

HARMONIZATION OF SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING SYSTEM IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

Lahorka Halmi

Institution awarding the PhD Degree

University of Rijeka
Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality
Management, Croatia

PhD Programme

Management of Sustainable
Development

Supervisor

Milena Peršić, PhD,
Senior Research Scientist
University of Rijeka, Faculty of Tourism and
Hospitality Management, Croatia

Co-Supervisor

Katarina Poldrugovac, PhD,
Assistant Professor
University of Rijeka, Faculty of Tourism and
Hospitality Management, Croatia

Date of defense 30 September 2020

SUMMARY

Purpose

Sustainability reporting is becoming an increasingly prevalent form of both reporting of and a sophisticated way of suggesting a business entity's sustainable approach to generating profit. Although being relatively a new form of reporting, sustainability reporting has become somewhat prestigious form of communicating with stakeholders. In certain cases, sustainability reporting has become a necessity by law, yet it is not a widely practised form of reporting.

Such cases are becoming even more widespread worldwide, with perhaps the Directive 2014/95/EU by the European Commission of the European Union (EU) most widely known. By the Directive effective from 2014, all entities in the EU starting on 1st January 2017 are to report on non-financial information, such as environmental, social and employee matters, as well as respect for human rights, anti-corruption, bribery matters, and other topics related to the impact an entity generates in its natural, social and economic environment. As a member state, Croatia has incorporated provisions of the Directive into its national Accounting Act, thus requiring all entities with more than the average number of 500 employees on their balance sheet data, a criterion stated in the Directive 2014/95/EU, to report on non-financial information, while it is encouraged that other entities should welcome and abide by this Directive as well.

This requirement means that business entities should be prepared to disclose non-financial information on a timely basis of their own choice, but to do it regularly, just as it is being reported on financial matters in highly sophisticated and widely familiar financial statements. This requirement which was defined by the Directive and triggered the research questions of this thesis, aims to understand the level of readiness of business entities to meet this requirement.

The literature review suggests that the application of sustainability principles in the internal processes impacts the quality of information disclosed in (external) sustainability reports. This leads to a research question concerning the methods used by business entities, i.e. practices that are the results of application of certain accounting methods (*de facto* harmonisation), as opposed to *de jure* accounting harmonisation, e.g. accounting methods set by law and/or accountancy profession. The purpose of this research is to examine the state of sustainability reporting in the hotel industry from the point of the *de facto* accounting harmonisation, thus assessing the level of preparedness of hotel business entities to comply with the law requirement defined by the Directive.

Methodology

The hypothesis of the research refers to correlation between the application of sustainability principles (environmental and social) in internal processes and the quality of sustainability reports. The research divides *de facto* into internal and external harmonisation. Such approach to the research requires a mixed methods research design, where qualitative and quantitative methods are sequentially and equivalently applied, meaning they are afforded equal weighting, with one method preceding the other.

The external *de facto* harmonisation focuses on (available) external sustainability reports disclosed by the world's leading ten hotel groups (Marriott International, Accor Hotels, Wyndham Hotels and Resorts, Hilton, Hyatt Hotels Corporation, Jin Jiang International Hotel Management Company, Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts, Melia Hotels International, Intercontinental Hotel Group, NH Hotel Group) that were available for five reporting periods. The internal *de facto* harmonisation focuses on the internal processes in the hotel entities, which data was gathered by an online questionnaire e-mailed to large and medium-sized hotel entities (all having 50 or more employees) that are registered in the Republic of Croatia.

The external *de facto* harmonisation is explored by quantitative methods, with data being gathered by content analysis of sustainability reports and measured by a harmonisation index. The internal *de facto* harmonisation is explored by qualitative methods, with data from the questionnaire being analysed by the use of descriptive and non-parametric (Kendall W test of concordance) statistics. The hypotheses were tested by Spearman's correlation coefficient. The data analysis did not provide statistically significant correlation between the application of sustainability principles and the quality of sustainability reports, thus not supporting the stated hypotheses.

Findings

The research results reveal very low levels of both external and internal *de facto* harmonisations. Also, very few environmental and social indicators moderately correlate with the quality of sustainability reports. Due to the experiences of using the Uniform System of Accounts for the Lodging Industry (USALI), it was expected that the level of *de facto* harmonisation among hotel groups and entities would be somewhat higher. The reason to consider USALI standards is that these are worldwide recognised standards used in the hotel industry practice for financial segment reporting, even in Croatia, thus making it an excellent starting point for creating a quality internal non-financial reporting, not only for internal but also for external users (stakeholders).

