

**Publisher**<http://jssidoi.org/esc/home>**SENIOR TOURISM FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF CUSTOMERS' PREFERENCES*****Viera Papcunová^{1,2}, Michal Levický^{3*}, Jarmila Hudáková⁴, Alexandra Gelnická⁵**¹*Institute of Economics and Management, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Nitra, Slovak Republic*²*Department of Regional Economics, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic*^{3,4,5}*Institute of Economics and Management, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Nitra, Slovak Republic*E-mails: ^{1,2}vpapcunova@ukf.sk; ³mlevicky@ukf.sk; ³mlevicky@gmail.com (Corresponding author);⁴jhudakova@ukf.sk; ⁵alexandra.gelnicka@student.ukf.sk

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Abstract. The ageing of the population has brought the concept of the silver economy to the economy and senior tourism to the tourism. This paper aims to evaluate seniors' preferences for tourism based on selected indicators in the context of various socio-economic characteristics. The perception of senior tourism was analysed based on a questionnaire survey. At the same time, we tested hypotheses regarding the relationship between seniors' socio-economic characteristics and travel preferences. Our research has shown that most seniors travel for relaxation, for health, i.e. visiting a spa or wellness centre, for culture or tourist activities. Less significant reasons for seniors to travel were to visit relatives, religion, shopping, social interaction, dining or business travel. Hypothesis testing revealed that men and women perceived length of stay, price of stay, discounts on visit, or motive or type of accommodation equally when planning a holiday. However, women plan holidays with more time in advance than men. Similar results were obtained by testing selected indicators in the context of respondents' place of residence - urban and rural. We did not observe any differences in holiday planning across age groups of respondents.

Keywords: senior tourism; population ageing; customer's preferences

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JEL Classifications: Z32, C12, J14

1. Introduction

One of the most significant demographic trends in the contemporary societies of developed countries is the ageing of the population. This ageing is becoming a critical demographic issue and a social, economic, health and even cultural one due to its scale, impact and almost universal presence. An ageing population is widely believed to have adverse consequences, such as an increase in the old-age dependency ratio, a reduction in the labour force and a decline in the birth rate (Šprocha & Ďurček, 2019; Xu et al., 2023)—demographic processes, such as changes in birth and death rates or increasing life expectancy cause population ageing. The proportion

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of the elderly population is also growing due to various other factors, such as technological, economic and medical advances (Cursaru, 2018). Among the most essential factors prolonging human life are social factors. These are, first of all, the level of civilisational development of society, the technical level of society, the level of social infrastructure, the economic opportunities of society, the standard of living of people and political events.

In contrast, life expectancy is shortened by the state of the environment and morbidity (Dvořáčková, 2012). As life expectancy increases, mortality is shifting to older ages, and there is an overall increase in population ageing. The average age is rising, and people are in better physical and mental condition as they get older. Longer lives will give older people opportunities to pursue new activities such as further education, new careers or exploring neglected hobbies - which can include tourism (WHO, 2022). As Jantan (2020) noted, many countries are experiencing a new demographic transition. This new type of demographic transition is characterised by longevity, where the size of the working-age population does not provide an increase in life expectancy but by people of retirement age. Unless an additional mechanism to regulate social security for older people is implemented, a steady rise in the population's life expectancy may damage the stability of public finances and overall economic welfare. In such circumstances, the state is forced to look for potential solutions to the situation on the ground (Urbanikova & Stubnova, 2018). This is confirmed by Lukyanets et al. (2021), who state that the increase in older people entails deepening problems related to their financial support, ensuring a minimum acceptable standard of living and government spending for these purposes.

The term senior comes from the Latin word 'senex' (old), the second degree of which 'senior' denotes an elderly person. Senior is, therefore, a term associated with the period of ageing and old age. However, the perception of the term needs to be more consistent in the literature. The most common definition of seniors is by age. However, The age used varies between authors and is somewhere between 50 to 65 years (Eusébio et al., 2016). A significant number of studies assume that the market's senior segment comprises individuals over the age of 50. At the same time, other researchers believe that the minimum age is 55, 60 or 65. These approaches have implications at different levels, particularly regarding the methodological procedures used in the sample, the selection and interpretation and the validation of the results (Santos & Santos, 2021). The European Commission and the United Nations also identify different age limits for seniors. The European Commission defines seniors as people aged 55 and over, while the UN identifies the elderly population as people aged 60 and over. These differences generally depend on each country's retirement time, the social and political reforms in place, and individual cultural conditions (Francescato et al., 2017). Kotíková (2013) and Patterson (2018) add that terms such as Older adults, Woppies (well-off older people), Muppies (mature, upscale, post-professionals) or even third-age tourists are used to refer to seniors. This means that the perception of seniors is changing to that of active people, where they are no longer labelled as the 'silent generation' or the 'grey generation'.

