How to brand the Zemplin region in Slovakia, in an attempt to enhance its domestic tourism

An analysis of the underlying branding potential in an unknown region

Master's thesis

Name: Adriana Danielovicova

Student number: 115717

Supervisor: Tore Kristensen

Study programme: MSc. in Social Sciences in Service Management

Abstract

Today, the importance of destination branding is becoming more and more obvious. With the world becoming more globalised, people are constantly longing for travel and are interested in exploring unknown destinations more than ever. Destination branding as a tool is therefore becoming inevitable and countries, regions and cities need to be able to utilize it to the best possible extent. However, the process of destination branding is very complex, and a strong alignment of all involved stakeholders is needed.

Region branding is the central topic of this thesis, specifically focusing on the Zemplin region, in the east of the Slovak Republic. The region has a lot to offer, both in terms of the landscape and historical sites, as well as in terms of its rich traditions and culture. However, the Zemplin region tends to get overlooked by both domestic and international travellers. Therefore, this thesis seeks to answer the research question of how the region should be branded in order to increase its domestic recognition and to attract more domestic tourists.

The research process consisted of an online questionnaire, as well as of the creation of the Visit Zemplin Instagram page. The Visit Zemplin social media profile has an informative character.

A set of recommendations for the branding of the Zemplin region was developed. It has been concluded that the region's potential is recognised by the domestic travellers, however, a higher level of promotion and a branding strategy involving all the stakeholders is needed. Based on the findings, this potential lies in the rich culture, the folklore and the traditions of the Zemplin region influenced by its diverse population and major historical events taking place in the area, as well as in the region's specific type of architecture and historical sites.

Table of contents

List of figures

1. Introduction

1.1. Tourism in Slovakia and the Zemplin region

Slovak republic (or Slovakia) is a landlocked country in central Europe, neighbouring Ukraine in the east, Poland and the Czech Republic in the north, Austria in the west and Hungary in the south. Unfortunately, Slovakia is not a primary target for most tourists. However, in the last years, tourism in Slovakia has significantly increased. According to the Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic (2018), Slovakia was visited by 5.4 million tourists in 2017, which in comparison with 2016, poses an increase of 7%. Most of these tourists come from the Czech Republic (645.000) and Poland (209.000), followed by Germany, Hungary and Austria. Slovakia has also become popular for visitors from China, Israel, Iceland or Russia. What is particularly interesting for the purpose of this thesis is, that domestic tourists constitute 60% of all the visits. However, most of these visits concentrate towards Bratislava, the capital city, and High Tatras, the highest mountain range in Slovakia.

The Zemplin region, which will be the central topic of this thesis, has a huge tourist potential. Being one of the most populated and biggest regions in the Slovak Republic, it is also culturally and naturally rich. Probably the most interesting cultural heritage of this region is it being a language melting pot – people of Ukrainian, Czech, Hungarian, Rusyn, Roma and of course, Slovak, descend live together in this territory. (Kaľavský, 1991) Unfortunately, despite its tourist predispositions and a number of interesting offerings, the Zemplin region lacks visitors – both domestic and international.

Zemplin is the home of 430.000 inhabitants, according to the last census. (Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 2011)
It spreads over 5.400 square kilometres and borders three countries - Hungary in the south, Ukraine in the east and Poland in the north.

Figure 1: Position of the Zemplin region
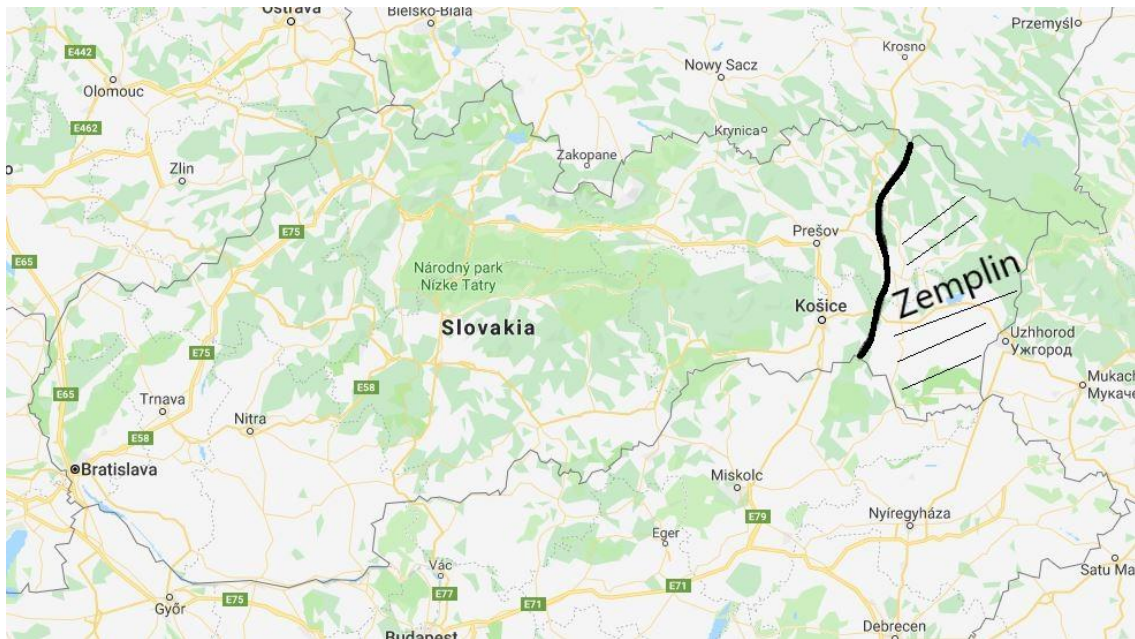
Source: own creation

As already mentioned, Zemplin region is culturally and naturally rich and offers various, notable spots to visit, as well as it is a home of specific local products. Just to mention a few:

- Zemplin and Brekov castles and the ruins of Vinne castle
- Zemplinska Sirava, Vinne and Morske Oko lakes
- Vihorlat or Poloniny mountain ranges
- Zemplin museum in Michalovce, Vihorlat museum in Humenne and Andy Warhol museum in Medzilaborce
- Wooden churches in the Upper Zemplin
- Wineyards in Tokaj or Tibava
- Ceramics in Pozdisovce

1.2.   Tourism in general

„You do not travel if you are afraid of the unknown, you travel for the unknown, that reveals you with yourself." *Ella Maillart*

1.2.1. Worldwide tourism

Tourism is one of the most dynamic economic sectors. WTTC, World Travel and Tourism Council (2018) states, that tourism accounts for almost 30% of global service exports.

A basic definition was made by UNWTO, World Tourism Organization, which defines tourism as *„a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors and tourism has to do with their activities."* (UNWTO, 2014)

In the last decades, tourism is growing rapidly, and tourists tend to explore less conventional places.

1.3. Problem formulation

Based on the low number of tourists visiting the Zemplin region, despite its high potential, this leads us to the conclusion that the region is not well promoted and branded. However, to be able to successfully promote a region, a number of actors needs to be involved and these need to be aligned on the long-term goals.

A number of authors have studied destination branding and developed theories and concepts, which will later be analysed in this thesis. Anholt's Hexagon of Competitive Identity and Dinnie's Category Flow Model of Nation Branding will be the center pieces for this analysis.

This thesis will provide an analysis of the Zemplin region and it will point out areas to focus on during the branding process. A successful branding would have positive effect on all stakeholders, not only bringing tourists to the region, but also creating new jobs, strengthening economy and bringing new potential investors. The whole hospitality industry would benefit to a high extent.