These research results reveal that the hotel industry is aware of the importance of sustainability reporting and has been trying to implement it into its business, but the results also suggest the lack of support that comes from *de jure* harmonisation. Current trends in the *de jure* harmonisation suggest very different paths in sustainability reporting, depending upon the geographical area and the stakeholders in focus, resulting in quite different approaches to sustainability reporting, e.g. SASB Standards, GRI Standards, Integrated Reporting to name but a few. These research results suggest that *de facto* harmonisation to a certain degree may be correlated to and/or caused by the *de jure* harmonisation.

Major limitations of the research are evident in the analysis of both the external and internal harmonisations. Although ten of the world-leading hotel groups' sustainability reports have been analysed, their collection required a meticulous approach and a constant scrutiny as to which reports should and which reports should not be included in the research. In this process, one of the challenges to overcome was the different time frames of these reports (the hotel groups were both reporting on a different time basis and by different reporting frameworks) as well as the different reporting frameworks that were applied over the period (different versions of the GRI frameworks, UN Global Compact or the framework of their own choice and such like).

In general, there are very few sustainability reports available due to this being a relatively new kind of reporting. Although the biggest and the most significant hotel entities (hotel companies) in Croatia did fill out the questionnaire, the response rate was rather low, which also limited the research to the use of descriptive and non-parametric statistics. Even after the mandatory date for reporting on sustainability set by the Directive (entities with more than 500 employees), the number of these reports in Croatia did not increase simply because the majority of hotel entities in Croatia did not fall under this category, thus it not being mandatory to report on sustainability.

Generally speaking, at the moment there are not enough either sustainability reports or responses available from the hotel entities to perform any kind of multivariate analysis and to test the causal relations, and to discover the true nature of both the external and internal *de facto* harmonisation in the hotel industry.

A suggestion for further research is to find the most suitable way of upgrading current USALI Standards with environmental and social indicators, for these are a well-developed system in the field of internal financial reporting for internal users in the hotel industry, and as such could provide a methodological framework for improving sustainability reporting for internal and external users in the hotel industry.

Another suggestion for further research would be to assess the internal and external impacts that affect the quality of the disclosed sustainability reports. Due to the diversity the hotel processes even within one country, a suggestion is that future researches should include both quantitative and qualitative methodologies and methods in order to generate the indicators and other relevant specific information needed in sustainability reporting. While quantitative methodology reveals why something is happening, qualitative methodology reveals the answers as to how and why something is happening.

Regardless of the current situation, the history of the sustainability reporting development has proven that sustainability has been continuously evolving, suggesting it will continue this trend in the years to come. Yet, further evolution of this reporting system inevitably presumes a higher level of quality of these reports and information therein disclosed, meaning that now that some kind of framework for sustainability reporting has been established, the next focus ought to be on the quality of the information disclosed therein.

Another approach to consider in improving sustainability reporting is to motivate business entities to improve sustainability reporting “from the inside out”, meaning that management ought to be motivated to report on the impact the business has on the environment and society, not only because of the legislation or to meet yet another requirement to be present in certain areas (e.g. stock exchanges), but also because sustainability reporting provides better recognition among the stakeholders in the hotel industry, including employees, wider society, management and others. This could be done by recognising such efforts through national, international and industry rewards (e.g. The Tourism Flower – Quality for Croatia), which all could signify the level of commitment of a business entity towards the full and quality implementation of sustainability reporting system in their operations.

Originality of the research

The research results of this doctoral dissertation present a significant contribution to the science and practice of sustainability reporting. Based on a comprehensive analysis of theoretical knowledge, standards, regulations, and examples of good practice, two original models were developed, one for assessing the quality of sustainability reports, and the other one for assessing the degree of harmonization of non-financial reports in the hotel industry.

The need and approach to change the conventional accounting paradigm (financial reporting) are pointed out as a requirement to provide information for sustainable development that is relevant in the decision making process. Assessment of the quality of sustainability reporting of the world’s most successful hotel companies and the

practice of the Croatian hotel industry resulted in suggestions for improving *de facto* harmonization of the sustainability reporting system in the hotel industry.