The evolution of the old-age-dependency ratio confirms the ageing of the population in Europe. In 2011, there were 26.6 seniors for every 100 working-age people in the EU-27; by 2022, there will be 33 seniors. In 2011, Germany and Italy had the highest number of seniors per 100 working-age inhabitants, with 31.4 and 31.3 seniors, respectively. In contrast, the lowest number of seniors per 100 working-age people in 2011 was 17.2 in Ireland and 17.5 in Slovakia. In 2022, the number of seniors per 100 persons of working age will increase even more in Germany to 34.7 and in Italy to 37.5 seniors. All European countries have aged significantly in 2022 compared to 2011 (Figure 1). In 2022, the number of seniors per 100 working-age inhabitants increased considerably in Finland (37.4), Portugal (37.2), Croatia and Greece (35.6) and Bulgaria (34.0). In these countries, this represents an increase of 40% on average. In the V4 countries, the most significant increase in the number of seniors in 2022 compared to 2011 was recorded in the Czech Republic at 32.6, representing a 46% increase (Figure 1)

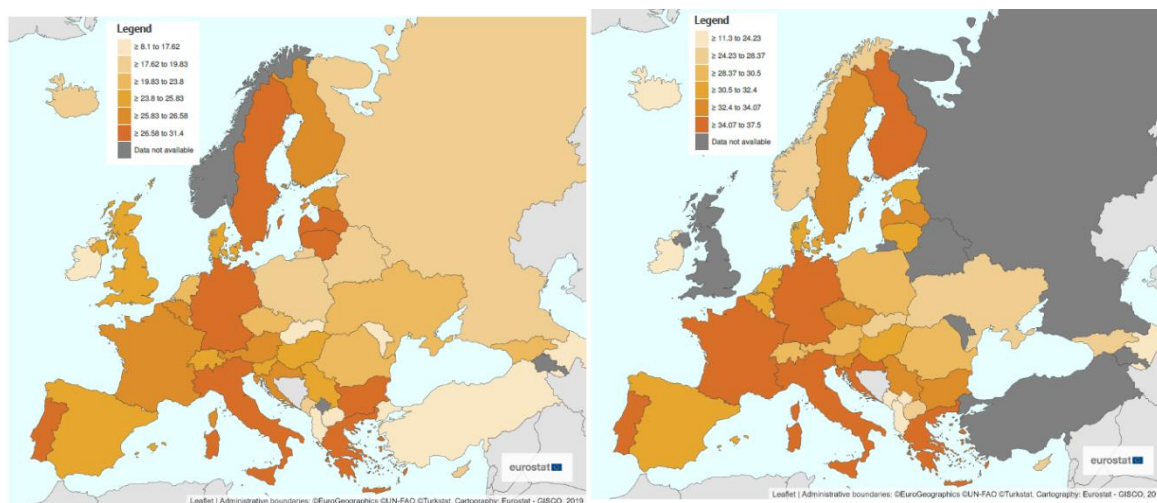


Figure 1. Old-age dependency ratio (population 65 years over or over to population 15 to 64 years)

Source: Eurostat database

* This indicator is the ratio between the number of people aged 65 and over (the age at which they are generally economically inactive) and the number of people aged 15 to 64. The value is expressed per 100 persons of working age (15-64).

This shows that seniors are becoming an essential part of the market, and there is increasing talk of a 'silver economy'. This situation also has a significant impact on tourism. In this context, Alén et al. (2012) identified the following age categories of older tourists in the tourism sector based on age differences in the definition of senior: a) persons aged 50 years and over, b) persons aged 55 years and over, c) persons aged 60 years and over, d) persons aged 65 years and over. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of older tourists. In 1999, more than 593 million international tourists aged 60 and over. At that time, they accounted for approximately one-third of the total amount spent on holidays in that year. By 2050, seniors will account for 2 billion holidays per year (Patterson, 2018). According to research across all age groups, seniors spend the most on travel and holiday leisure (Vigolo, 2017). In 2014, seniors took about 442 million trips, 56% of the total. Of these, 225 million were for day trips, and 217 million were for multi-day vacations. 70% of senior tourists spent their holidays in their home country, and the remaining per cent preferred to travel abroad. Based on this 2014 research, seniors, on average, travelled seven times during the year on day trips and five times on vacations lasting multiple days (Francescato et al., 2017). However, travel options for the elderly population are strongly influenced by national culture and the economic situation of seniors; the higher the income and the longer the leisure time, the stronger the desire to travel (Tuo et al., 2022). According to Kotíková (2013), only individuals can afford to travel. Nowadays, seniors like to invest in travelling abroad, often to exotic destinations. Seniors with less financial means prefer to travel within domestic tourism.

2. Theoretical background

One of the key sectors affected by an ageing population is tourism. The over-65 population certainly has different tastes and preferences for tourism compared to the younger generation, and this issue may lead to a decline in tourism demand (Xu et al., 2023). Senior tourism, also known as grey tourism/silver tourism, is a very important form of tourism developing at a high rate worldwide. To date, there is no agreement on a clear definition of the concept of senior tourism (Yazan et al., 2017). Senior tourism creates new market opportunities and has a large socio-economic impact. This form of tourism targets tourists in their old age, seniors. It mostly includes health, physical and mental well-being services or exploring a selected culture. The tourist motivations of seniors differ from those of other age groups because this population group is most often looking for rest and relaxation, unlike younger generations who want to experience adventure and gain new experiences. However, these differences are changing due to the changing lifestyles of seniors. Tourists' motivation is essential for their trip satisfaction, as it is influenced by their reasons for travelling and the attributes of the destination itself (Moniz et al., 2020). Patterson (2018) cites the desire to experience and gain valuable experience as motivation