A thorough assessment of potential visitors is needed, in order to suggest the right branding strategy based on their desires and expectations. Only the domestic visitors and the visitors from the Czech Republic will be addressed. As already mentioned, domestic visitors constitute the

highest portion of visits to the region, 60%. We will target potential visitors in the 18-35 age group, since these are the most likely to be interested in visiting unknown places.

The following research question was created for the purpose of this thesis:

How can the Zemplin region be branded to increase domestic recognition and attract more domestic tourists?

This thesis aims to analyse the possibilities of raising awareness about the region through region branding and social media, along with exploring the possibilities of increasing domestic visits as well as visits from the Czech Republic in the region. However, the main focus will be on the domestic visitors.

1.4. Motivation behind the chosen topic

The main motivation for the topic choice is personal attachment of the author, born and raised in the Zemplin region, as well as low recognition of the region, despite its huge potential.

The findings of this thesis could potentially help improve the regional branding strategy and lead to increased awareness of the Zemplin region as well as higher rates of tourist visits. As already mentioned, a successful branding strategy could also lead to a better economic situation of the region, strengthening the labor market and increased revenues not only from tourism itself, but also from possibly higher exports of the local products.

Additionally, this research could form a point of departure in analysing branding strategies of other regions in Slovakia and abroad.

1.5. Delimitations

The thesis will touch upon attracting both domestic and international tourists from the Czech Republic, however, the main focus is on the domestic ones, since those constitute the highest numbers of tourists in the Slovak Republic in general. These domestic tourists could also be likely to possibly relocate to the Zemplin region.

Regarding geographical delimitations, this thesis will only focus on the specific region (Zemplin) and not on other regions in Slovakia. However, the outcomes of the analysis could be applied to other regions in the future.

It is important to mention, that the Zemplin region also expands through the border to Hungary. Hungarian part of the region will not be subject to this thesis.

2. Literature review

Destination branding is an extensive topic, being studied by a number of scholars. These offer different, yet quite alike views, models and theories, which will be discussed and analysed in this section of the present thesis.

Destination branding, as well as region branding, is a complex phenomenon. No single theory can currently describe region branding, instead, the term is comprised of various concepts and theories beyond traditional branding. Destination branding is becoming increasingly popular, but also a necessity in the current globalised world. Almost every country in the world is therefore increasing its efforts not only in country branding, but also region, city or place branding.

To be able to dive deeper into the topic, definition of "branding" and one of "region" is needed.

2.1. Defining a brand and branding

Even though the term "brand" has many different definitions, the authors of these are quite aligned on the main message. The most simple definition of a brand is as follows: *"A brand is a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers."* (American Marketing Association, 2014) Definition of a brand by Doyle (1992) is: *"a successful brand is a name, symbol, design, or some combination, which identifies the "product" of a particular organization as having a sustainable differential advantage."* Macrae, Parkinson and Shreeman (1995) follow up with: *"brand represents a unique combination of characteristics and added values, both functional and non-functional, which have taken on a relevant meaning that is inextricably linked to the brand, awareness of which might be conscious or intuitive."*

To be able to make a brand stand out and differentiate it from its competition, a successful branding strategy is needed to develop. *"Branding is endowing products and services with the power of the brand."* (Kotler and Keller, 2015) Branding as a practice can be defined as *"the process by which companies distinguish their product offerings from those of the competition."* (Jobber, Fahy, 2003) Branding is used to create a specific positive picture of a brand's product or service in the minds of the consumers, make them quickly identify this product or service and choose it over a competitor. To be able to achieve this, a strong brand is needed. Branding can be done through

various communication channels and advertising, but many other strategies are used in the process. Branding is always a long-term procedure, which only has little to no short-term outcome.

Branding theory is composed of three key elements, these being brand identity, brand image and brand positioning.

As identified by Jean-Marc Lehu (2006), **brand identity** is created by twelve components – the name of the brand, positioning, personality (how independent and dynamic the brand is), its heritage, visual characteristics (logo or colours), everyday behaviour, a narration of former events, its status (is it a market leader or an unknown brand?), values, projected image (how the brand wants to be seen), its attitude towards consumers and the attitude of the consumers towards the brand.

We could point out the difference between a brand identity and a brand image, as while these two notions are fairly similar, they are yet quite different. Brand identity is a desired perception of a company, which the brand is trying and is able to influence. On the other hand, **brand image** is how the consumers perceive the brand and what comes to their mind when hearing of it.

Brand image, in case of a destination brand is very dependent on first-hand experience of the visitor, as well as word of mouth (WOM).

When assessing brand image, it is necessary to segment the audience, to monitor the image held by various groups.

Brand positioning is defined by Kotler and Keller (2015) as follows: *"Positioning is the act of designing the company's offering and image to occupy a distinctive place in the mind of the target market."* Each brand therefore has to find its unique spot on the market and position itself in the best way possible.

2.2. Nation and destination branding

Aronczyk (2008) defines place branding as *"the result of the interpenetration of commercial and public sectors interests to communicate national* (regional) *priorities among domestic and international populations for a variety of interrelated purposes."*

The purpose of regional branding is to create awareness of a region by using already proven marketing techniques.

The start of the nation and destination branding is connected to changes in political and economic systems in the end of the 20th century. (Aronczyk, 2008) With economies and countries becoming more globalized and more involved in the world's affairs, the need for differentiation has become apparent. We could define globalization as "*the growth of interdependence between the world's economies, cultures and populations, brought about by cross-border trade in goods and services, technology and flows of investment, people and information.*" (Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2018) As already mentioned, with this growth of interdependence, the need for branding each country and making it stand out became obvious. Later on, destination branding emerged as a discipline, including region, city and place branding as its subdisciplines.

Another important term comes into account here, it being the notion of national consciousness. This could be described as a group of people sharing common historical, cultural or ethnic background and the awareness of these similarities. (Leonard Stone, 1998) National consciousness is highly subjective and it is an emotion. In our case, consciousness also happens on a regional level, as the similarities between people living in the Zemplin region are obvious and in a certain characteristics much stronger than similarities with the general population of the Slovak republic.

As Anholt (2016) states, "*a national brand strategy* (regional in our case) *determines the most realistic, most competitive and most compelling strategic vision of the country* (region), *and ensures that this vision is supported, reinforced and enriched by every act of communication between the country* (region) *and the rest of the world.*"

2.2.1. Region branding

Region is defined as a territory, a part of a landscape sphere, which is by a number of features, conditions and events, differentiated from neighbouring or other areas, while this unity is an objective requirement and a legitimate result of the development of this area. (Demek, 1987) A region has a common historical, cultural or linguistic heritage that differentiate it from other

regions. Regions tend to be more homogenous and connected internally (in terms of common heritage, dialects or traditions) than the country itself.

The importance of a region branding is in the way region promotes itself in terms of tourism, export, trade, inward investment or culture. Regional politics, as well as the stance of the region towards national and foreign policy is also of a high importance. Continuous enhancement of the region will have a positive effect on its branding within the country and abroad. One of the goals connected to successful region branding is to create a strong personal connection to the region, not only by its population, but also visitors and potential visitors influenced by the branding strategy. A strong regional brand will also result in pride and feelings of confidence of the population.

As Anholt puts it (2016), regions are, in fact, brands themselves and they are perceived as ones. A certain picture comes into mind when thinking of a particular region, followed by its characteristics, as well as the characteristics of its inhabitants. This picture can affect the way people act towards the region's population, whether it is in general communication, sports, trade or politics, to name a few. It is, however, important to state that branding a region is not the same as promoting tourism. Region branding is a long-term strategic process involving a number of stakeholders. To be able to successfully differentiate a region from another one, a region has to find a unique way to brand itself. A number of places uses phrases such as "the most beautiful nature", "rich history", and so forth, but to be able to stand out, a destination has to point out its unique features.