By continually expanding the knowledge of this new accounting paradigm focused on providing and disclosing specific non-financial information relevant to the internal and external users, a gradual change will come to the ways of earning the profit, which is to include environmental and social issues as well. Achieving a higher quality level of sustainability reports and their greater usefulness requires better cooperation of hotel management with stakeholders and the community as a whole, including the development of a national system for stimulating and rewarding application of sustainability principle in everyday operations, with sustainability reports becoming a new approach to assessing competitiveness and market visibility based on sustainability principles.

Keywords sustainability reporting, sustainability accounting, hotel industry

Citation: Halmi, L. (2020), Harmonization of Sustainability Reporting System in the Hotel Industry, Doctoral Dissertation Summary, *Tourism and Hospitality Management*, Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 463-467.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT MODEL OF THE RELIGIOUS TOURISM DESTINATION

Tomislav Korov

Institution awarding the PhD Degree

University of Rijeka
Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality
Management, Croatia

Supervisor

Daniela Gračan, PhD, Full Professor
University of Rijeka, Faculty of Tourism and
Hospitality Management, Croatia

PhD Programme

Management of Sustainable Development

Date of defense 17 November 2020

SUMMARY

Purpose

Religion has always been an important part of human civilization and has largely determined its paths. When speaking of tourism, religion has been one of the oldest motives for traveling. That kind of traveling found its place in the complex mechanism of touristic migrations as a selective tourism type called religious or faith tourism.

Although Croatia as a country full of historical and art valuables has great potential for further religious tourism development, there is a lack of scientific and objective analysis of this specific area.

Like any other form of selective tourist offer, it is also required to manage religious tourism in order to ensure efficient and sustainable economic development. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the religious tourism destinations, to look at the parameters that influence the effective synergy of the religious tourism destination factors, and to consider the needs of guests - religious tourists, in order to ensure positive economic effects with sustainable development in the destinations. Accordingly, the focus of the planned research is to find an optimal model for strategic management of religious tourism destinations.

Methodology

Various different methods of scientific research and suitable combinations thereof are employed when conducting scientific research, formulating and presenting results relevant for the defence of a doctoral thesis.

For the *empirical part of the research*, a scientific model for the development of religious tourism was formulated and tested. Scientific research, formulation and presentation of research results in this doctoral dissertation has been accomplished by application of general methodological principles, commonly used in economic research. Acquired data has been analysed using *methods of descriptive and inferential statistics*. For the purpose of examining the sample of respondents that participated in conducted surveys, distributions according to gender, age groups, marital status, household income, employment status and degree of education have been determined. Distribution according to place of residence has also been determined for respondents who have gone on a religious journey at least once and responded to the survey. Distribution of respondents according to their application in describing the sample, *descriptive statistical methods* have been used to provide insight into research variables. For this purpose, three measures of central tendency (arithmetic mean, median and mode), as well as two measures of dispersion (standard deviation and interquartile range) have been calculated. Distribution of responses has also been presented by way of multiple bars. Considering that the responses were measured by ordinal scale, differences in evaluations and attitudes among individual groups have been analysed by means of nonparametric statistical tests. The Mann–Whitney test was used to test the significance of difference between two groups. The Kruskal–Wallis test was used to analyse differences between three or more groups. In cases where latter determined that there were at least two analysed groups with a significant difference, the Dunnin test was used for the purpose of their identification. It should be noted that empirical significance levels adjusted by Bonferroni correction are given alongside all Dunnin test results. Differences confirmed at a significance level below 5% were considered statistically significant for the purpose of this research. Statistical analysis of data was performed using statistical packages SPSS and Statistica, while graphical representations were generated using Microsoft Excel.

Findings

Two questionnaire surveys have been conducted for research purposes. A survey of attitudes of people who have gone on at least one religious journey or pilgrimage was conducted on a sample of 502 respondents, and a survey of attitudes and the level of involvement of local population in the management and application of sustainable tourism criteria in religious tourism destinations, as well as their level of satisfaction with the quality of living in the same observed religious destinations, was conducted by means of an online questionnaire, created using Google Forms, on a sample of 315 respondents. The survey was conducted in eleven selected religious destinations in the Republic of Croatia, namely: Ilača, Aljmaš, Slavonski Brod, Pleternica, Voćin, Ludbreg, Marija Bistrica, Krašić, Trsat, Sinj and Blato on the island of Korčula. The survey focused on the local population of a religious destination and on pilgrims, religious travellers and visitors of Croatian sanctuaries, keeping in mind the creation of a representative sample within the statistical dataset. The survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire in Croatian language.