for seniors to travel. By travelling, seniors are reminded of the years of their young lives, during which they can also make new friends, positively affecting their mental health. This is confirmed by Parreira et al. (2021) research, which found that seniors from Portugal, Spain and France emphasise enjoying leisure time, reducing physical and mental tension, learning more about the destination and making connections with others. However, older tourists from non-European countries show similarities to those from Germany in terms of positive surprise or enjoyment, which visitors from the UK, Ireland and Spain value. Another motivating factor is curiosity, the opportunity to experience new experiences and the desire for an active holiday (Tomka et al., 2013). The economic situation of older people is a major factor in determining participation in tourism. Seniors have sufficient financial resources, but this statement applies primarily to the older population in developed countries, as a significant percentage of older persons in developing countries still do not and will not have sufficient resources to travel (Spasojević & Božić, 2016). In addition to the economic situation, Sibi (2017) states that seniors' health is an important condition for travel. Nowadays, travel for seniors is nevertheless becoming more and more accessible, thanks to technological advances in healthcare. With the increasing level of medical care, the demands of the senior segment on travel as consumers are changing in seeking a more active form of vacation (Nikitina & Vorontsova, 2015). Another factor influencing the consumer behaviour of the older population in the tourism industry is the amount of time. Although seniors are known to have a lot of free time, some of them may feel a lack of it. This is because they need more time to cope with routine responsibilities and also because some of them have a lot of responsibilities, such as helping their children and grandchildren, taking care of pets, gardening or pursuing their hobbies and interests (Kotíková, 2013). The lack of a travel companion can also be one of the barriers to senior tourism. Older tourists prefer to travel with someone close to them (Sibi, 2017). As travellers get older, they are more likely to be widowed or lose friends and potential partners for participation in the travel industry. Therefore, the absence of a travel partner is a common reason seniors do not want to travel (Lee & Bowes, 2016). Another barrier to senior travel is the safety concern. Seniors are also concerned about traffic problems and unexpected events during their holidays. They are worried about whether they will be able to cope with the organisational issues of the trip and whether they will be able to adapt to local conditions and customs (Kotíková, 2013). Older tourists also fear being understood in a foreign language, which can also be a barrier to a trip abroad (Wen et al., 2020). Manipulating the Internet and making online bookings also influence seniors' travel behaviour (Patterson, 2018). Unlike previous generations, many of today's seniors are more experienced and have clearer ideas about what they expect from travel and services. This will make it more difficult for all stakeholders to develop a product or service that will interest and pleasantly surprise seniors. According to Patterson & Balderas (2018), tourism offerings for the older population should be personalised, offering exotic destinations, memorable experiences, the opportunity to learn something new, and space for social interaction and self-development. Experienced older tourists will seek the authenticity of the destination and new experiences. Liew et al. (2021) note that a destination's climate influences seniors' consumption behaviour. For many seniors, the type of transport they use to travel to a destination is critical. The choice of means of transport depends on the distance to the destination and the reason for the trip. Most often, seniors travel by car and aeroplane. However, as they get older, they tend to travel by bus. Older people who most prefer bus transport are senior couples (Alén et al., 2012). Nowadays, the Internet is influencing the overall travel experience. Using the Internet, searching for information about a destination, sharing experiences or making online bookings is possible. The older population usually does not use the Internet due to a lack of trust (Vigolo, 2017; Markovic et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the Internet is becoming a more important source of information discovery among seniors. Research showed that 26% of respondents used the Internet to find tourism information. Further, 30.2% used the services of a travel agent, 23.5% relied on their previous experience, and 22.1% relied on recommendations from friends or family. Although the Internet is becoming important among seniors, this segment still prefers information from friends or family, so-called 'word of mouth' (Alén et al., 2012; Sibi, 2017). Another phenomenon of seniors is that they like to use organised tourism services rather than travel individually. They like to use organised tour programmes of travel agencies because such travel gives them a sense of security and safety. The reason why they prefer the services of tour operators is the necessary socialisation, i.e. making new friends and possibly lack of knowledge of a foreign language, where they are not able to communicate abroad (Kotíková, 2013; Estrada-González, 2020). A deeper understanding of the new leisure motivations of older tourists can assist industry practitioners and policymakers in developing promotional and marketing campaigns for the successful development of this tourism segment (Li, 2012; Lukac et al., 2021). Bulut & Nazli (2023) and Severova et al. (2021) note that it is significant for hotels, travel agents and tour operators to offer diversified, interesting products and services, tourist experiences

and other great opportunities to the relatively unknown senior market, taking into account their economic status and willingness to travel to destinations they have never been to before. Tourism organisations and marketers should analyse older tourists, especially the more affluent ones (Berebecka, 2013). They should try to understand their travel motivations, needs, inspirational factors and desires, and real health concerns and offer creative solutions to their unique demand before travelling. Confirming this, Diekmann et al. (2020) and Chang et al. (2022) believe that the tourism industry should evolve to a new paradigm to provide new offerings, such as social tourism, for older people. Based on the concept of well-being, the tourism industry can design new packages to counter the ageing population phenomenon. According to Nikitina & Vorontsova (2015) the main trends associated with the ageing population that tourism organisers should address in 2014 are the creation of a new "senior tourism" segment, the creation of high-tech hotel and resort complexes with a wide range of geriatric care, promoting active ageing, and, of course, the widespread adoption of Telehealth and Telecare technology that will support the desire of older people to travel and encourage their active lifestyles. Ashton et al. (2015) add that tourism contributes to developing positive experiences and improving the skills of older people, facilitating their social integration and overcoming the difficulties associated with the ageing process, especially when older tourists engage in leisure, recreational and entertainment activities. Tourism businesses should also adapt to this trend (Lincenyi et al., 2023), catering to the special needs of seniors while ensuring price competitiveness and product uniqueness to attract as many elderly tourism consumers as possible (Chen & Zhou, 2014). Parreira et al. (2021) add that tourism organisations need to increase their efforts to anticipate the emotional needs of the senior tourism market segment while determining how to meet the needs of both younger and older seniors. The significant growth of this market - coupled with higher life expectancy - makes this tourism area attractive. However, the overwhelming power of social media also means that bad experiences can be shared quite quickly among potential older tourists, putting the commercial development of destinations at risk, regardless of their potential. This risk further highlights the need to understand the motivations of older travellers. According to Yao & Hou (2019), the senior tourism industry is becoming a new economic form in an ageing society. Coping with the ageing population has become an important main direction of economic restructuring and transformation of economic development in the conditions of an ageing society. Senior tourism can not only promote the new growth of the tourism economy but also, to some extent, weaken the influence of the off-season tourism market on related industries and fill the seasonal income gap of the tourism economy.