Based on Caldwell and Freire's (2004) definition of destination branding, we need to look at two dimensions, when discussing region branding. Firstly, functional dimension describes visible attributes of the region, such as landscape, sights, specific culture, etc. These are usually the main reasons to visit a place. Secondly, representational dimension defines perception of a region based on attributes or people linked to it, for example artists or celebrities. These two dimensions combined create a regional brand.

If a region is to be branded successfully, a consensus of all involved stakeholders is needed. This includes governmental body, media, investors and general population, as well as tourism and

investment agencies, trade associations and NGOs, as seen in the figure below. Reaching this consensus can become quite challenging. This would represent an ideal state, however, in reality we will see more of an actual state representation. (Dinnie, 2008) When speaking of challenges of a region branding, it is important to make sure that all of the stakeholders involved are aligned on the significant decisions. This includes both public and private stakeholders, as well as the citizens. Here, also the necessity of aligning the strategies and communicated message of independent city brands in the region with the one of the region itself, is important to mention.

Figure 2: Stakeholders involved in the branding process
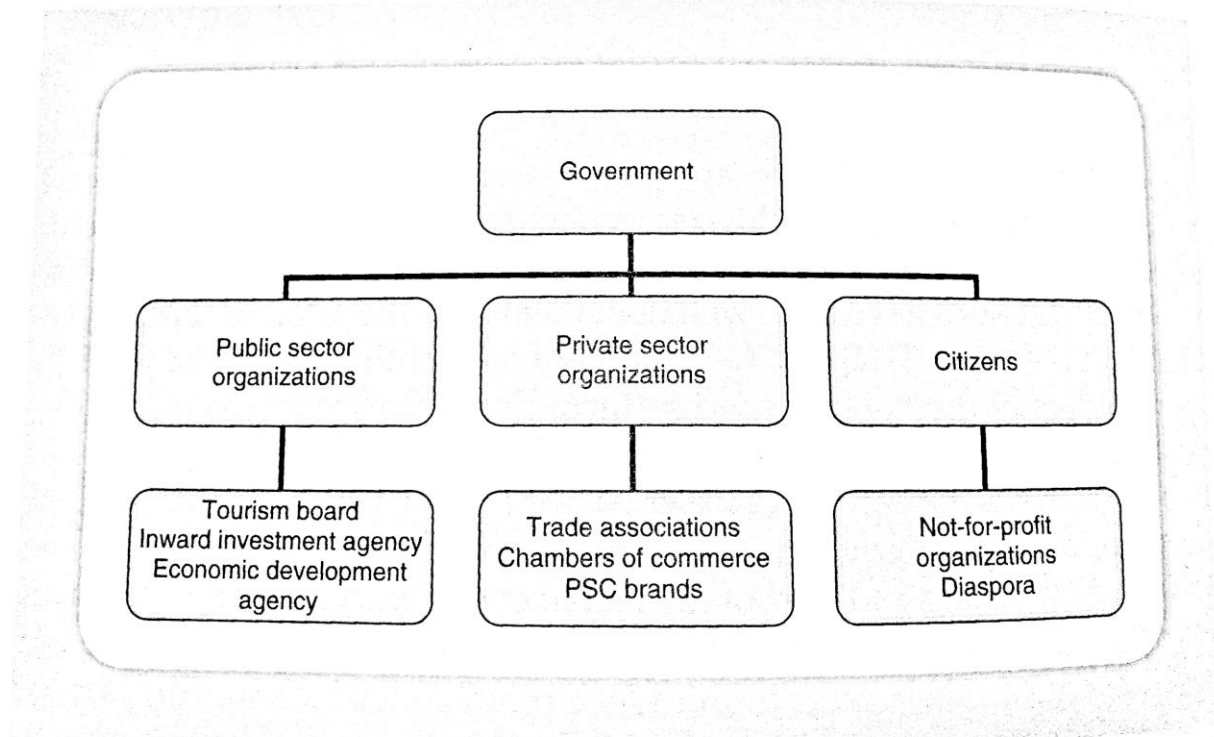
Source: Dinnie, 2008

All of the mentioned stakeholders have a high influence on region branding and a possible change of a region image. Governmental institutions, mainly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, promote destinations abroad in the best possible light. Anderson (2003) raises the importance of a region's ability to make policy decisions, to solve its own challenges and to have the capacity to make decisions, which will contribute to the region's long-term prosperity. In case of the Zemplin region,

10

we are missing one regulatory body for the whole region. Instead, each of the involved municipalities have to align their branding strategy and all of these involved municipalities need to fully cooperate, which could prove to be difficult.

Public sector organizations, such as tourism boards, promote the region to business and leisure travellers. Investment agencies promote the region to both domestic and foreign companies and potential investors.

Private sector organizations and mainly region's exporters and leading manufacturers, in combination with trade associations, promote regional products and services within the country and abroad.

Cultural institutes build cultural relations with other regions or countries and promote the region's cultural and educational products and services. Common way of building cultural relations is creation of cross-national partnerships in form of partner cities. Lastly, citizens often promote their own region without any particular strategy, sharing their stories and positive feelings by WOM.

To be able to create a successful region branding strategy, Hankinson (2007) mentions five guiding principles for destination brands management. These principles include *strong and visionary leadership, a brand-oriented organizational culture, departmental coordination and process alignment, consistent communication across a wide range of stakeholders and strong partnerships*. These principles can be applied to each of the stakeholders involved in region branding.

Region branding can be performed with a help of various touchpoints. These would mainly include advertising, PR, promotion, social media, customer service, blogs or discussions. (Dinnie, 2008)

2.3. Public diplomacy

Public diplomacy has become an effective communication strategy in creating stronger relationships with other cities and regions. (Anholt, 2014) Public diplomacy involves various activities, such as cultural and study exchange programmes, language trainings and classes, sports

and cultural events, radio and television broadcasting and social media or a programme of partner cities.

Michalovce, as the biggest city in the Zemplin region, has seven partner cities, including Congnac in France, Villa-real in Spain, Vyskov in the Czech republic, Jaroslaw in Poland, Pancevo in Serbia, Sátoraljaújhely in Hungary, Uzghorod in Ukraine, Kavarna in Bulgaria and Liptovsky Mikulas in Slovakia. (The Informational Portal of the city of Michalovce, 2017) Other cities of the Zemplin region have their partner cities as well, however, since Michalovce is the biggest city of the region, we only chose to address this. The partner cities programme creates strong partnerships and cross-promotion.

This type of a communication strategy is a non-aggressive branding method and it leads to great long-term results.

2.4. The category flow model of region branding

The category flow model has been developed for the purposes of nation branding, but it can also be applied to regions. We will therefore use this nation branding model in chapter 5 to explain region branding in our case. See the visual representation of the model in the next figure.

