this concept.

The author of the present article is convinced that the above shift of paradigm represents the key critical points of the concept applied by the Constitutional Court in the Hotel Brioni case. The decision did not sufficiently reflect the context of the manifestation of the political views in the proportionality assessments concerning the free speech right and the protection of the other constitutionally guaranteed fundamental human rights. The decision also did not sufficiently take into account basic concept of anti-discrimination legislation, based on the differentiation and assessment of particular means and forms of behavior. It could be manifested e.g. by the general provision of section 7 of Anti-Discrimination Act conditioning the exceptional admissible forms of differentiated treatment by appropriate and necessary means of achieving the legitimate goal (BOUČKOVÁ, 2016).

My House My Rules ?

The Constitutional Court provided for specific additional argumentation in support of the idea of priority of the right to free speech in the Hotel Brioni case. The legitimacy of politically motivated different treatment of customers, according to the decision, is considered to be a component of the freedom of businessperson and the integral element of the entrepreneur's´ personal enjoyment of enterprising The enterprising, according to the Constitutional Court, involves not only elements of profit oriented business activity, but also elements of special personal enjoyment of the entrepreneur to influence the community and social life. This enjoyment also includes the freedom to express the individual views and priorities through the particular form of enterprising. The act of enterprising constitutes a specific realm of individual autonomy and self-fulfillment (CONSTITUTIONAL COURT, 2019, par.20).

The very idea of the existence of entrepreneurs´ enjoyment and potential philanthropic motives can hardly be contested. The author of the present article, however, is far from accepting this principle as unconditional and relevant in the future decision making of potential Hotel Brioni-like cases. The main reservations are based on total prioritizing of this principle over the protection of consumers´ rights arising from the absence of detailed differentiation. The variety of the form, size and the nature of the enterprising is not sufficiently reflected by the decision. The practice and standards of the small restaurant facilities, mentioned in the decision, are not generally applicable to the whole sector of hospitality services rendered to the global community (CONSTITUTIONAL COURT, 2019, par.20). The nature and quality of the relationship between the service provider and the customer are apparently fundamentally dependent on i.e. the character and size of the business.

The attempt to proclaim the hospitality enterprise to be a "free speech arena" of an entrepreneur in the above sense is not only disrespectful to the customers, but it is violating the principles of consumers´ protection and importantly also their fundamental constitutional rights protecting their dignity and freedom.

The Typology of Customers in Discrimination Cases

Apart from the factor of the form and size of the particular service, the typology of the customer is of the main significance in all assessments. The generic representatives of particular subculture, religious group, political movement, the country nationals or state citizens, have to be clearly differentiated from the active proponents, public figures or officials. The sensitivity in differentiation between the generic client and the active proponent of political regime is fundamental in all customers´ discrimination cases of the type discussed.

The analysis concerning the principle difference between an average tourist and e.g. a uniformed foreign high-ranked military official, is absent in the Hotel Brioni decision. The differences in the level of exposed manifestation of the disputed values, however, are of relevance. The reservation of conscience is then generally more legitimate in the cases such as e.g. refusal to accommodate a political meeting at the hotel premises, a congress of abortion specialists, not to speak about the apparently controversial activities such as the "Cannabis Festival", "Erotic Ball" or a concert of rock group associated with a Nazi movement. The refusal to accommodate reputation-threatening activities in such cases can thus be accepted as legitimate. Not only the internal reservation of conscience, however, constitutes the legitimate reason for refusal of service in similar cases. The "false neutrality" in similar cases can directly jeopardize the reputation of the business and also results in the economic losses especially in such a profoundly controversial cases. In the above examples the social and business reputation of the hospitality enterprise might well be critically in stake.

Despite the similarities, the principal differences can be identified between the Hotel Brioni decision and the recent internationally well-known leading cases of refusal of service based on the conscientious objection. In recent cases of similar type in the service sector, the major contradictions between the values of the service provider and the particular individual customers were profoundly manifested by customers. With regard to that, the potential acceptance of the requested service by the provider, in such cases, can be interpreted as the open support of the customer´s opinions. (REYES, 2019).

The recent leading cases of consumers´ discrimination, such as 2018 US Supreme Court Masterpiece Cakeshop (MASTERPIECE CAKESHOP, 2018) or Lee vs Ashers Baking Company (SUPREME COURT OF THE UK, 2018) solve the disputes of the customers openly manifesting their individual believes and values. The above cases do not represent the confrontation with the generic customers, but with the active proponents of certain religious or political values. The Supreme Court of the US provided for clear distinction in this respect by stating i.a. that the hypothetical orthodox catholic baker´s refusal to prepare a wedding cake suitable for both heterosexual and same sex marriages would be discriminatory. The refusal in the case of a special gay-marriage wedding cake decorated with a slogan celebrating and promoting the principles of the same sex marriage, however, was not considered to be unjustifiable discrimination of consumer. This assessment is based on the legally acceptable reservation of conscience principles (SUPREME COURT OF THE USA, 2018).