Statistical data analysis has been performed on questionnaires collected from pilgrims and religious travellers in religious tourism destinations and the results are presented in this paper.

The results of conducted analyses of collected questionnaires show that the majority of residents of religious destinations have indicated a presence of unplanned tourism development within their destination and they predominantly agree with the assertion that unplanned tourism development has a negative impact on balanced economic and sustainable social development, which may lead to significant negative economic and social trends within their destination. It has been determined that local residents of religious destinations mostly agree that a synergetic effect of a religious destination's strategic management with the local community and higher-ranked church officials has an impact on the efficiency of strategic management, whereas pilgrims and religious travellers somewhat agree with this statement. The majority of residents who live in religious tourism destinations, including those involved in the hospitality and tourism industries, believe that religious tourism generates positive effects on their communality and agree that religious tourism benefits the development of their community in different ways. Almost 90% of respondents agree that tourism creates new job opportunities for the local population and contributes to youth employment, while over 90% of respondents agree that tourism has a significant impact on the town's aesthetics. Almost 88% of respondents agree that tourism increases sales of local products, thereby improving the quality of life of local residents through the development of events and infrastructure, while more than three quarters of respondents agree that tourism raises the level of environmental awareness and fosters conservation and renovation of cultural and sacral heritage. While local residents somewhat agreed with most assertions concerning the negative effects of tourism, such as that tourism effects an increase in the price of goods and services, causes an increase in number of seasonal workers, reduction in the number of permanently employed persons and precipitates an abundant production of waste, the majority of residents disagreed with the assertion that tourism development bears a negative impact on the development of other economic sectors. Survey respondents agreed with most of the statements evaluating the importance of factors which impact the defining of a tourism product of a religious tourism destination, such as statements concerning the spiritual significance of a religious destination (67%), the spiritual need of an individual worshipper (77%), and religious destination safety (64%), while only one factor was deemed irrelevant for the definition of a religious tourism destination's tourism product by the majority of respondents (63%), namely the importance of the opportunity of travelling with pets. Pilgrims and religious travellers somewhat agreed with most of the claims regarding the impact of the parish community on the volume of tourists at a religious tourism destination, whereas they mostly agreed with the assertion that the proactivity of the parish priest and his ability to motivate parishioners significantly affects the number of pilgrimages and the number of pilgrims. Residents of a religious destination have indicated a lack of synergy among religious tourism stakeholders in the process of making decisions on the development of religious tourism and for the most part agree (84%) that successful tourism management of their destination requires strategic planning with the broader local community and involvement of all religious tourism stakeholders in tourism development decision-making, which is functionally tied to success in properly drawing up and implementing a sustainable strategic plan of development of the destination.

In-depth interviews have also been conducted for the purpose of the doctoral dissertation. The interviews were formulated as semi-structured and were conducted with priests who manage church shrines at six religious destinations, namely: Aljmaš, Ilača, Voćin, Ludbreg, Marija Bistrica and Trsat. The second part of the research also involved in-depth interviews, but with directors of the tourist associations of the city of Rijeka, Vukovar-Srijem County, Marija Bistrica, Ludbreg, Osijek-Baranja County, and Sinj. In-depth interview contributors were selected for being the most competent representatives of their institutions, able to provide answers to questions posed within the scope of the subject being analysed, and for having the most practical experience in dealing with the aforementioned issues, thus they were the most relevant persons to provide answers.

Upon analysing the responses obtained through in-depth interviews conducted with priests, church sanctuary managers and tourist association directors, one can conclude that all research questions have been answered, stating that religious tourism in Croatian destinations is not sufficiently valued, that insufficient attention is paid to ensure sustainable development of religious tourism in religious destinations and noting a lack of mutual cooperation between tourist associations and managers of sanctuaries, who are the key stakeholders of religious tourism in religious destinations.