This model proposes an explanation of relationships between **antecedents, properties** and **consequences**. All of these categories are highly dependent on each other and create a natural flow. Here, the category of "antecedents" comprises of anticipation, defined by stereotypes and personal experience. Secondly, category of "properties" comprises of complexity (managing diversity, uncontrollability and urban/rural dichotomy), cultural expressiveness (heritage, landscape and the arts) and encapsulation (redefinition, branding and zeitgeist). Lastly, the "consequences" category is represented by engagement, which consists of inclusiveness and exemplars. All of these categories are closely related and dependent on each other. (Dinnie, 2008)

Figure 3: The category flow model
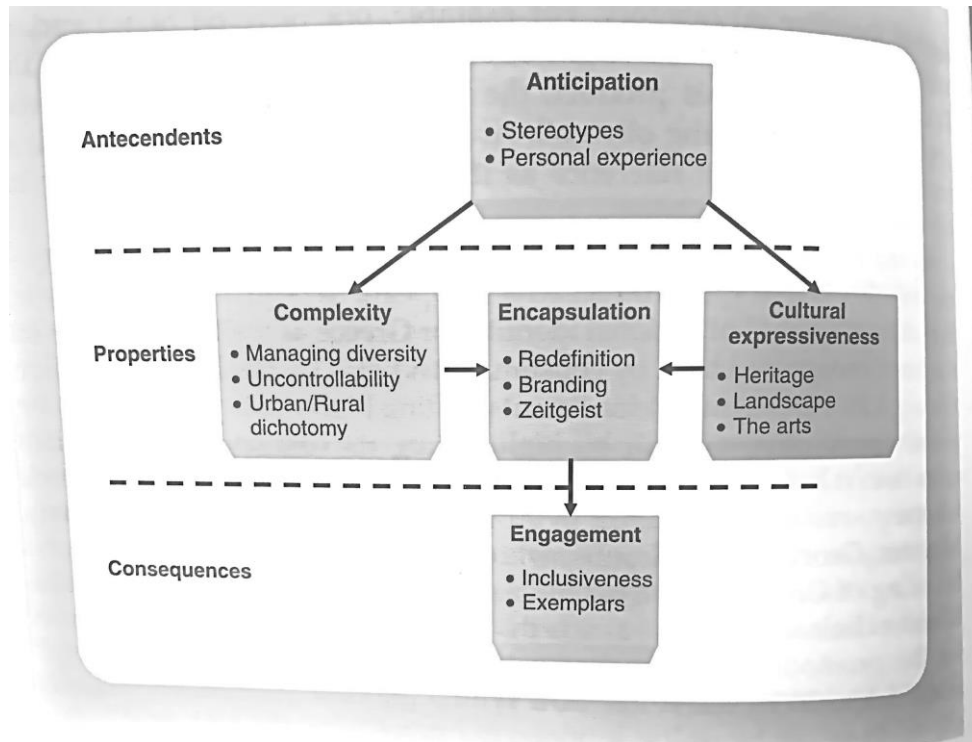
Source: Dinnie, 2008

The fact that the category of anticipation is based on already existing perceptions of a place emphasizes an 13mportance of this being a primary step in any analysis of the category flow model. These perceptions could very likely be based on misconceptions or false stereotypes. The complexity category is impossible to influence by the region itself, as it depends on uncontrollable events and therefore this category can only be closely monitored. The category of cultural expressiveness is likely to be one of the most important ones, and the one visitors will base their perceptions on, since it comprises of all elements visible to a visitor's eye. (Dinnie, 2008) Every region needs to acknowledge its cultural expressiveness and work with this category to the best possible extent. In the encapsulation category, the branding strategy itself is created. It includes redefinition of regional values. Lastly, if encapsulation is successful, engagement within a wide range of stakeholders is created. (Dinnie, 2008)

Anticipation can be defined as something the consumers are expecting from the place, what do they hope for and what they have prepared themselves for. If the stereotype of a place is negative, the region must use any means to increase the expectations of the guests. Personal experience can

13

describe an individual's perception of a visited place, while the interactions with locals, consumption of local food, services or products have a significant influence.

The importance of managing diversity in the described cycle lies particularly in the present multinational culture. It is important to keep and manage the diversity of organizations present in the region branding process. This, however, also poses a challenge. It is also of a high importance, to manage urban and rural dichotomy to the point, that they complement each other. (Dinnie, 2008)

Anholt (2014) argues, that to be able to successfully brand a region, it is crucial to integrate region's cultural and artistic expression. The concept of heritage in our model includes region's history, architecture, traditions and customs, etc. It is very important to build a modern brand based on its strong roots and traditions. Landscape is particularly important in regards to tourism.

As already mentioned, encapsulation is the crucial element, where branding process is initiated. Here, the brand needs to efficiently work with the different brand values and transform them successfully into the right branding approach.

Firstly, it is important to redefine the ways the region wishes to brand itself towards its stakeholders. If this is done wrong, region will be defined based on the stereotypes, which will in most cases be negative. Therefore, redefinition is mostly needed, if the general perception is negative, to positively brand itself.

Zeitgeist is closely related to the process of redefinition, as it similarly is an ongoing, long-term process.

Engagement can be considered as a basis for region branding. Inclusiveness suggests involving each stakeholder to take part in the branding process and to not exclude anyone. It is, however, challenging to include each stakeholder's values and visions. Second concept of engagement, exemplars, is used to provide successful examples of branding in times, when our branding process finds itself in scrutiny. (Dinnie, 2008)

2.5. Negative assumptions, stereotyping and reputation

Not only things and people can barely avoid being stereotyped, this problem concerns places as well. Every place seems to have stereotypes that *"represent a particular belief or characteristic of a place's culture"* (Brioschi, 2006). Unfortunately, stereotyping usually comes with a negative meaning. In sociology, the notion of a stereotype is described as *"a biased view of a group or class of people, a view that is resistant to change or correction from countervailing evidence."* (O'Shaughnessy, Jackson, 2000)

Every inhabited place on Earth has its reputation. Reputation of a place might be either simple or complex, as well as it can be positive or negative – a place is usually shifting between these two. If a place means very little to the most people who know about it, it has a weak reputation, which is most likely the case of Zemplin region, as it is quite unknown and overlooked. Place reputation also strongly influences how people act towards it and think about it, as well as the way they respond to the things happening there.

An image of a region can be based on facts, but in many cases, it is based on false assumptions, creating an untrue picture. These assumptions might be based on historical events, and even though the current state is different, the assumption stays the same. Many regions are battling negative associations, which take a lot of effort and energy to change.

In most countries and regions, other bodies, such as agencies, special interest groups, NGOs or companies are continuously promoting not only themselves, but also a region they operate in. However, all these bodies work by themselves and often send out contradicting information, without discussing and coordinating with each other. As a result, there is no consistent image of a region and the image goes back to its stereotype.

2.6. Place attraction, place attachment and place image

Attraction is *"a quality that causes an interest, desire in, or gravitation to something or someone."* (Ortony, Clore and Collins, 1994). Making a place or a region attractive is a significant step towards place attachment. Place attachment can be defined as *"the bonding of people to places"* (Manzo,

2003) If a person is attached to a place, he/she is likely to either be longing to visit it, if that did not happen yet, or revisit often. Place attachment also leads to recommendations to visit spread within the network of a said person attached to a place.

To create positive feelings about a place, people need to be engaged.

Three types of factors highly influence place attraction. These are cultural, economic and social factors. (Campelo, 2017) When analysing regions, cultural factors might be rather easy to identify, since, as has previously been mentioned, regions are usually built on common cultural and historical heritage. Economic factors would include region's economic prosperity, its job market, salaries or living expenses. Lastly, social factors would be individual's personal ties to the region, such as family or friends.

Place image, according to Haider, Kotler and Rein (2008) is *"the sum of beliefs, ideals, and impressions people have towards a certain place."* The presence of sensory experiences, such as tastes, sounds, smells and visions influences one's image of a place (Campelo, 2017). Senses often create first experience of a place. A place image can be strongly influenced by photographs, especially by current strength of social media platforms, notably Instagram or Pinterest.

Next to the place image, importance of one's sense of a place is also significant. This is a combination of sensory, aesthetic, emotional, cognitive and subjective experiences (Campelo, 2017).