Discussion

The Reputation Risks of Discrimination Cases

The hospitality business is considerably sensitive to the reputations risks. The overall environment of tolerance and equal treatment of customers constitute one of the fundaments and basic factors of the success. Hospitality services largely benefit from the local, regional and national reputation based on the long-term traditions. The Czech hospitality sector benefits from the country´s traditions of religious and political tolerance. In the present time this can be manifested e.g. by the level of acceptance of the LGBT community in the hospitality sector and tourism, which is significantly more friendly in comparison with the most countries of the region. The Czech service sector did not experience political or religious boycotts or other significant forms of oppression or discrimination in decades. This factor largely contributes to the perception of the country as one of the safest tourist destinations (INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMICS & PEACE, 2021). The spirit of tolerance constitutes an important element of successful tourist business brand.

The overall fragility of the services´ reputation is notorious. In the existing environment the internet and social media in particular, increase the potential harming effects on the reputation of hospitality services to global dimensions. The discrimination cases represent one of the most critical harming factors in hospitality services in this respect. The discrimination cases in the hospitality sector are globally communicated by the social media and reflected by the international audience.

The social dynamics under the influence of internet result in the mass polarization of beliefs, political and religious opinions or even simple everyday preferences. The purchase of goods or rendering services, in this respect, is potentially interpreted as the manifestation of the preferences of specific social values. The prompt large-scale opportunity to express an individual opinion, preference or emotion with the use of the social networks is tempting. It is promoting the individual demonstration of opinions and preferences as the direct consequence of the mass manifestation of priorities with utilization of social networks by others. This factor, however, also supports the rise of polarization, escalation of rivalry and hate speech. The increase of irrationality is the unfortunate element of this process at the same time.

The immanent sensitivity to discrimination cases in hospitality services has to be recognized and the appropriate preventive measures has to be implemented in order to minimize the reputation risk factors. Both the extralegal and legal instruments have to be applied jointly. The stable legal environment including the consistent sanctioning is the priority. In the constitutional judicial review, the consequences of each case apply far beyond the particular case itself. Despite the fact that the single, largely contested Hotel Brioni decision adopted by two judges does not constitute a new doctrine, the published Constitutional Court decision approved a potentially dangerous and controversial approach. If the desirable neutrality of the hospitality services is ruined by the manifestations of the personal beliefs of the service providers, the chain reaction can be reasonably expected. In its extreme consequences, the future lack of activism can be potentially interpreted as the support of the opposite standpoint, as a direct outcome of the above scenario. Such a consequence would be devastating not only for the hospitality sector.

The Discrimination of Customers in the Light of the 2022 Russian War against Ukraine

The current international situation is profoundly shaped by the Russian aggression against Ukraine. This factor is significantly affecting the public opinion. The manifestation of support for Ukraine constantly increases across all segments of society including the hospitality services.

The variety of forms of spontaneous support at the beginning involved only a several isolated questionable actions targeting the Russian-speaking customers of the hospitality sector in the Czech Republic. A well-respected national hotel chain calling for the immediate collective boycott was the only rare significant example (HORÁČEK, 2022).

The fast response of the state organs sticks with the traditional stance respecting the anti-discrimination legislation. No tolerance is applied to individual attempts of differentiated treatment based on the nationality or state citizenship principles. Despite the fact that the strange legacy of the controversial 2019 Hotel Brioni decision is still present in the public debate, no direct application, however, can be witnessed. Minimum impact of the decision on the application practice can be also reasonably expected in the current situation due to the already mentioned negative acceptance both by the judiciary and the general public.

The rare initial calls for boycott and other exceptional cases of discriminatory treatment were widely criticized. The Office of Ombudsman of the Czech Republic issued an official statement warning that the rights and obligations guaranteeed by the Anti-Discrimination Act cannot be suspended in present state of emergency. The Ombudsman explicitly warns against "self-proclaimed sanctions" by individuals targeting Russian citizens living in the country, such as restrictions on access to services or unequal treatment at work (KŘEČEK, 2022). The official critical opinion was expressed also by the president of the Association of Hotels and Restaurants of the Czech Republic (NOVOTNÁ, FOŘTOVÁ, 2022). The current needs and importance of the principle of tolerance in the domestic political environment can also be illustrated by one of the very first official governmental reactions to the current upheavals - the official ministry measure preventing the hate speech and the discrimination at schools. (MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SPORTS AND PHYSICAL TRAINING OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC, 2022). The measures of such nature are needed in the current Czech environment where both the Ukraine and Russian nationals live, study and work in numbers.

The international and state policy of political and economic sanctions affecting not only the proponents of the Russian political regime and its institutions, but all Russian citizens are fundamentally different from the cases of private revenge. The international community, in contrast to private subjects, is legally entitled to use such political and economic tools. The principles of legality are applied by the international community. One of the main commonly recognized standards of justice and fairness is the prohibition of the collective guilt (NOVOTNÁ , FOŘTOVÁ, 2022). The application of international economic sanctions, however, is not in breach with the law. No analogy with the “self-proclaimed sanctions″ of individuals is legally acceptable.