A proposal of a model for strategic management of a religious tourism destination is presented at the end of the paper. A vital part of the model involves the establishment of a strategic management structure for a religious destination which should certainly be unbiased and have executive power. Strategic management structure for a religious destination established in this manner should certainly be local enough to involve all key religious tourism stakeholders, such as representatives of local government, the church institution, the private sector, the local population, associations, pilgrims, religious travellers and tourists as key stakeholders of sustainable tourism development, encouraging them to cooperate in matters of sustainable tourist development of a religious destination. Such a structure should be strong enough and large enough so that its successfully established communication and coordination can determine a common development strategy and other instruments of religious tourist destination management which are founded on balanced principles of sustainable tourism development.

Originality

The scientific contribution of the doctoral dissertation is polysemantic. It can be viewed in the determination of certain economic rules, but also in the theoretical and applicative sense, which is evident in the presented results and conclusions of conducted research on selected religious destinations in the Republic of Croatia.

In the *theoretical sense*, the contribution to the economic science is evident in the comprehensive and detailed overview of extensive, primarily foreign, scientific literature based on which key concepts pertaining to the topic of this paper have been systematized and defined. The analysis of reviewed scientific literature enabled the interpretation of important economic patterns, which emphasises the theoretical contribution of this paper. Unfortunately, domestic authors do not pursue the observed subject matter to a sufficient degree, and thus domestic literature dealing with the subject matter of this doctoral dissertation – religious tourism – is lacking, so this doctoral dissertation has at least partly

filled the existing void in domestic scientific and technical literature. The paper's scientific contribution in the theoretical sense can be expressed through better understanding of the role and importance of sacral heritage and religious events on the successfulness of a religious tourism destination, as well as through cognitive facts resulting from research which can serve as a basis for defining models for religious tourism events founded on sacral heritage that can significantly impact the improvement of level of satisfaction of pilgrims, religious travellers, tourists and the local population with the ultimate goal of improvement of the economic impact on the religious destination, but also the economy as a whole. The theoretical impact is emphasised through the use of a valid and reliable measurement instrument (survey questionnaire and in-depth interview) used in the collection of primary data, so the scientific contribution is also emphasised through the applicability of statistical methods in the analysis of research data.

Based on analyses of conducted research, by implementing the research results in its development strategies, planning and establishment of a religious and tourism events offering focusing on religion, culture, tradition and sacral heritage while ensuring sustainability, the management of a tourist destination can devise and implement models of religious and tourism events in accordance with the requirements of pilgrims, religious travellers, tourists and the religious destination itself.

In the *applicative sense* of the scientific contribution, research results can aid the management and all stakeholders in religious destinations, serving as guidelines for strategic management, planning and implementation of tourism events based on religion, culture, tradition and sacral heritage, which will have a significant impact on the preservation of originality of culture, tradition and sacral heritage and its promotion on the tourism market, thus creating a unique religious tourism product and ensuring the recognisability of a religious destination.

So with the approach of strategic management of a religious tourism destination, development of religious tourism going forward must be founded on criteria of sustainable development, i.e. on development of religious tourism which caters to the needs of attending pilgrims, religious travellers, tourists and the domestic population, satisfying economic, social, environmental and aesthetic requirements of the society, at the same time preserving religious and cultural identity and environmental processes, as well as resources of future development. Significant economic and non-economic effects will be achieved through sustainable development of the religious tourism offering and strategic management of a tourism destination.

Keywords religious tourism, sustainable development, tourist destination, strategic management, destination management

Citation: Korov, T. (2020), Strategic management model of the Religious tourism destination, Doctoral Dissertation Summary, *Tourism and Hospitality Management*, Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 468-472.

MODELLING INTENTIONS FOR ONLINE RESERVATIONS IN HOTEL INDUSTRY

Jelena Dorčić

Institution awarding the PhD Degree

University of Rijeka
Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality
Management, Croatia

Supervisor

Suzana Marković, PhD, Full Professor
University of Rijeka, Faculty of Tourism and
Hospitality Management, Croatia