3. Research objective and methodology

The results of the primary data collection can contribute to identifying the dimensions of factors that influence seniors' holiday choices. The following variables were chosen for the research: motive for travel participation, length of holiday, cost of holiday, discounts and off-season promotions when choosing a holiday, the lead time in which seniors plan their holiday, and type of holiday accommodation. As part of the research, we also tested hypotheses aimed at identifying differences in the perception of holidays in terms of gender structure, economic status of pensioners, and their type of residence (urban-rural).

The data collection process was conducted continuously from November 2021 to January 2022. The baseline sample includes respondents aged 60 years and older in Slovakia. The sample was selected randomly. Respondents completed questionnaires in Google forms. Methodologically, we focused on respondents' psychological barriers to completing content- and technology-intensive questionnaires. Based on this, we designed the most appropriate questionnaire with a reasonable number of questions as simple as possible. In designing the questionnaire items, we emphasised their symbiosis with each other. Pilot testing was conducted on a small sample of respondents to obtain feedback on the comprehensibility of the questionnaire. After slight modifications, the result was four socio-demographic and twenty vocational questions related to the problem.

Of the 401 respondents, 57,86% were female, and 42,14% were male (Figure 2). In terms of age, the majority of respondents in the survey were aged 60-70 years old (55,11%). This was followed by the category of 71-80 years old (33,42%) and then the category of respondents who were over 81 years old (11,47%) (Figure 3).

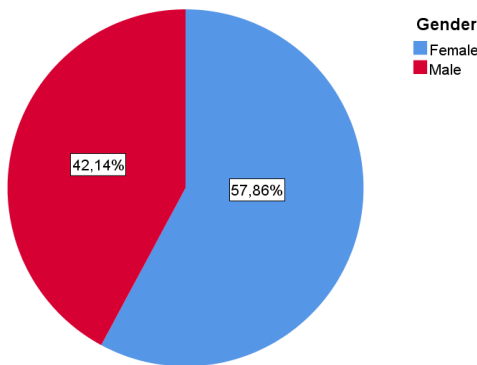


Figure 2. Gender structure of the respondents
Source: questionnaire survey, own processing

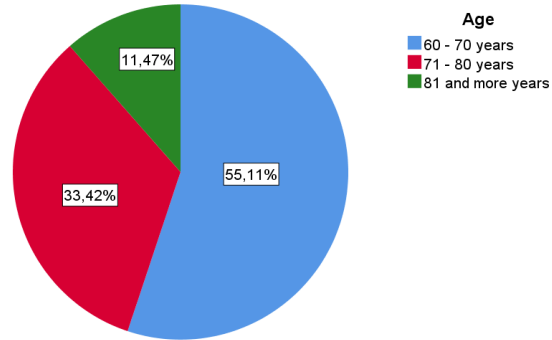


Figure 3. Age structure of the respondents
Source: questionnaire survey, own processing

Of the total respondents, 55.86% live in urban areas and 44.14% live in rural areas (Figure 4). Based on economic activity, most of the respondents are retired (72.32%), 20.95% are working, and 6.73% are working pensioners. None of the respondents were unemployed (Figure 5).

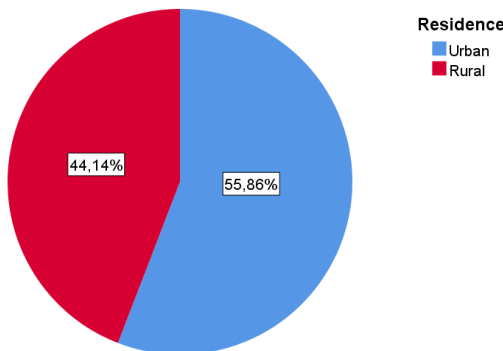


Figure 4. Respondents' place of residence
Source: questionnaire survey, own processing

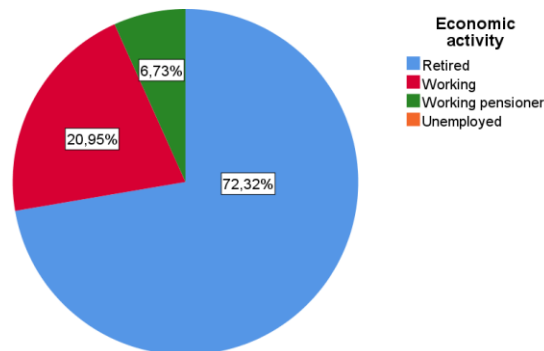


Figure 5. Economic activity of the respondents
Source: questionnaire survey, own processing

We will evaluate the dataset from the questionnaire survey using appropriate statistical tests. Statistical analysis was performed in the SPSS 22 program. Through appropriate statistical tests, we assess the validity of the stated hypotheses based on the calculated p-values, which represent the probability of the error we commit if we reject the null hypothesis. The significance level is set at 5% for all tests.