The global democratic society reasonably expects that the Russian aggressor will soon face charges of the international tribunals for the war crimes breaching the fundamental human rights. The sole notion of legality is therefore of the main importance in the present situation and it should support the motivation of the democratic society to insist on the principles of fundamental human rights. The catalogue of fundamental human rights, however, involves the principles of fair equal treatment, human dignity, ban on discrimination and prohibition of any form of collective guilt.

Conclusion

"*Those who have ever valued liberty for its own sake believed that to be free to choose, and not to be chosen for, is an inalienable ingredient in what makes human beings human*."

Sir Isaiah Berlin (BERLIN, 1975).

No businessperson is forced to be politically neutral. The hospitality services providers are not deprived of their rights to express political views including the utilization of particular forms related to the specific character of their enterprising. Such a manifestation, however, have to be performed in a fair, appropriate and non-discriminatory manner. The free speech right is profoundly limited by the co-existence of fundamental rights of the others. The optimum equilibrium is uneasy to find. The decision-making authorities have to assess all individual relevant aspects of each case and apply the precise and balanced proportionality test. No particular element can be excluded from proportionality tests *a priori*, including the particular form of the contested behavior, overall context and the violation of rights of other potentially involved subjects.

The quality of the decision-making is fundamentally based on the consistency, which is providing for the desirable stability of the normative framework. The overall stability of the enforcement of the main principles and rules affects the social environment by satisfying the reasonable expectations of all subjects, including the business community. Such parameters are significantly forming a stable business environment making the local and foreign investments and long-term planning possible not only in the hospitality business.

The unusual and questionable decisions of state agencies of a democratic deliberative society have to be subject to scrutiny and public debate. The constitutional review assessing the application of fundamental legal principles is no exception. The denial of equal treatment rights together with the manifested tolerance to elements of collective guilt by the Hotel Brioni case decision did not acquire support neither by the professional community, nor by the public opinion..

The instant response of the Czech authorities to the initial isolated elements of customers´ nationality-based discrimination in the light of the current Russian war against Ukraine provides not only for hope, but also for the proof of the desirable transformation of the temporarily eroded anti-discrimination paradigm. It is a positive signal that after more than six months of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the Czech HORECA sector does not provide for any significant indications of discriminatory treatment based on nationality. The broad legal and public critical discourse in the context of the Brioni Hotel case has undoubtedly contributed to this business climate.

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INFORMATION PAPERS

UNREVIEWED ARTICLE

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TRADITIONAL EUROPEAN DESSERTS

Abstract
This paper provides a comprehensive overview of traditional European sweet desserts and meals. Nine European countries (Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Greece, United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, and Czech Republic) have been chosen and their traditional desserts and sweet meals were described. These countries have been randomly chosen based on their impact on dessert development and their influence on other countries' sweet-eating customs. Literature review has been used to describe traditional sweet desserts and meals in chosen countries. *This paper contributes to a better understanding of gastronomy and tourism within the context of traditional European desserts. This paper also provides valuable resources for current students, teachers and researchers in the field and those entering this area of research. It can also be a valuable source of information for tourists discovering the specifics of the desserts and the linked gastronomy of specific regions.*

Key Words: Traditional desserts, European cuisine, Gastronomy, Pastry, Sweet meals

JEL Classification: L66, L83, N94, Z32

Introduction and Methodology

From the cultural and historical point of view, some nations seem to savour desserts more than others. This information paper aims to provide comprehensive information concerning such specific areas as traditional European deserts unarguably are. This paper also aims to describe traditional desserts in ten European countries, mainly the ones that had the most impact on the dessert development and influenced the other societies sweet-eating customs (Booth 2018). All the names of desserts mentioned are in their original form.

This informative paper reviewed available literature sources from nine European countries. The authors randomly selected these countries. Namely this paper includes Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Greece, the United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic. The study draws on qualitative methods using secondary data. The academic literature is insufficient on this topic; therefore, the authors used relevant internet sources and, in some cases, archives.

Nine European countries and their traditional desserts overview:

Portugal

For Portuguese people, desserts play a significant role in their lives. This is best demonstrated by examining local maps and finding that pastelerias (local pastry shops) are based basically at every corner. Moreover, each restaurant menu offers an astounding range of various "sobremesas" (desserts). Historically speaking, most of the desserts were invented in monasteries across the whole country. Portuguese pastries are most often made from eggs and sugar as the prevalent ingredients and then variously shaped or mixed with various items. Other prevalent ingredients feature chocolate and almonds (Hirsch, 2021). People worldwide enjoy the signature Portuguese pastry, no other than Pastel de Nata or sometimes referred to as Pastel de Belém. The difference between these two pastries is only geographic. While Pastel de Nata can be produced anywhere in Portugal, Pastel de Belém is only connected to one specific location (Belém), where it is baked. The creamy egg-yolk custard mixture is poured into a basket-shaped dough made from a puff pastry, dusted with sugar and cinnamon and then baked together. The tart has a crunchy surface and lemony appearance. Pastéis de Belém originated sometime before the 17th century and was invented by catholic nuns from the Jerónimos Monastery in Lisbon. Nowadays, one can find the best pieces in a quarter of Belém in Lisbon (Gallo, 2017).