PhD Programme

Management of Sustainable Development

Date of defense 25 November 2020

SUMMARY

Purpose

Over the last twenty years, information and communication technologies have completely changed the way hotel companies do business and the behaviour of tourists. The Internet has become the most important sales channel in the hotel industry, and tourists have become "experts" in searching, communicating and buying tourism products and services. The importance of understanding the online tourists' behaviour is extremely important for hotel companies, travel agencies, tourist destinations, but also for other stakeholders in the tourism sector. Online tourist behaviour is an extremely complex research area in which both the tourists and the environment itself are changing extremely rapidly. A number of interrelated factors influence the online tourist behaviour. Online reservations are one of the fastest growing segments of online sales. The two main channels of online hotel sales are online travel agencies (OTA) and directly through hotel websites. Over the last decade, these two distribution channels have been fighting for market share and despite all the efforts of hotel companies to increase direct bookings, OTA still holds a dominant position in the market. The reason for this may be that OTA invests considerable resources in managing and improving the online customer experience, while hotels use their websites primarily to present hotel content and information.

A comprehensive literature review has revealed a lack of studies investigating the relationship between website quality, online customer experience and booking intentions, which are the main research concepts of this doctoral thesis. The main objectives of the doctoral thesis are: to examine the existing theoretical knowledge in the field of the observed research concepts, to develop a conceptual model to measure the influence of website quality on online experience and booking intentions, to investigate

the reliability and validity of the model on two independent samples, and to test the proposed hypotheses.

Existing studies have largely concentrated on examining customers' online travel purchases based on theories and models that use a cognitive approach to predict customer behaviour (such as the Technology Acceptance Model, the Theory of Reasoned Action, the Theory of Planned Behaviour). These have often been criticised for not providing sufficient theoretical support to explain the affective side of customer behaviour. Recently, Moon et al. (2017) stated that researchers could use the stimulus-organism-response model (S-O-R) to better predict and explain the intentions of online shopping. Therefore, based on the relevant literature on tourism and consumer behaviour, this study proposes a conceptual model based on the S-O-R paradigm (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) to measure the influence of website quality on the online customer experience and future booking intentions.

The stimulus in the proposed conceptual model is the website quality. The model proposes that website quality will positively and significantly influence the cognitive and affective online customer experience (organism), which will ultimately have a positive and significant impact on future booking intentions.

Methodology

In order to test the proposed research hypotheses, an empirical study based on primary data was conducted using the online survey method. The questionnaire was based on a comprehensive review of previous research on website quality, online customer experience and behavioural intentions. The questionnaire was designed in English, Croatian, German and Italian language. In order to check the content validity, clarity and comprehensibility of the questionnaire as well as to determine the exact time needed to complete it, a pre-test of the questionnaire was conducted on a sample of six members of the academic and four members of the non-academic community.

The open source application Ika (<http://english.ika.si/>) was used to create the questionnaire and conduct the research. A convenience sample was used, but in order to reach a larger number of respondents, a snowball sampling was also applied, where the contacted respondents were asked to forward the e-mail to friends and acquaintances to fill out the questionnaire. In addition, links to the survey were posted on social networks and professional research groups, as well as on websites specializing in online research. The survey was conducted from mid-April to the end of September 2018. During this period, 3869 respondents approached the questionnaire, while 833 respondents completed the questionnaire. With screening question whether they had booked hotel accommodation online in the last 12 months, 159 questionnaires were excluded from further analysis. When the database was checked, 127 questionnaires were identified with more than 15% of the missing values, and according to the recommendation of Hair et al. (2017), such questionnaires are not be included in the further analysis. Finally, the sample of the empirical study consisted of 547 respondents, which corresponds to a response rate of 14.15%.

An empirical analysis was carried out using univariate (average scores, coefficient of skewness and kurtosis for all variables), bivariate (Mann-Whitney U test) and multivariate (partial least squares structural equation modelling method; PLS-SEM) non-parametric statistical methods.

Findings

In the sample, 381 (69.65 %) of the respondents made their last reservation through the OTA website, while 166 (30.68 %) of them made a reservation through the hotel's website. The clear disparity between the two samples confirms the results of previous research that tourists prefer OTA websites when booking accommodation. Women are significantly more represented in both samples and the most represented age group is between 23 and 33 years. Respondents are highly educated and come from 53 countries around the world. Although 42% of respondents are from Croatia, most foreign respondents are from the UK, the Netherlands and Serbia. From the sociodemographic characteristics studied, it can be concluded that there are similarities between the two samples. The results of the research showed that when looking for information about the hotel, the respondents mostly use the websites through which they made the reservation. Most of the respondents made their last reservation for a holiday abroad. More than half of the respondents stated that they spent 3-6 nights in a hotel and mostly booked 4-star hotels.