We use chi-square test of independence to detect the dependence of two nominal variables (Řezanková, 2011; Rakesh & Singhal, 2015). It is based on the assumption that if two features are independent, then the distribution of the counts in the contingency table is proportional to the row and column marginal counts. These frequencies are called expected frequencies. Suppose we denote the relative abundance in the base set as π_{ij} . In that case, we write the null hypothesis of independence in the form $H_0: \pi_{ij} = \pi_{ij,0}$, where $\pi_{ij,0}$ is the relative abundance expected in the case of independence, given by the relation $\pi_{ij,0} = \pi_i + \pi_j$. We test this null hypothesis against hypothesis $H_1: \pi_{ij} \neq \pi_{ij,0}$ for at least one pair i, j ($i \neq j$). The Pearson chi-squared statistic can be used as a test criterion, which is expressed by the relation:

$$\chi^2_P = \sum_{i=1}^R \sum_{j=1}^S \frac{(n_{ij} - m_{ij})^2}{m_{ij}} \tag{1}$$

The prerequisite for using this test is that the expected frequencies in each contingency table cell do not fall below a value of 5 in at least 80% of the cells and that the remaining cells have values of at least 1. If this prerequisite is not met, we use the Fisher-Freeman-Halton test, which can be thought of as a generalisation of

Fisher's exact test for the R x S table (Van Auken et al., 2021; Ozturk et. al, 2021). If the data sets are too large or unbalanced, we will use Monte Carlo simulation to increase the reliability of the asymptotic results (Mehta & Patel, 2011; Cengiz et al, 2009). Cramer's V coefficient is used to find the degree of dependence between qualitative traits. Cramer's V is an alternative to Phi Coefficient in tables bigger than 2 × 2 tabulation. Cramer's V varies between 0 and 1 without any negative values. Like Pearson's r, a value close to 0 means no association (Akoglu, 2018; Prematunga, 2012). If the sampling results are arranged in a contingency table of type r x s, then Cramer's V is defined by the relation:

$$V = \frac{\chi^2}{\min\{(r - 1), (s - 1)\}.n} \tag{2}$$

when χ^2 is the Pearson test statistic and $n = \sum_{i=1}^r \sum_{j=1}^s n_{ij}$.

Assuming a normal distribution of the dependent variable and assuming equality of variances, we will use the Independent Samples t-test to test the hypothesis about the difference in the means of independent groups. If the sample is small (less than 30 in each group) and the variable does not have a normal distribution in the groups, we use the non-parametric Mann Whitney U (Hudec et al., 2019). It is used instead of the t-test comparing the means of two basic sets in case the condition of normality is not met. Through this test, we verify the hypothesis that two independent sample sets come from the same base set.

4. Results and discussion

Rest and relaxation, spending time and interacting with family are the most important factors in seniors' holiday choices, while weather and climate, beaches and water sports, and beautiful scenery and attractions are also the most important attributes (Oliveira et al., 2018). Seniors often travel outside the main tourist season because they have retired or have grown-up children, so they are not tied to the dates of their holidays, so they can spend their free time travelling at any time (Balderas-Cejudo et al., 2016). This fact, therefore, represents a good tool for the tourism offer to reduce seasonality in the destination and thus prolong the income during the year (Sibi, 2017). Travelling in the low season offers older tourists several advantages: better prices, fewer other tourists, a quieter atmosphere and milder climatic conditions. In coastal areas, for example, they start looking for stays in early June or September (Patterson & Balderas, 2018; Kotíková, 2013). Many older travellers are more willing to travel in the off-peak season, when it is cheaper, and to be away from home for longer than previous generations. As older travellers have more spending power due to higher incomes, many also value the quality of service provided (Balderas-Cejudo et al., 2019). However, all these attributes of holiday choices may be perceived differently by men and women. Our research confirmed this, which showed that men and women have different preferences for length of stay. Women prefer longer holidays (Table 1). The results also showed that up to 77.6% of women and 67.5% of men prefer holidays of 4 to 7 days (Table 2).

Table 1. Expression of the relationship between the gender structure of the issues related to the respondents and the length of stay on holiday

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Length of vacation is the same across categories of Gender.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,012	Reject the null hypothesis.

Source: SPSS 22 program

Table 2. Length of stay on holiday

Length of holiday * Gender Crosstabulation				
% within gender		Gender		Total
		Female	Male	
Length of holiday	One day	7.8%	13.0%	10.0%
	2 - 3 days	4.3%	10.7%	7.0%
	4 - 7 days	77.6%	67.5%	73.3%
	More than 7 days	10.3%	8.9%	9.7%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: questionnaire survey, own processing

Although men and women perceive the length of stay of a holiday differently, we did not confirm our hypothesis that this affects the price of a holiday. Based on our testing (Independent Samples t-Test; $p=0,559$), we found no difference between how men and women perceive the price of a holiday, despite women prefer longer stays (Table 2). 41.8% of women and 40.8% of men are willing to spend between 301 € - 500 € on a holiday (Table 3).

Table 3. Price of holiday

Price of holiday * Gender Crosstabulation				
% within gender		Gender		Total
		Female	Male	
Price of holiday	Less than 300 €	29.7%	28.4%	29.2%
	301 - 500 €	41.8%	40.8%	41.4%
	501 - 1.000 €	27.2%	28.4%	27.7%
	More than 1.000 €	1.3%	2.4%	1.7%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: questionnaire survey, own processing

At present, when the economic situation of not only working people but also seniors has worsened due to the current worsened economic conditions (inflation, rising energy prices, war conflicts in the world), we were also interested in whether there is a difference in the use of discounts and off-season promotions in the context of the gender structure of seniors. In this case, our research has shown that men and women have the same preferences for using discounts when planning a holiday (Table 4).