However, one of the most traditional and signature Portuguese pastries that are not so widely known to the foreign public is Queijadas de Sintra. Nevertheless, they are unique and trendy in Portugal. They can be found throughout all pastry shops across the whole country. It is a confection extremely rich in texture and sweetness, filled with sugar and cheese, covered in a fluffy crust at the top and powdered with cinnamon. The dough is made from milk, eggs and flour. It originally comes from the town of Sintra, which is an hour drive from Lisbon (Easyportugueserecipes.com, 2013). Although they are unusual, Ovos Moles deserve to be placed on the list. They are even labelled by the Protected Geographical Indication status from the European Union (Commission Regulation (EC) No 286/2009). These tiny biscuits are shaped like seashells. The wafer dough is extremely thin, and the insides are made from a cream produced from egg yolk and sugar. They are typical for the town of Aveiro and was invented by the local nuns (Hirsch, 2021).

Brigadeiro is a pastry that initially came from Brazil which is very popular in Portugal. It is a favourite option of dessert that is often present at various celebrations, such as children's parties, anniversaries, weddings or baptisms. The recipe originated in the 1920s when Nestlé opened its first factory in Brazil and introduced condensed milk. This national truffle of Brazil is prepared from the above mentioned condensed milk, butter, cocoa powder and then is sprinkled over with chocolate on top (Cardoso, 2016).

Spain

Spanish cuisine is a mixture of traditions and innovations. According to Gallo (2017), Spaniards were the first to use products imported from America, such as cocoa and coffee. Countless numbers of recipes of traditional Spanish dishes have been passed on for many centuries, including the ones of local monastic recipes. Spaniards are a very social nation and love to have a good time both when eating and afterwards. As Randolph (2018) pointed out, La Sobremesa is the time spent around the table after lunch or dinner, talking to the people you shared the meal with; time to digest and savour food and friendship. One of the most famous sweet desserts is undoubtedly churros. The dough for churros is pushed into boiling oil from a tube with its ending shaped like a star. This frying technique gives the pastry its golden colour. It is eaten with sugar and cinnamon or dipped in / poured over with hot chocolate sauce (Gallo, 2017). Another well-known Spanish dessert is flan caramel. It is a type of pudding made of eggs, milk and sugar. The caramel sauce is poured into a mould before the custard base is added. It is usually prepared using bain-marie on a stovetop or in the oven in a water bath. After taking the dessert out, it is turned and served cold with caramel sauce on top. Its texture is gelatinous, soft and creamy (Abd El-Fattah et al., 2019; Davidson, 1999). A very similar type of Spanish pudding is crema Catalana; however, the surface is powdered with sugar that is left to caramelize, so it creates a solid layer of crust on top. As the name suggests, its origin is in Catalonia. In fact, crema Catalana is one of the oldest desserts in Europe. It resembles a French dessert crème brûlée, which is more famous globally, even though it is an adaptation of the former. The custard of crema Catalana is thickened with egg yolk and cornstarch, while the French version of crème brûlée uses cream and the whole egg. Another difference is in the baking procedure. Crema Catalana is slowly cooked over the fire using an incandescent iron grill pan, while crème brûlée is finished with a bain-marie in the oven. Crema Catalana is traditionally served on a terracotta dish at room temperature. (Gallo, 2017; Las Delicias, 2019). Below are not too well-known desserts to the general public, but essential pieces in Spanish gastronomy. Tarta de Santiago is a typical Galician almond cake. It is still offered these days to pilgrims on the Way of Saint James as it was done during the Middle Ages when this recipe originated (Gallo, 2017). Even though the origin of this following dessert is Arabic, it is popularly consumed in Spain too. Paparajotes is an elegant and sweet-smelling dessert made from lemon leaf dough. The fried leaves are covered with sugar, and they go exceptionally well with a glass of Anisette liquor (Gallo, 2017).

At first, Mantecados de Estepa, a traditional Sevillan dessert, was produced in monasteries in the 16th century. The dessert is composed of almonds, flour, shortening and sugar mixed with significantly pronounced flavours such as cinnamon, coconut, hazelnut and cocoa. These sweets are preserved in cardboard boxes that are works of art on their own (Gallo, 2017).

Arnadí is a typical Valencian Easter dessert similar to a pudding. It is prepared from pumpkin, eggs, almonds, lemon and cinnamon. It is usually paired and consumed with a glass of Muscat wine (Gallo, 2017).