2.7. Theory of Competitive Identity

"Making smaller places competitive in a global marketplace is a huge challenge". (Anholt, 2014)

Competitive Identity is a central topic of Anholt's research on nation and destination branding, since the world has become a competitive place of countries, regions and places for their status, and the share of visitors, tourists or investors. Competitive Identity therefore examines *"the synthesis of brand management with public diplomacy, and with trade, investment, tourism and export promotion."* (Anholt, 2014)

The importance of Competitive Identity lies in a number of facts. Here we will mention the most important ones.

Firstly, the spread of democracy in the world means higher need for transparency and open relationships, as well as growing interest in participating in regional, national and international affairs by public. Tightly linked economic system and the need for competitive long-term strategies lead companies towards positioning and promoting themselves more extensively in the marketplace. This is also linked to the growing interest in purchasing local products by the population.

Secondly, growing power of media and more informed audience creates a need for non-secretive ethical behaviors. (Anholt, 2014) Not to mention a constantly growing influence of the social media and digital communication.

Lastly, lower costs of travel lead to higher interest in discovering unknown places, since people constantly keep on searching for new experiences. Citizens do not mind moving to different parts of a country, also abroad. This leads to countries', regions' and cities' increased competition in attracting talented workforce and creating the best conditions.

National, as well as regional reputation comes from region's communication with the rest of the country, e.g. world, by one of the six channels. (Anholt, 2014) These channels therefore constitute the basis of the Competitive Identity.

1. *The **tourism promotion*** is usually the most important when it comes to branding a region together with visitor's first-hand experience.
2. *Region's **export brands***. However, the country/place of origin has to be explicit and widely known.
3. *Regional **policy decisions**,* which get reported to media and therefore create a lot of public interest.
4. The way the region manages ***investments***, its labor market situation or attraction of foreign companies.
5. Through ***cultural exchange and cultural activities*** – sports teams, musicians, artists.
6. The region's ***inhabitants*** themselves, widely known people, leaders, as well as general population, the way they behave when visiting other places or regions or abroad, and how they treat visitors of their region.

Figure 4: Hexagon of the Competitive Identity

The Hexagon of Competitive Identity

```
        Tourism              Brands

                Competitive
  People          Identity          Policy

        Culture             Investment
```
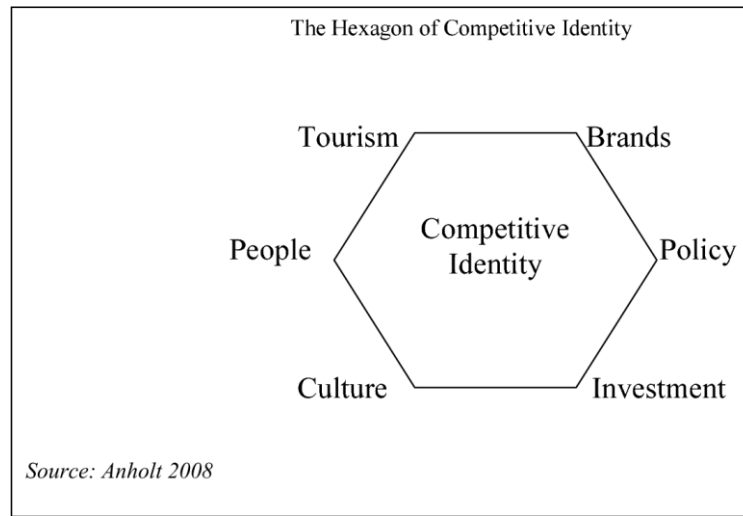
Source: Anholt 2008

Source: Anholt, 2008

Tourism agencies are one of the most persuasive actors in terms of creating a Competitive Identity. They are able to provide visitors with valuable information about the place - how does it look like, explain the history, population characteristics, environment and landscape, culture and activities. Tourism agencies therefore have high responsibilities when it comes to gaining new potential visitors.

Local brands are also one of the most important communication channels and therefore they can generate Competitive Identity. It is always beneficial, if people can associate a particular brand or a product with a region/place.

Culture is another element unique to its country or region. In order to facilitate Competitive Identity, places should create cultural events that will become reasons to visit a place, such as festivals, exhibitions, or the like.
Significant and popular sports events and teams can also create high awareness of a place. Events usually tend to be popular in the media, which will create increased interest in the place itself as well. However, this media coverage is only short term and it is not considered to be an act of branding. Region or a place has to take the right actions during the event, in order to turn this media attention towards positive branding of a place.

The last actor of Competitive Identity, population, poses an immense strength when it comes to marketing. The possibility of spreading positive messages about a region by its own population is of a high importance. This would, of course, not influence the Competitive Identity to a great extent, but it still is free and rather powerful marketing and branding tool.

If a region is able to manage coordination of all six components of the Hexagon of Competitive Identity, it should also be able to build and sustain Competitive Regional Identity both internally and externally, while all of the involved stakeholders would benefit from such actions.

As already mentioned, it is immensely important that the stakeholders are aligned and coordinated on the way they promote a region. Otherwise, if each of them presents their own image of a region, an unclear message is spread towards the public and to the outside world which would not lead to progress being achieved.

Without a doubt, successful Competitive Identity brings number of positive outcomes, such as more effective tourism and promotion of travel, better reputation of a region in a country and abroad, more effective investments, easier agreement on long-term goals between the stakeholders, better relations with cultural partners, both domestic and international, more coverage in the media, where public can follow regional policy and events as well as important news. (Anholt, 2014)

To change region's possible negative reputation and build its Competitive Identity, it is needed to mainly promote individual segments of the Hexagon of Competitive Identity. It is particularly needed to promote tourism and attractions of the region, companies relevant and vital for the region as well as their products and services, regional culture, its labor market and investments, and lastly, people living in the said region. This needs to be supported by a right advertising strategy and branding strategies. (Anholt, 2014)

It is important each of these stakeholders not only stay consistent in managing their primary responsibilities, but also try to continuously develop new policies, strategies, or new laws. This will also help with creating a better reputation.

19

2.7.1. The Virtuous Circle of Competitive Identity

The Virtuous Circle of Competitive Identity by Anholt (2014) illustrates how to create even more Competitive National Identity.

Figure 5: The Virtuous Circle of Competitive Identity
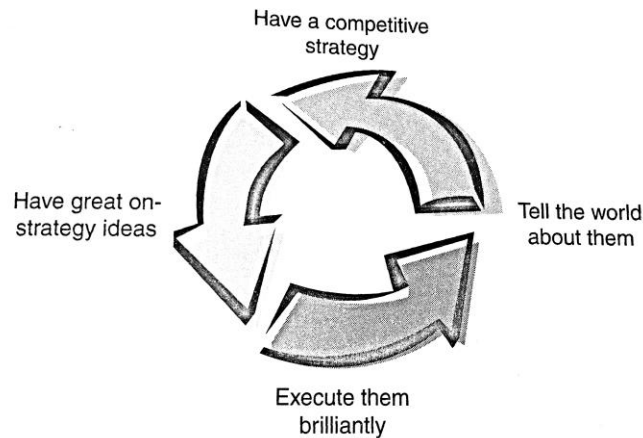
Source: Anholt, 2014

A competitive regional strategy and innovation in each sector (tourism, culture, investments, industry, government, etc.), are prerequisites for the Virtuous Circle of Competitive Identity. All the ideas in the regional strategy have to be executed at the highest level possible. Lastly, the promotion of these successful ideas has to take place through traditional and social media. This process is complex and never ending, as the new ideas are constantly developed. This circle should lead to a positive regional reputation, which will inspire further need for innovations and new strategies.