Table 4. Expression of the relationship between the gender structure of the issues related to the respondents and the discount of a holiday

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Use of discounts is the same across categories of Gender.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	,171	Retain the null hypothesis.

Source: SPSS 22 program

The same situation with the choice of discounts arose in the question asking how far in advance they shop for their holidays. In the questionnaire, they had a choice of periods ranging from less than one month to more than 6 months of advance holiday planning. We assumed that seniors would take advantage of discounts and plan their holiday as far in advance as possible. The survey showed (Table 5) that most men and women plan a holiday within 1 to 3 months (65.9% female and 64.5% male).

Table 5. Date of purchase of holiday

Date of purchase of holiday * Gender Crosstabulation		Gender		
		Female	Male	Total
% within gender	Less than 1 month	14.2%	25.4%	19.0%
	1 - 3 months	65.9%	64.5%	65.3%
	4 - 6 months	18.5%	8.9%	14.5%
	More than 6 months	1.3%	1.2%	1.2%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: questionnaire survey, own processing

In their research, several authors cite different reasons seniors go on holiday. For example, Beránek (2013) reports that seniors most often prefer recreational tourism, health tourism, hiking, cultural and sightseeing trips or boat trips. Otoo & Kim (2020) identified 13 domains of motivation in older tourists, each further subdivided into subdomains. For example, socialisation includes being with family and friends and interacting with others. This is confirmed by Zhao et al. (2013), who report that many older people travel to enrich their leisure time and feel mentally satisfied. While travelling, they can enjoy the scenery, broaden their horizons, expand their knowledge, enjoy life and eliminate the loneliness caused by the abandonment of their family. The second domain is the ego, through which tourists receive recognition and respect from others and, therefore, feel privileged to travel. Escape, routine, stress, and obligations are other important motivational domains. Another category is destination attractiveness, which includes the cultural attractiveness of the destination, the natural or scenic environment, and the weather. Other vital domains of motivation for seniors are acquisition of knowledge, well-being, relaxation and comfort, opportunity to travel, novelty, hedonism, quality of life, updating and nostalgia, etc. (Otoo & Kim, 2020; Dusek, 2018). Teruel-Sanchez et al. (2021) add that the most sought-after type of tourism for seniors is sun and sand, followed by nautical activities and golf. These types of tourism, primarily sun and sand, bring a concentration of tourists at certain times of the year because they are linked to the climate and the natural environment; in other words, seasonal tourism. Udrea (2023) notes that pilgrimage tourism is part of senior tourism. The research found that almost half of the seniors surveyed chose religious tourist attractions as a motivating factor in choosing a holiday. The results of our research showed that there is no difference in the perception of the different motives for holidays. Considering the nature of the variables, the size of the contingency table and the fulfilment of the established assumptions, we performed the testing using the Chi-square test or by Fisher-Freeman-Halton test. Due to the nature of the contingency table, Monte Carlo simulation was used in the Fisher-Freeman-Halton test. The testing was carried out at a significance level of 5%; that is, if the p-value is less than the chosen significance level $\alpha = 0.05$, we reject the tested hypothesis at the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$. The null hypothesis assumes independence of the investigated nominal variables. The calculated p-value was at the level of 0.045, which means that we reject the null hypothesis. A statistically significant difference exists between men's and women's travel motives. Considering the result of testing the relationship between the gender of the respondent and the motive for travel, we determined the degree of relationship between these variables. Considering the nature of the variables as well as the scope of the contingency table, we chose to use the non-parametric Cramer's V coefficient. The null hypothesis assumed no dependence between the investigated nominal variables. Based on the calculated p-value, the null hypothesis can be rejected ($p=0.047$). The alt alternative hypothesis was confirmed, based on which there is a statistically significant dependence between the investigated variables. The calculated value of Cramer's V coefficient was 0.206, which indicates a weak to moderate dependence between the location of the respondent's residence and the motive for participation in tourism. Silva et al., (2021) reported in their research that women mainly, were more motivated to enjoy the Azores' natural beauty cultural and historical richness than men. In our study, females preferred relaxation (24.1%), sport and tourism (22.0%) and culture and history (16.4%) as holiday motives. Males also preferred relaxation (21.9%), but also health (19.5%) and sport and tourism (16.6%) as a motive for holiday (Table 6).

Table 6. Motive for participation in tourism

Motive of involvement in tourism * Gender Crosstabulation		Gender		
		Female	Male	Total
% within gender	Motive for participation in tourism			
	Culture, history	16.4%	12.4%	14.7%
	Relaxation	24.1%	21.9%	23.2%
	Health	13.8%	19.5%	16.2%
	Sport and tourist	22.0%	16.6%	19.7%
	Social interaction		1.2%	0.5%
	Gastronomy	0.9%	1.2%	1.0%
	Shopping	3.4%	2.4%	3.0%
	Adventure	2.6%	7.7%	4.7%
	Religion	8.6%	7.1%	8.0%
	Visiting friends, family	8.2%	8.3%	8.2%
Work		1.8%	0.7%	
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Source: questionnaire survey, own processing

Regarding the choice of accommodation, according to Alén et al. (2012) seniors prefer to stay in a hotel, a guesthouse and, to a lesser extent, a cottage in the countryside. They also like to stay with friends or acquaintances during their holidays (Alén et al., 2017); note that senior tourists mostly prefer hotels. In another study, they prefer residences and friends' apartments (Alén et al., 2014). According to the study of Martínez-García & Raya (2008), senior tourists prefer holiday apartments that contribute to extending their length of stay in a specific destination. Hypothesis testing revealed no difference between the type of accommodation preferred by men and women. The testing was carried out using the chi-square test with Monte Carlo simulation with a p-value of 0.207, which means that we cannot reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference in the preference for the type of accommodation according to the respondent's gender.