France

French culinary traditions consist of countless variations of dishes and flavours. The local cuisine is commonly referred to as "cuisine du terroir", and the modern temporary cooking style is known as "nouvelle cuisine". France is also famous for its abundance of elegant desserts (Gallo, 2017). In the 19th century, the nationalization of French cuisine came through its textualization in cookbooks and literary works. The dishes inscribed in them were culturally comprehensible and gastronomically pleasing. It is worth mentioning an essential persona in the French culinary world that lived at that time, Chef Escoffier. He was the first person who decided to unify somehow or codify the French cuisine. Because of him, France gained its prestigious reputation in the gastronomic world (Tebben, 2015; Gallo, 2017). Dessert course carries a heavy cultural load in France. We may find a long list of sweet meals invented in France. One of the most well-known desserts is crème brûlée. As mentioned, and described above, it is a vanilla-flavoured custard similar to crema Catalana. Another very famous sweetmeats are macarons. These little mussel-like sweets are made from egg whites, almond flour and sugar. The shells of the macarons are filled with cream, ganache or fruit jams. There is an abundance of filling flavours to choose from (Hermé, 2011; Gallo, 2017).

Soufflé is a chocolate-type dessert. Many think it requires a professional set of skills to make it, but it can be mastered by anyone who can cook simple dishes. The main principle is that the batter rises significantly when it is placed in the oven due to the number of egg whites used in the preparation. The egg whites need to get a heat shock, which makes the dessert expand considerably. Soufflé is always served hot right from the oven (Waldo, 1990). Another national dish is crêpes. They are a type of thin pancakes usually made from wheat flour. The origin of crêpes is in Bretagne, a region in the northwest of France. However, their consumption is nowadays widespread in the whole of France. Crêpes are served with various fillings or even powdered with sugar or flambéed as crêpes Suzette. A trendy version is a combination of salted caramel. In its true sense, salted caramel is a sauce made from caramel, cream and a pinch of salt from salt plains of Guérande. It presents a perfect addition to pies, ice creams, or cookies. The salty version of crêpes is called galettes. They are usually made from buckwheat flour and are filled with ham, cheese and eggs. However, you may find other and more elaborate variations. They are folded into a rectangle (Clay, 2007; Gallo, 2017).

A signature pastry that comes to mind as one of the first is a croissant. It falls into a category called viennoiserie, which is, in essence, baked goods made from a yeast-leavened dough or puff pastry. Viennoiseries are typically eaten as snacks or at breakfast. Among viennoiseries is classed for example brioche, pain au chocolat, or chausson aux pommes. There are varieties of croissants with chocolate fillings, cream, raisins or jam. However, a common misconception is that croissants come from France, when in fact, their origin is in Vienna, Austria (Gallo, 2017).

Following is an additional list of other well-known French desserts that are worth mentioning:

- Beignets à Éclairs- nicknamed "a coffer with treasure", are made from pâte à choux, where the basis is from flour and eggs. They are either round or oval-shaped and are filled with whatever cream you like (Gallo, 2017).
- Tarte Tatin - is a baked pie filled with caramel, sprinkled with apples and turned upside down. It is named after sisters Tatin, who invented it (Gallo, 2017).
- Mousse au Chocolat - is an unbaked chocolate foam (Gallo, 2017).
- Le gâteau St-Honoré - its name was derived from the French patron saint of bakers and pastry chefs Saint Honoré (d. 600 AD). The base is made from puff pastry (or in French "pâte feuilletée") that is covered with a layer of pâte à choux. It is then decorated with profiteroles on top made from pâte à choux. They are filled with cream and dipped in caramel (Prichep, 2012).

- Pain d'epices - a traditional Christmas dessert that comes from Alsace. It is something in between bread and plum pie. It is spiced with green anise, cloves, ginger and cardamom (Gallo, 2017).
- Pain perdu (commonly known as French toast) - represents a French breakfast component. It can be made both as a sweet and salty version. It is a white bread soaked in eggs, fried in a pan, seasoned and decorated independently (Gallo, 2017; Pohlreich, 2016).