Image of a place can change when people are somehow affected by the place they visited. If this affection is positive, regional reputation can easily change from a stereotype to a positive image. This positive experience will create positive feelings about the place itself, its local products, landscape, its culture and its people. Anholt (2014) expresses a hypothesis, that "any positive experience of a country (region, place), its people or its production, tends to create a positive bias

towards some or all aspects of the country (region, place)." This can also happen in opposite way, when an individual has a negative experience of visiting a region.

Stereotype or a negative image of a whole region can easily be created if a visitor only has a bad experience with one part of the Hexagon, for example bad government will result into thinking that population of a region is also bad. However, a region has very limited power over how it is perceived amongst visitors.

Anholt (2014) proposes a City Brands hexagon, which we can use for our case as well. Here Anholt considers different components of the hexagon to those of the Competitive Identity. Firstly, we look at *the presence*, which describes city's (region's) national and international status. This leads to determination whether the region is known, how often it is visited and what is it famous for. Secondly, we focus on *the place*. Here we explore region's landscape, its climate, infrastructure, etc. Thirdly, *the potential* is measured. What are the options for investments, economic growth, trade or how hard it might be to land a job. Next part consists of *the pulse*, which describes how attractive and vibrant a region is and whether it offers a lot of entertainment and things to do. *The people* element obviously describes people inhabiting a region, whether they are friendly and accept immigrants, and also, how is the region perceived in terms of safety. Lastly, *the prerequisites* state a basic image of a region, how it would be to live there, whether the standards of living are high or low, etc. (Anholt, 2014)

Figure 6: City Brands hexagon
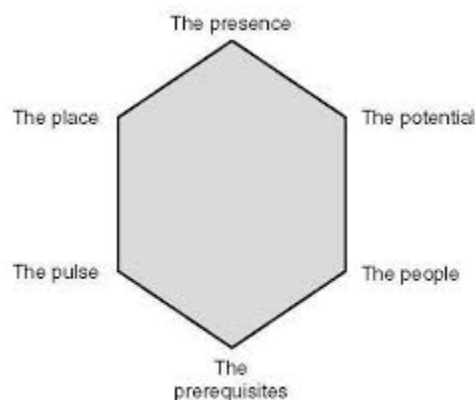
Source: Anholt, 2014

As already mentioned, places usually carry a stereotype that sticks for decades. To change this fact, right marketing is needed.

In many cases, a place or a region is unknown to the people. In this case, it needs to be introduced, with pointing out the most interesting parts. This information need to be rightly targeted, towards people with a spending power (Anholt, 2014). Places with negative or incorrect image need to have their image corrected. This image can be expanded, enhanced, revitalized or improved.

The most important, when marketing a place, is objectivity. It is needed to find something that is truly unique to a place instead of comparing itself to a bigger place.

Building a Competitive Identity is a hard and complex task and can't be left on only one of the stakeholders. It needs cooperation between the three main stakeholders - government, civil society and business.

If a strategy for building a Competitive Identity is to be successful, it needs to have six most important characteristics:

1. Creativity - In order for the region to become noticed, the strategy has to be creative.
2. Ownability - the strategy has to be based on truth, has to be credible. It cannot only be based on governmental and tourism agencies perception of the place, but audience's perception.
3. Sharpness - the story about the place (region) has to be very specific. It cannot be something audience is hearing all the time or heard previously about other place. Points of uniqueness are needed to determine.
4. Motivation - if a strategy is to be successful, it should aim to make a change in behavior of government, people, etc.
5. Relevance - does the region offer anything to the visitor?
6. Elemental - the strategy can't be too specific. It has to be able to be relevant for many people in many situations, practical and universally applicable. (Anholt, 2014)

Most regions are culturally, historically or naturally rich, but not many of them know how to transform this richness into a successful branding strategy. Lack of economic resources might also be a case of stagnation. Luckily, in case of region branding, the product is most likely intangible, economically non-demanding and therefore mostly needs the right intellectual capital to be branded successfully. An attractive regional brand has to be created.

In this case, economic power is rather needed to be in hands of potential visitors, who will travel to the region, stay in some type of accommodation and invest their monetary resources into experiences, such as food, culture, etc.

As Anholt concludes: *"Competitive Identity is an inherently peaceful and humanistic approach to international relations. It's based on competition, consumer choice and consumer power, and these concepts are very intimately linked to the freedom and power of the individual in democracy."* (Anholt, 2014)

Competitive Identity is an absolute necessity if a region wants to trade with other regions, places or countries and if it wants to compete for visitors, investors, culture or simply, if it wants to be discovered and liked.

2.8. Social media

Social media is a medium and a method of communication used to distribute news and information. However, unlike traditional media, here anyone can create and distribute content.

For our case, we will analyze engagement on newly created Instagram page Visit Zemplin. To be able to successfully analyze user engagement on the page, we need to look at variables leading to it. These are divided into three categories, them being independent, moderating and dependent variables. Independent variables include entertainment, remuneration and information, followed by moderating variables - brand attachment, but also engagement. Lastly, dependent variables include word of mouth and re-purchase intentions.

Figure 7: Variables in social media marketing
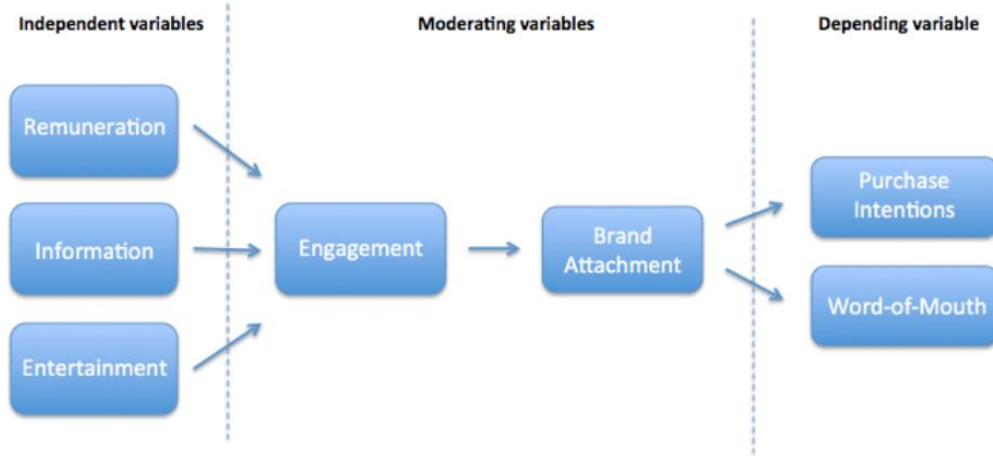
Source: own creation

Rewards (or remuneration) are benefits shared and distributed through social media, usually as various promotions (Tsai & Men, 2013). In the case of Visit Zemplin these could be free vouchers for experiences or restaurants.

Potential users are often seeking information on the Page, also in the form of reviews, opinions or advice (Park, Kee, and Valenzuela, 2009). Information will probably be the main variable for the Visit Zemplin Page.

Entertainment, according to Tsai and Men (2013), can be defined as "the relaxation, enjoyment, and emotional relief generated by temporarily escaping from daily routines". Based on prior research, higher entertainment will lead to higher engagement.

Engagement is defined as *"the level of an individual customer's motivational, brand-related and context- dependent state of mind characterised by specific levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity in direct brand interactions"* (Hollebeek, 2011). Consumers will engage with pages that provide some kind of connection and create interest. Engagement poses very high relevance for our research, as it can show the attachment to the region.

The definition of brand attachment is *"the emotion-laden target-specific bond between a person and a specific object"* (Thomson, MacInnis & Park, 2005). Brand attachment is highly relevant for this research, since users, if attached, will continue to engage with the Instagram page, which could later lead to attachment to the region and its visit.