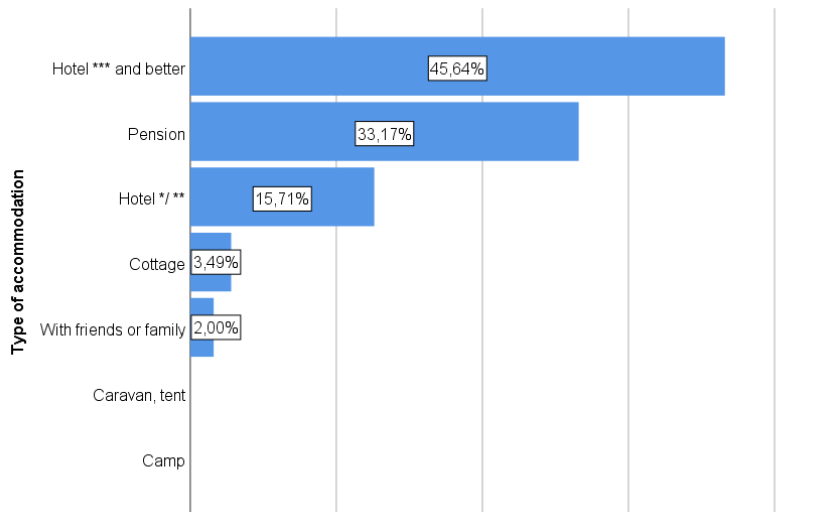


Figure 6. Type of accommodation

Source: questionnaire survey, own processing

Most respondents, regardless of gender, preferred hotel*** and better (45.64%) or pension (33.17%) for accommodation. None of the respondents imagined a holiday in a caravan or a camp (Figure 6).

Regarding the length of stay of seniors in a destination, the general perception is that they have enough free time compared to other age groups and stay on holiday longer (de Oliveira Santos et al., 2014). Neuts et al. (2016) revealed that seniors prefer longer trips (between 10 and 14 days), as opposed to non-seniors who require a duration of between 3 and 7 days (Atef & Balushi, 2017). However, some authors note that the length of stay for an older adult can range from 1 to 3 nights, 4 to 5 nights, or up to 9 nights. Thus, there is no correspondence

with the typical duration of a senior's holiday, probably due to the heterogeneity in the segmentation of this tourism market (Alén et al., 2012). Length of stay is an essential factor determining tourism development in a destination. If tourists stay more days in a destination, the economic benefits of tourism will increase (Sibi, 2017). Therefore, in the next part of the research, we focused on whether seniors' place of residence impacts the length of leave. We hypothesised that seniors living in rural areas might prefer shorter stays due to having their farm to care for. And it is seniors who live in cities who would choose longer holidays. However, the results of the hypothesis testing showed no difference in the preferences of seniors living in rural or urban areas regarding the length of stay (Table 7). Seniors from rural and urban regions mostly preferred a stay of 4-7 days (Table 8).

Table 7. Expression of the relationship between the respondents' place of residence related to the length of holiday

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Length of vacation is the same across categories of Residence.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.623	Retain the null hypothesis.

Source: SPSS 22 program

Table 8. Length of holiday

		Residence		
		Urban	Rural	Total
% within residence	Length of holiday			
	One day	8.9%	11.3%	10.0%
	2 - 3 days	7.6%	6.2%	7.0%
	4 - 7 days	73.2%	73.4%	73.3%
	More than 7 days	10.3%	9.0%	9.7%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: questionnaire survey, own processing

The next part of the research tested whether rural seniors perceive the cost of holidays differently than seniors living in the city. The results showed no difference in the preferences of seniors living in the urban and those living in the rural regarding the price of their holiday (Table 9). Most urban and rural seniors spend 301 € - 500 € on holiday (34.4% urban, 50.3% rural) (Table 10).

Table 9. Expression of the relationship between the respondents' place of residence related to the cost of holiday

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Price of vacation is the same across categories of Residence.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.050	Retain the null hypothesis.

Source: SPSS 22 program

Table 10. Price of holiday

		Residence		
		Urban	Rural	Total
% within residence	Price of holiday			
	Less than 300 €	29.5%	28.8%	29.2%
	301 - 500 €	34.4%	50.3%	41.4%
	501 - 1.000 €	33.5%	20.3%	27.7%
	More than 1.000 €	2.7%	0.6%	1.7%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: questionnaire survey, own processing

The total price of the stay is also related to the search for discounts or the length of time seniors plan to travel. As part of testing hypotheses related to perceptions of discounts and the length of time before planning a holiday, we were interested in whether the type of residence - rural or urban - affects these factors. The survey results showed that while the type of residence does not influence the search for discounts, urban seniors plan their holidays further in advance (Table 11). Table 12 shows that urban and rural seniors plan their holiday 1 to 3 months in advance (63.8% urban, 67.2% rural).