Italy

In Italy, people's lives revolve very much around gastronomy. It is nothing unusual to get a glass of wine or a cup of coffee when you randomly bump into a friend or acquaintance. People gather very often to share a gastronomic experience while discussing their lives. Piras (2008) compares Italian gastronomy to a table with four legs. Regional multiformity, high quality of products and tradition comprise the three legs, which provide a rich culinary experience. However, the table cannot stand without its fourth leg- which is meant to represent a typical Italian attitude towards gastronomy. In Italy, food preparation, consumption, gourmandise, and culinary are synonyms for pure pleasure (Piras, 2008). A typical Italian dessert with a coffee flavour that is not baked is tiramisù. It is made from ladyfingers dipped in a solution of coffee and Amaretto. They are layered with a mixture of Mascarpone, eggs and sugar. It is then sprinkled over with cocoa powder. The dessert's origin is subject to dispute between Italian regions Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia (Piras, 2008; Ridi, 2010). Panna Cotta, which is a cooked cream, is a well-known dessert worldwide, and it is easy to prepare. However, it is necessary to use a high-quality cream. Panna Cotta is a typical dessert for the whole North of Italy, primarily because milk has been processed there for a long time. When making Panna Cotta, only three ingredients are used- gelatine, whipping cream and sugar (Piras, 2008). Another dessert that is connected with Italy is creamy, frozen gelato. We may find variations like parfait, sorbet, sherbet or ice cream bomb. The most profound difference that distinguishes sorbet from regular dairy gelato is that the main ingredient used is sweet fruit juice, sparkling wine or wine. It has a water base, not a dairy one. Concerning the texture, it is also lighter. To achieve an even more delicate texture, it is recommended to put in whipped egg whites. Sorbet is often served in between dishes when feasting. Another variation is sherbet, which differs from sorbet in having the fruit mixed with a dairy product instead of having a water base. The gelato is not served wholly frozen because its aroma starts to release right before the melting (Piras, 2008; Gallo, 2017). There are various opinions on where and by whom the ice cream was invented. There is evidence that a frozen dessert, flavoured ice to be precise, was firstly introduced by Chinese people in approximately 3000 B.C. Whether it was artificially made snow with fruit juice or milk and sugar remains unknown. This invention was then spread through traders to Europe. However, this theory contradicts a second opinion, which is more acknowledged by the public. Although there is no verified evidence, it is said that Marco Polo brought the discovery from China to Italy during his travels in the thirteenth century. Since then, ice cream's popularity has gradually grown (Migoya, 2008). Biscotti (biscuits) are generally very popular in Italy. You can find a variety of different types at the local bakeries. If you order an espresso in a bar in the northern part of Italy, you typically get an almond biscuit on the side. Such biscuits are called Lazzaroni A Amaretti, and they have a long tradition over there (Piras, 2008). Lastly, a classic Sicilian treat named Cannoli presents an important constituent among Italian desserts. The richness of this pastry is reached through creamy ricotta and zesty lemon curd (Piras, 2008).

Greece

Cooking has always been taken very seriously in Greece. In ancient history, if you wanted to be a chef, you had to attend a gastronomy school. Gastronomy even had its own Goddess, Adefagia. Up to the present, Greeks like to sit around the table and share a meal (Gallo, 2017). A crucial component of many Greek desserts is a Filo (/ phyllo) dough. It was initially brought to Greece from Turkey. It is an extremely thin dough made only from water and flour, and it may be used both in salty and sweet dishes. One of the traditional desserts where this dough is used is Portokalopita. It is an old-fashioned orange cake, dipped in syrup once baked and served with yoghurt. Even though it may not be generally perceived as a dessert by itself, a typical "giaoúrti" is also considered a dessert in Greece. Characteristic features of this Greek yoghurt are its thickness and density reminiscent of cheese. It is mainly served with honey and walnuts (Gallo, 2017). Another typical pastry where Filo dough is used is Galaktoboureko. It is filled with semolina porridge wrapped up in many layers of filo dough. An orange and lemon peel give this dessert its characteristic aroma. A very similar pastry to

Galaktoboureko that is often consumed for breakfast is Bougatsa. It consists of a sheet of crispy filo filled with semolina cream cooked with milk. A reinvented version is usually served with a caramel-flavoured ice cream (Etcheverria, 2014; Gallo, 2017).

Although both Baklava and Chalva have different origins, they are connected with Greece. They are now widely consumed in the countries where the Ottoman Empire used to reign in the past. Baklava is a pastry made of several layers of filo dough, filled with walnuts and flavoured with syrup or honey. Chalva is a very solid sweet, with the prevalent ingredient being sugar, which is mixed with a plant infusion and a paste from sesame seeds. It is often flavoured with vanilla, pistachios, chocolate or almonds (Roden, 1986). Also, a worth-mentioning pie is Sicomada. It is a pastry typical for the island of Corfu. It gives a pleasant fragrance and rich aroma from the mixture of dried figs, walnuts, almonds, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, orange peel, grapes and a local spirit Ouzo (Gallo, 2017).

United Kingdom

British cuisine differs depending on the region as it has many varieties. It is distinguished in broader English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish cooking categories. Each has developed its local dishes, and that goes for desserts too, for example, Yorkshire pudding, Welsh cakes, Cranachan (Hix, 2006). Before diving into the breakdown of traditional desserts, it is essential to mention a closely connected tradition to sweets consumption. Afternoon tea, commonly known as TeaTea at 5, originated in the 19th century. Back then, English people were not used to having lunch. A duchess from Bedford firstly introduced it. She often suffered from hunger in the afternoon. Once, she asked her house servant to bring her something to ease the pain. The maid brought her TeaTea and cookies. It did not take long, and this custom caught on throughout all social classes. Nowadays, the tradition has remained. However, the Tea is served between 3:30 pm and 5 pm, and people usually drink black TeaTea with sugar, milk and small sandwiches together with scones and small tarts (Gallo, 2017). One of the most known desserts from the United Kingdom is considered pudding. The nature of pudding varies depending on where it is made. In its traditional meaning, a pudding is a simple custard-like concoction. However, it can refer to any sweet dish consumed after the main course in England. A speciality, or unusual version of pudding, is a soft dessert made from butter and bread dipped in milk, decorated with various ingredients ranging from conserved fruits to caramel sauce. Another famous kind of pudding is Yorkshire pudding. It is baked in the oven and typically served on Sunday's lunch. As the name suggests, traditional Christmas pudding is connected with the Christmas holidays. However, it is consumed on a Sunday before Advent, around the end of November. Christmas pudding is a dark-coloured, sticky, and dense sponge. It is made of mixed dried fruit, apple, candied fruit peel, and citrus zests. Its deep and complex flavour is reached through Brandy and spices addition (Gallo, 2017; Lemm, 2021).