WOM (word-of-mouth) is defined by Wallace et al. (2014) *as "the flow of communication among consumers about products and services."* This is particularly relevant for our research, as it is mostly by WOM (traditional and electronic), information about the region and activities within it, spreads.

Lastly, re-purchase intentions, are defined as *"the individual's judgment about buying again"* (Huaiqin & Hong, 2013). Here we could address intentions to re-visit the region.

3. Methodology

Based on the problem formulation, this thesis aims to analyse possibilities of increasing domestic recognition and attracting more domestic tourists to the Zemplin region. This thesis also aims to get insights on Zemplin's visitors and their knowledge of the region.

In addition to this, a new Instagram account Visit Zemplin is created to promote Zemplin on social media.

In order to successfully reach these goals, a methodological plan has been created.

This chapter will therefore focus on author's position in regards to the philosophy of science, it will explain the methods used in the research, explain the process of conducting the research as well as state what type of data has been collected.

3.1. Philosophy of science

Philosophy of science comprises two main dimensions, ontology and epistemology. These concepts are closely related and they influence each other.

The stance of the author towards the philosophy of science is important to understand the taken research process.

We will therefore examine the two main philosophy of science dimensions.

3.1.1. Ontology

Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality. There are two main aspects of ontology, depending on the way researchers believe the world operates and how do we as humans see the truth. Therefore, depending on the answer to this question, we consider two aspects of ontology, these being objectivism and constructivism, respectively.

Objectivists believe that reality exists uninfluenced by humans and we are born into a pre-existing world. This group of researchers enforces an importance of research based on scientific methods and testing of hypotheses. Quantitative research is usually used by objectivists.

On the other hand, constructivists believe that the world exists dependently of social factors. Social phenomena and their meanings are constructed by humans and language and its representation shapes our perceptions of reality. Constructivists base their research on series of individual truths. (Bryman, 2015)

The author considers herself an objectivist and believes that reality is not dependent on its observer. This thesis is based on empirical research, primary data and testing of the initially set assumptions in order to answer the research question.

3.1.2. Epistemology

Epistemology tries to answer the question, what should be considered an acceptable knowledge in a discipline. Epistemology studies the question of *"whether the social world can and should be studied according to the same principles, procedures and ethos as the natural sciences."* (Bryman, 2015)

Again, based on an answer to this question, researchers split into two categories, positivists and interpretivists.

While the positivists apply natural science methods to social science research, interpretivists believe that access to reality is only through social constructions, such as language, consciousness or instruments. (Myers, 2013)

Here, the author considers herself to be a positivist.

3.2. Deductive research

In order to apply and analyse the chosen theories and to obtain insights on Slovak and Czech visitors to the Zemplin region, the author chose to use a deductive research approach.

Deductive approach is the most common when analysing the relationship between the theory and social research. In this type of research, the researcher deduces a hypothesis or a set of hypotheses that will later be tested. The last step of the research is an induction, when the researcher *"infers the implications of his or her findings for the theory that prompted the whole exercise".* (Bryman, 2015) The initial theory is then revised.

Deductive research is accompanied by a few concerns. Firstly, the process itself is very linear, giving very little space to any innovation. However, based on the results of the research, the researcher can change his previous stance towards the chosen theory, or he can influence the research itself by strategically selecting the questions for the questionnaire or survey. This selection can therefore have an impact on the results of the study.

3.3. Assumptions

This thesis aims to answer the question, whether the Zemplin region can be branded in order to increase its recognition and attract more domestic tourists. Several assumptions were identified, in order to answer this question, as well as to analyse the preferences of these domestic visitors to better understand market needs.

A1: Zemplin region is not well recognized between Slovak travellers and it is rather unknown by the Czech travellers.

A2: Potential visitors are interested in visiting a region that is not particularly popular, but has a lot to offer.

A3: Zemplin region is rather unattractive to the potential visitors.

A4: Nature and the history of the place are the factors by which a potential vacation place is chosen by our respondents.

A5: Not everyone will be able to name advantages and disadvantages of the region, which would mean a low level of knowledgeability.

A6: Different age and social groups will prefer different types of vacation.

A7: The components of Anholt's Hexagon of the Competitive Identity are important factors when choosing a vacation place.

3.4. Research design

Primary and secondary data were used throughout the research process of this thesis. Secondary data were mostly used for determining and analysing the theory, while these consisted of destination branding and social media marketing literature.

Primary data were collected on the basis of an online questionnaire, through Google Forms. The questionnaire was carried out in the Slovak language, since the research in this thesis targets the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic residents.

The questionnaire was created keeping initially set assumptions, as well as the Hexagon of Competitive Identity by Anholt in mind.

To be able to identify possible problems in question formulation (Bryman, 2015), the questionnaire was sent to 10 respondents as a pre-test. After the pre-test, the questionnaire was distributed.

3.4.1. Likert scale

Likert scale was also used while conducting the questionnaire. Likert scale is defined as a multiple-indicator of an attitude set relating to a specific area. (Bryman, 2015) The purpose of this scale lies in measuring of feelings intensity regarding a specific topic. 5 point Likert scale was used.

3.5. Sampling and data collection

We have used snowball sampling for our research. The questionnaire was distributed through Facebook, in groups of Slovak and Czech nationals. The author also shared the questionnaire with personal acquaintances fitting the desired characteristics. After posting the questionnaire into Facebook groups, respondents have shared the survey on their Facebook walls, which helped to obtain higher number of answers. As Bryman (2015) describes, researcher makes initial contact with a group of relevant people and later snowballing comes into effect. We could argue whether the initial group of respondents might have been biased and therefore the whole sample could be

biased as well. However, since we have made sure to distribute the questionnaire in various Facebook groups with different social groups, this is rather unlikely.

The challenge with snowball sampling is that the sample will not be representative of the population. However, this poses only a small problem when conducting a qualitative research. (Bryman, 2015)

A possibility of not answering the questionnaire has been a challenge in our research, however, with the obtained data we cannot determine how big of a sample has not answered the survey and therefore we cannot calculate the response rate.

The questionnaire was done only online, since the author is currently not living in any of the researched countries, to hand out the questionnaire personally.

Data has been collected during April and the beginning of May 2019.

3.6. Structure of the questionnaire

The title and the description of the questionnaire explained the purpose behind the research and provided a little information about the author. The description also assured the respondents about the use of the responses solely for academic purposes.

Since the survey was conducted in Slovak language, this has secured that all the respondents were from our target group, Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic residents.

The first part of the questionnaire was demographic, were the respondents were asked about their gender, age and social status, in order to help us understand the respondents' backgrounds.

In the second part, the survey focused on the habits while travelling in general, such as the type of preferred vacation, the importance of various predispositions of the place visited, or the motivation when choosing the vacation place. This section was to answer *A2: Potential visitors are interested in visiting a region that is not particularly popular, but has a lot to offer, A4: Nature and the history of the place are the factors by which a potential vacation place is chosen by our respondents* and *A7: The components of Anholt's Hexagon of the Competitive Identity are important factors when choosing a vacation place.*

In the third part, we focused on vacations in Slovakia. Respondents were asked about preferred type of accommodation, budget for their travels or the type of transport when travelling around Slovakia. This part was mainly to provide an answer to *A6: Different age and social groups will prefer different types of vacation.*

The last part of the questionnaire focused on the Zemplin region. Respondents were to state their perception of Zemplin, whether they thought it had something to offer and what do they consider to be the biggest advantages and disadvantages. In this section, we aimed to answer *A1: Zemplin region is not well recognized between Slovak travellers and it is rather unknown by the Czech travellers, A3: Zemplin region is rather unattractive to the potential visitors* and *A5: Not everyone will be able to name advantages and disadvantages of the region, which would mean a low level of knowledgeability.*

Both single option and multiple choice questions were included in the survey, as well as questions using Likert scale. Some of the questions also allowed to answer "other" and then state respondent's own answer that was better fitting. A number of questions was created to test Zemplin's Hexagon of Competitive Identity.