The results of the descriptive statistical analysis show that in both samples the respondents rated all characteristics of website quality (system quality, information quality, service quality and hedonic quality), constructs of cognitive online experience, affective online experience and behavioural intentions with relatively high marks. Respondents who booked through the OTA website mostly agree that the website provides secure transactions ($\bar{x}=6.17$), that they received exactly what they booked through the website ($\bar{x}=6.04$) and that the information on the website is clear ($\bar{x}=6.03$), useful ($\bar{x}=5.99$) and complete ($\bar{x}=5.99$). Respondents who have made a reservation through the hotel website mostly agree that the information on the website is up-to-date ($\bar{x}=6.05$), accurate ($\bar{x}=6.05$), complete ($\bar{x}=5.90$), and useful ($\bar{x}=5.89$), and that the website provides secure transactions ($\bar{x}=6.01$). Regarding the construct cognitive online experience, respondents generally agree that they controlled activity while on the site (OTA sample $\bar{x}=5.56$; hotel sample $\bar{x}=5.58$) and they were able to communicate with the website (OTA sample $\bar{x}=5.56$; hotel sample $\bar{x}=5.42$). The lowest degree of agreement was expressed for thinking about other things while using the website (OTA sample $\bar{x}=3.72$; hotel sample $\bar{x}=3.71$) and that the website aroused the imagination (OTA sample $\bar{x}=4.10$, hotel sample $\bar{x}=3.92$). In both samples, respondents mostly agreed that a visit to the website was interesting (OTA sample $\bar{x}=4.72$; hotel sample $\bar{x}=4.43$), while the least agreement was expressed that the website was fun to visit (OTA sample $\bar{x}=4.45$; hotel sample $\bar{x}=4.23$). The average scores for future behavioural intentions in both samples are high, suggesting that they will book hotel accommodation through this website in the near future, that they will consider this website if they need to book hotel

accommodation, and that they have a high desire to book hotel accommodation through this website in the future.

The results of the bivariate statistical analysis show that only three out of twenty-three variables of the website quality construct differ statistically and significantly in the average scores between the two independent samples. Since the scores of the majority of the tested website quality variables are not statistically and significantly different, the H1a hypothesis was not confirmed. Furthermore, for all the constructs measured, except for affective online experience (H1c), there are no statistically significant differences in the average scores between the two independent samples. Therefore, the hypotheses H1b and H1d could not be confirmed.

PLS-SEM was subsequently conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the data and to empirically test the hypothesized relationships between the constructs. Based on the analysed criteria, the reliability and validity of the measurement (external) model was determined. The results confirmed the hypotheses (H2a and H2b) in both structural models that the website quality is a multidimensional higher order construct.

In order to evaluate the predictive power of the structural models, coefficients of determination (R^2) of endogenous constructs were calculated. From the R^2 values it can be concluded that in the OTA sample 60.8% of the variance of the cognitive online experience, 22.7% of the affective online experience and 16.3% of the behavioural intentions were explained. In the hotel sample, the calculated coefficients of determination R^2 indicate that independent variables explained 72.2% of the cognitive online experience, 17.2% of the affective online experience, and 34.0% of the main dependent variable future booking intentions.

These low coefficients of determination of the main dependent variable (especially in the OTA sample) could be justified by the fact that only certain factors (website quality and online experience) were included in the model. In addition to these factors, the decision to make a reservation could be influenced by various personal factors (such as sociodemographic characteristics of individuals, booking habits, motivation, etc.) or characteristics of sales channels (such as price, purchasing conditions, image, trust, etc.). However, if the coefficients of determination are compared with previous similar studies, it is possible to conclude that they do not deviate significantly.

It was found that the website has a positive and significant impact on the cognitive customer online experience. In the OTA sample, the relationship is weakest in the structural mode but still statistically significant (H4a: $\beta = 0.185$, t -value = 4.665), while in the hotel sample the relationship between these constructs is strong (H4b: $\beta = 0.490$, t -value = 12,113). The obtained research results are similar to those of previous studies that found a positive and significant relationship between website quality and cognitive experience (Gao & Bai, 2014; Ali, 2016; Huang et al., 2017).