A very popular, and at the same time, easy to make British pie crumbles. It allegedly emerged in England during World War II. in a period of shortage of food. As there were not enough ingredients at disposal for traditional pies, English people decided to leave only the fruit filling, sprinkle it with streusel from eggs, flour and butter, and then bake it together. Later on, Americans grew very fond of it too and crumble even substituted their favourite apple pie. Crumble is often served with ice cream on the side (Gallo, 2017; Gourmet Academy, 2021).
Trifle constitutes a favourite option for Anglo-Saxons. It is a creamy dessert with many layers. The base is made from a sponge cake; then, after baking, it is spread over with cream and decorated with meringue kisses from egg yolks and sugar and with fruits (Gallo, 2017).

A typical English dessert is scones. To be exact, Scotland is credited for their invention. Scones are small, soft-baked goods made from oatmeal, wheat flour or prepared in sheet pans. They are often served with sour cream or jam, and are regularly consumed at afternoon tea, so-called "Cream Tea" (Goldman, 2007; Gallo, 2017).
Last but not least, a famous cake consumed in the United Kingdom is an upside-down cake that can be made with various types of fruit such as pineapple or apple (Gallo, 2017).

Czech Republic

Due to the country's geographic location and its history, we can notice some similarities in the cuisine with its neighbouring countries such as Germany and Austria. One of the characteristics of traditional desserts is the extensive use of poppy seeds, which is quite unusual compared to other countries. Poppy seeds may be used both in sweet as well as salty dishes. They were firstly introduced by Celts and were/are favoured for their slightly calming effects (Gallo, 2017).

One of the first Czech sweet desserts that comes to mind is bábovka. Even though the origin is supposedly in Germany, known as Gugelhupf, bábovka is very often consumed in all countries of Central Europe (the Czech Republic, Poland, Austria, Slovakia, southern parts of Germany. Ingredients-wise it may be compared to a French type of dessert called Baba au rhum. In the Czech Republic, bábovka is usually made in a two-coloured version. The dark layer is enriched with cocoa (Goldstein, 2015). Staročeský trdelník has gained enormous popularity, especially in recent years, and many tourists have linked it with Prague. However, its origin does not come from the Czech Republic at all. It was first introduced in Romania in Transylvania, where it has been produced for many centuries. Its production then expanded so far as Slovakia – Moravia borders. Trdelník is a hollow tube-shaped sweet dough prepared over the open fire on a turning bar and then traditionally coated in sugar. However, you may find variations with ice cream fillings, whipping cream, or fruits in today's market (Čechová, 2018). Větrník and věneček are known and favoured by many Czechs. They are very similar but only differ in small details. Both desserts are filled with cream made of egg yolks. In věneček, however, you add whipping cream. Větrník, on the other hand, is flavoured with caramel cream and then is also coated in caramel. The ancestors of both sweets may be considered profiteroles. The dough is made from cream puff pastry/choux pastry, and its production is time-consuming and demanding (Pilátová, 2021).

Rakvička represents another popular dessert, behind a display case in every Czech cake shop. Its name is derived from the shape of the form used in its baking. The dough is again made from egg yolks. Rakvička is often served with whipped cream, be it classic white or Parisian cream (Pilátová, 2021).
Typical Czech sweet meals include:

- Kynuté koláče - are round-shaped pies from yeast dough. They cannot be missing at weddings, various celebrations, or balls. Their fillings are incredibly diverse, let it be cream cheese, poppy seeds, plum butter, or jams from multiple fruits (Fresh.iprima.cz, 2021).
- Frgále - are big round-shaped pies with a diameter of even 30 cm, traditionally made in the Valašsko region. They are made from yeast leavened dough, the filling may consist of various flavors just like kynuté koláče above and are sprinkled with streusel (Eur-lex.europa.eu, Regulation n. 1151/2012 o režimech jakosti zemědělských produktů a potravin, 2013).
- Mrkvance z Polné - are traditional baked goods made from yeast dough or puff pastry called "plundrové těsto". There are a lot of spices used in the dough- fennel, cinnamon, lemon peel, anise, etc. The tiny buns from the hand-kneaded dough are filled with carrots and powdered with poppy seeds (Mesto-polna.cz, 2015).