Table 11. Expression of the relationship between the respondents' place of residence related to the plan of holiday

Independent Samples Test				
		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Date of purchase of holiday	Equal variances assumed	.043	.126	.062
	Equal variances not assumed	.042	.126	.062

Source: SPSS 22 program

Table 12. Date of purchase of holiday

Date of purchase of holiday * Residence Crosstabulation					
% within residence		Residence			
		Urban	Rural	Total	
Date of purchase of holiday	Less than 1 month	17.0%	21.5%	19.0%	
	1 - 3 months	63.8%	67.2%	65.3%	
	4 - 6 months	17.9%	10.2%	14.5%	
	More than 6 months	1.3%	1.1%	1.2%	
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Source: questionnaire survey, own processing

Huber, (2019) argues that how individuals perceive their age, particularly how much time they think they have until death, strongly influences their travel. For younger seniors with relatively healthy physical and mental health, hiking activities may be more important, leading to more frequent and longer trips. A significant shift occurs in later years when seniors become more vulnerable due to declining health and mobility and the perception of impending death. In this sense, we tested for selected indicators in relation to the different age categories of seniors. Neither hypothesis showed any differences in the perception of motive, length of stay, type of accommodation, price of holiday, search for holiday discounts, or timing of holiday planning. Considering the nature of the variables, the size of the contingency table and the fulfilment of the established assumptions, we performed the testing using the Chi-square test or Fisher-Freeman-Halton test. Due to the nature of the contingency table, Monte Carlo simulation was used in the Fisher-Freeman-Halton test. The testing was carried out at a significance level of 5%; if the p-value is less than the chosen significance level $\alpha = 0.05$, we reject the tested hypothesis at the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$. The null hypothesis assumes independence of the investigated nominal variables. The calculated p-value was at 0.000, which means we reject the null hypothesis. There is a statistically significant difference between what motives seniors have for travelling with regard to their economic activity. Considering the result of testing the relationship between the gender of the respondent and the reason for travel, we determined the degree of relationship between these variables. Considering the nature of the variables as well as the scope of the contingency table, we chose to use the non-parametric Cramer's V coefficient. The null hypothesis assumed no dependence between the investigated nominal variables. Based on the calculated p-value, the null hypothesis can be rejected ($p=0.000$). The alternative hypothesis was confirmed, based on which there is a statistically significant dependence between the investigated variables. The calculated value of Cramer's V coefficient was 0.344, which indicates a moderate to strong dependency between the motive of participation in tourism and the economic activity of the respondent.

Table 13. Motive for participation in tourism

Motive for participation in tourism * Economic activity Crosstabulation		Economic activity			
		Retired	Working	Working pensioner	Total
% within motive for participation in tourism	Culture, history	81.4%	18.6%		100.0%
	Relaxation	66.7%	25.8%	7.5%	100.0%
	Health	75.4%	7.7%	16.9%	100.0%
	Sport and tourist	72.2%	22.8%	5.1%	100.0%
	Social interaction	100.0%			100.0%
	Gastronomy	50.0%	50.0%		100.0%
	Shopping	83.3%	16.7%		100.0%
	Adventure	57.9%	42.1%		100.0%
	Religion	84.4%	12.5%	3.1%	100.0%
	Visiting friends, family	66.7%	21.2%	12.1%	100.0%
	Work		100.0%		100.0%
Total		72.3%	20.9%	6.7%	100.0%

Source: questionnaire survey, own processing

In the category of working pensioners, most seniors prefer health (16.9%) or visiting friends, family (12.1%). Working seniors prefer gastronomy (50%) and adventure (42.1%). Retired seniors prefer social interaction (100%)

Conclusions

The global population ageing brings new challenges for national economies to address. On the one hand, there is increasing pressure on social and health services, and on the other, seniors who have enough free time and are willing to spend money on travel. Our research showed that most seniors travel for relaxation and health, i.e., to spas or wellness centres for culture or tourist activities. Our results are the same as those of other studies, according to which seniors most often prefer recreational tourism, health tourism, hiking, cultural and sightseeing trips or boat trips (Beránek, 2013). Less important reasons for seniors to travel were visiting relatives, religion, shopping, social interaction, dining or business trips. According to Udrea (2023), the research result was not confirmed, according to which almost half of the seniors cited pilgrimage attractions as a motivating factor (in our case it was only 8% of respondents). According to Alén et al. (2012) seniors prefer accommodation in a hotel or boarding house, to a lesser extent in the countryside. We reached the same results in our research.

However, researches differ on the duration of the vacation (Neuts et al., 2016; Atef & Balushi, 2017; Alén et al. 2012). Our results show that 73.3% of seniors prefer a length of stay of 4 to 7 days. Hypothesis testing revealed that men and women perceived the length of stay, the price of the stay, discounts for the stay, or the motive or type of accommodation in the same way when planning a vacation. However, women plan their holidays more in advance than men. Similar results were also obtained by testing selected indicators in the context of the respondents' place of residence - urban and rural. We did not notice differences in vacation planning across the age groups of the respondents. From the point of view of the economic activity of seniors, we state that pensioners prefer relaxation (21%), sports and tourism (20%). Among working pensioners, most seniors prefer relaxation (29%) and sports and tourism (21%). Working pensioners prefer health (41%) and relaxation (26%). Only 1% of retirees perceive social interaction as a motive for vacation. The number of respondents is a limiting factor of the research, which does not allow generalising conclusions about consumer preferences in senior tourism in Slovakia. In this case, it was a pre-test, based on which the questionnaire was subsequently modified and expanded to include other activities in the field of senior tourism. In the future, the data will be supplemented by personal interviews with travel agency owners about tour offers for seniors. Subsequently, a comparison will be possible in several European countries.

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