The research found that in both samples (H5a and H5b), website quality had a positive and significant impact on the affective online customer experience. In both structural models, the relationship between website quality and affective online experience is not

only statistically significant but also very strong (H5a: $\beta = 0.477$, $t\text{-value} = 12.898$; H5b: $\beta = 0.414$, $t\text{-value} = 6.688$).

In this doctoral thesis, which refers to the research of Rose et al. (2012), the influence of the affective online experience on the cognitive online experience was tested. The results indicate a strong statistically significant correlation in both structural models (H6a: $\beta = 0.674$, $t\text{-value} = 17.428$; H6b: $\beta = 0.520$, $t\text{-value} = 11.316$). This indicates that the more customers find a visit to the website interesting, fun, and enjoyable the more they are mentally involved in online reservations.

The differences between the two structural models can be seen in the analysis of the relationship between the cognitive online experience and future booking intentions. While this relationship was not confirmed in the OTA sample (H7a: $\beta = -0.101$, $t\text{-value} = 1.186$), it was statistically significant in the hotel sample (H7b: $\beta = 0.276$, $t\text{-value} = 2.035$) at $p < 0.05$. Further differences in structural models result from the analysis of the relationship between the affective online experience and future booking intentions. While in the OTA sample the relationship was statistically significant (H8a: $\beta = 0.332$, $t\text{-value} = 3.497$), in the hotel sample the relationship between these two constructs was not confirmed (H8b: $\beta = 0.136$, $t\text{-value} = 1.196$).

The research tested a mediating effect of the cognitive and affective online experience between website quality and future booking intentions. The mediating effect of the cognitive online experience in the structural model of the hotel sample was confirmed (H9b: $\beta = 0.135$, $t\text{-value} = 1.979$) as well as the mediating effect of the affective online experience in the structural model of the OTA sample (H10a: $\beta = 0.158$, $t\text{-value} = 3.358$). The mediating effect of the cognitive online experience in the OTA sample was not confirmed (H9a), nor was the mediating effect of the affective online experience in the hotel sample (H10b).

Although the proposed model has been developed on a rich theoretical background, as in any research project, this study has limitations that need to be taken into account when generalizing the results. The main research limitations relate to the choice of quantitative method, data collection, the sample of respondents and the design of the questionnaire.

Future research should include other constructs (e.g., website image, brand, trust) in the models that may be related to website quality, cognitive and affective online experience, and future behavioural intentions. This would provide additional insights into which combination of constructs best predicts the online experience and future behavioural intentions. It would also be interesting to explore the potential influence of different moderators (such as booking habits, motivation, and different sociodemographic characteristic) on proposed relationships in the model. The sample of the study contains an overrepresentation of Croatian citizens. In future studies, care should be taken to ensure that the proportion of respondents is more balanced in terms of country of residence. This would provide an opportunity to consider intercultural issues, which would provide useful information on how booking websites can be adapted to different markets.

Originality of the research

Regardless of these limitations, the results of this doctoral thesis contribute to the existing literature on the concepts of website quality, online customer experience and behavioural intentions regarding conceptual, empirical and applicative terms.

In terms of conceptual research, the doctoral thesis contributes through the development of a systematic literature review of the main research concepts and the development of a conceptual model to measure the impact of website quality on the customer's online experience and future booking intentions. As far as the empirical part of the scientific research is concerned, the contribution is reflected in the use of different methods of univariate, bivariate and multivariate statistical analysis to investigate the existence of statistically differences between the group of respondents who booked accommodation via OTA and the hotel website, testing the reliability and validity of the conceptual model and evaluating the relationship between measured constructs. In terms of the applicative part of the doctoral thesis, the scientific contribution is reflected in a better understanding of the website quality and the online experience in the hospitality industry. Moreover, this study provides measurement tool for simple and scientifically valid monitoring of the website quality and the online customer experience and defines specific recommendations for improving online booking experience on OTA and hotel websites.

Keywords website quality, online customer experience, future behavioural intentions, modelling, stimulus-organism-response model (S-O-R)

Citation: Dorčić, J. (2020), Modelling intentions for online reservations in hotel industry, Doctoral Dissertation Summary, *Tourism and Hospitality Management*, Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 473-478.