Germany and Austria

The exciting thing is that in Austria, some sweet dishes may be served even as a main course and at the same time be considered a dessert. It concerns, for example, fruit-filled dumplings. As mentioned above, the cuisine of Central European countries is very similar, and it intermingles. An example of such dessert is Apfelstrudel. It originally comes from Austria, but it is widely consumed in Germany, the Czech Republic and other neighbouring countries. It is made from pulled dough, consisting of many thin layers filled with apples, sugar, cinnamon, raisins, and sometimes walnuts. It may also be flavoured with rum. The strudel is made in other sweet variants (with cream cheese, poppy seeds etc.), or even in salty versions, such as spinach (Gundel, 1992; Gallo, 2017).

A typical Austrian pastry is Kipferl, commonly known as a croissant. Croissant does not have their origin in France. Its place of birth is Vienna, as Kipferl is believed to be the ancestor of today's croissant. Kipferl is a crescent-shaped sweet, usually baked plain, but maybe enriched with chocolate or jam fillings. Nowadays, it presents a famous morning pastry (Bakersmaison.com).

Other typical German / Austrian desserts include:

- Sacher cake is a Viennese speciality. It is an original chocolate cake smeared with apricot jam and chocolate icing (Sacher.com).
- Schwarzwald cake, or Black Forest Cake, is a multilayered chocolate dessert consisting of whipped cream frosting and sour cherries, and the base is made from sponge cake drizzled with brandy. Although it bears the same name as the mountainous region of the Black Forest, the cake's origin does not lie there. The name is derived from a speciality cherry-based liqueur of that region used for the cake's production (Gallo, 2017; Schmalbruch, 2016).
- Krapfen- is a doughnut made from fried yeast dough, filled with jam or cream, which is powdered with sugar (Gallo, 2017).
- Gugelhupf, or in Czech "bábovka"- A previously mentioned Gugelhupf is a traditional Christmas dessert in Germany. Some recipes also include raisins or candied fruits (Gallo, 2017).
- Linzer torte - a pie typical for the region of Linz. The base is made from hazelnuts and cinnamon, and the filling consists of jam from red berries (Gallo, 2017).
- Dampfnudeln - comes from the region of Pfalz. It is a bit sweet dumpling made from yeast dough cooked in steam. It is served with vanilla cream poured over or with sauce zabaione (Gallo, 2017).
- Lebkuchen from Norimberk - is a type of gingerbread consisting of candied lemon, anise, cloves, cinnamon and cardamom. It is always beautifully decorated and often prepared around Christmas time (Gallo, 2017).
- Kasekuchen - is a cheesecake from quark, cheese made from soured milk and cream (Gallo, 2017).

Discussion & Conclusion

The paper describes the traditional sweet desserts and sweet meals in chosen European countries with the impact on the dessert development and influence on the other societies' sweet-eating customs. Some of the traditional sweet desserts from different (mainly southern) countries are very similar in method of preparation and in used ingredients. For example, Portuguese Pastel de Nata is similar to Spanish Flan Caramel. The difference is that Pastel de Nata is a puff pastry filled with milk or cream egg yolk custard the other two desserts are only made using milk egg yolk custard. Another example of very similar desserts is Spanish crema Catalana and French Crème Brûlée. The only difference in these two desserts is that Spanish crema Catala is a thick custard made out of milk, egg yolks and corn starch and traditional French Crème Brûlée consists of cream and eggs. One of the well-known desserts from the United Kingdom that is very similar to custard-based desserts (crema Catalana, Flan Caramel, Crème Brûlée or Pastel de Nata) is considered pudding. The nature of pudding varies depending on where it is made. One of UK's favourite desserts is the upside-down cake. It is probably originated in France where it is called Tarte Tatin. Tart Tatin was first created in 1880's by accident but quickly become popular (www.tartetatin.org 2021; García-Segovia et al. 2012). Some sources mention that the English version of the upside-down cake was firstly introduced in 1924 in Seattle charity cookbook under the name Pineapple Glacé (McDowell 2020). Tarte Tatin is originally made only with puff pastry and apples, but the English version, as McDowell (2020) mentioned, of this tart is usually made with basic butter-vanilla cake sponge and pineapple. Only European country that differs from the other is Greece. Desserts and sweet meals usually do not have any similarities to other mentioned in chapter above. The main reason is probably that Greece had been occupied by the Ottomans for nearly 400 years (Glueck 2005). We can find other similarities in traditional desserts and sweet meals in Czech and German-Austrian sweet desserts and meals. But to compare these three countries, more research is needed to find more information about Czech traditional sweet desserts and meals. It is difficult to find relevant sources about the origin of traditional sweet deserts and meals in Czech Republic.

To date, European traditional desserts in general have not been the subject of extensive research in food history and this area of gastronomy is often neglected in the academic literature. Thus, further exploration is needed to ascertain the academic and public awareness and knowledge of traditional desserts.

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