3.7. Advantages and disadvantages of online (self-completion) questionnaire

As the biggest advantage of an online questionnaire we state its ease of conduction and administration, as well as no cost. In comparison with a structured interview, this saves an extensive amount of time. Self-completion questionnaire is sent out quickly in badges and answers come in constantly, while being automatically updated. Coding is therefore easy, since all results can be downloaded into a database. This type of a questionnaire is also convenient for the respondents, since they can answer in their own spare time and their own pace.

It has been suggested *"that characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, and the social background of interviewers may combine to bias the answers that respondents provide"* (Bryman, 2015). While this claim is more likely to be true when conducting a structured interview, information about the author has been provided in our case as well and could have led to some extent of bias, especially

if the respondents knew the author personally. Tourangeau and Smith (1996) also claim that respondents are more likely to respond truly, if they are not interviewed in person.

Another obstacle of a structured interview that is eliminated with an online questionnaire is that of asking questions in different order, different ways or even asking different questions in general. With an online questionnaire, the same set of questions is sent to everyone in the same order.

Compared to a structured interview, an online questionnaire has a number of disadvantages as well. Firstly, if a respondent has a problem with answering a question, instead of being helped during a personal interview, he/she is forced to choose an answer that might not be satisfactory. Secondly, questions that require more thorough answer or those where the respondents choose an answer "other" are likely to be answered very briefly, in comparison to the personal interview, where the respondent would be challenged to elaborate.

While during a personal interview, an option to quit interviewing is not very likely, respondents can leave an online questionnaire at any time, if they do not find it interesting or worthy their time. Therefore, an online questionnaire must be created bearing this in mind and providing a set of questions that will not be perceived boring.

As Bryman states (2015), as opposed to a structured interview, here respondents can read all questions in advance, which could change the flow of answers. We therefore cannot be sure the questions were answered independently and in a desired order.

As already mentioned, since an interesting and motivating questionnaire is required in order to make sure the respondents will not leave without answering, an online survey therefore needs to be of an appropriate length. Long questionnaires are likely to be dismissed due to fatigue and laziness.

Lastly, an option of multiple replies to a questionnaire needs to be addressed. Since this survey is anonymous, we cannot determine whether a specific person has only answered once or multiple times.

4. Analysis of Zemplin based on the Hexagon of Competitive Identity

To be able to further proceed with our research, an overview of Zemplin as a regional brand is needed. We will base this analysis on six crucial factors of the Hexagon of Competitive Identity by Anholt, described in the previous section.

4.1. Tourism

Zemplin offers extensive tourist opportunities. Its wine tourism, agro and eco-tourism, as well as numerous recreational areas by the water and number of medieval castle ruins, make it a perfect destination for every nature lover.

Wine tourism in the Zemplin region is one of the most developed in Slovakia, based on the presence of the world-famous Tokaj region in the south of Zemplin. Despite many disputes over the "designation of origin" with Hungary over the brand Tokaj, since this region lies partly in both countries, Tokaj still remains one of the most popular tourist destinations in Zemplin. The mentioned dispute has ended in 2008 and the European Court allowed Slovakia to continue using "Tokaj Wine Region" as a brand. (Court of Justice of the European Union, 2014)

However, propagation of tourism in the Zemplin region is lacking structure and strategy and it is only done without a systematic cooperation of the cities and villages of the region. The promotion potential of the region is not fully utilized.

A common portal or website for obtaining tourist information about the region is also missing. The website for Lower Zemplin, the bigger and more populated part, is well developed and offers a lot of constantly updated information on activities, culture, services, etc. The website is available in Slovak, Polish, Ukrainian and English language. However, the Upper Zemplin only has underdeveloped website with very little information, that does not seem to be updated often. A need for combining these websites to create an image of the whole region becomes apparent.

The organization Zemplin Regional Organization of Tourism is again only consisting of towns and villages of Lower Zemplin and does not provide a thorough and consistent message. (Dolny

Zemplin, 2016) Upper Zemplin does not have its separate tourism organization. Here we recommend creation of an uniform tourism organization for the whole region.

Since Zemplin offers numerous tourist attractions, tourism represents one of the strongest components of the Hexagon of Competitive Identity. On the other side, due to various shortcomings, an improvement in branding and consistent message between the two main parts of Zemplin is needed.

4.2. Local brands

It is particularly important to be able to associate certain brands, products and services with a place. Zemplin is not specifically known for many local products or services, however, we will mention two of the most important ones, worldwide known.

Pozdisovce ceramics might be the product most associated with Zemplin. It is handmade ceramics, with a tradition of a few centuries, while the oldest noted notion of it comes from the 17th century. The ceramics is made of kaolin clay. (Majstri hliny, 2001) Pozdisovce ceramics is a brand not only known in Slovakia, but also widely recognizable in the world. It stands out with its specific design. (see in Appendix 1)

Another example of a locally made product, is the Mini Babybel cheese, known in most parts of the world. Even though Michalovce's factory, belonging to the Groupe Bel, is not the only producer of this cheese (Mini Babybel is also produced in France and in the USA), it is a supplier to numerous European countries. Next to Mini Babybel, the factory in Michalovce also produces other unique cheese brands, such as The Laughing Cow, Maredsous, and others. Groupe Bel ranks third in the biggest branded cheese producers in the world. Every day, 33 million cheese portions made by Groupe Bel are consumed around the world. (Groupe Bel, 2012) This proves the brand's strength and its importance of being present in the Zemplin region.

Despite the lack of widely known products from Zemplin, we can see the importance of the two mentioned ones. These products definitely influence Zemplin's Hexagon of Competitive Identity to some extent.

4.3. Policy and government

As previously mentioned, it is hard to describe policy and decision making processes in the Zemplin region, since one regulatory body administrating the whole region is missing. Instead, every municipality is making its own decisions. However, the fact that every municipality belonging to the Zemplin region belongs to the same political party, makes the trends of these decisions rather easier to follow and administer.

In the last years, political situation in Slovakia as a whole, has been rather tense. Numerous scandals and problems have disturbed the citizens, making them call for justice and organizing protests all over Slovakia, not excluding Zemplin.

The fact that Zemplin is one of the poorest regions in Slovakia, with one of the lowest wages and the highest unemployment rates, is throwing bad light on the region and making it a place visitors want to avoid. Unemployment rates in 2018 were 13,9% in Lower Zemplin and 12,2% in Upper Zemplin. (Employment Institute, 2018)

Here we can see difficulties regarding the Policy component of the Hexagon of Competitive Identity and we could conclude that the unclear and rather neglected state of the regional government has negative effect on region branding and leads to stereotyping and negative assumptions about the region.

4.4. Investment

Regarding the investments towards the Zemplin region, we could consider the European Structural and Investment funds Slovakia has been allocated from the European Union, as the most notable ones. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Economy to distribute these funds to regions and cities in need of financial support. These funds have been particularly used towards renovating schools, whole streets, parks, playgrounds and bike trails, as well as towards building new green areas, securing waste separation, crime prevention, or extension of camera system, among others. The European Structural and Investment funds represent an immense help to the Zemplin region. One of the most notable rather recent investments could be the reconstruction of the Cultural Centre in Michalovce in 2006, where the town's cinema and art gallery are located, among others.

In 2012, further renovations were made, with the investment of 133.000 eur. (Dolny Zemplin, 2014)

We will also mention the project "Development of the Sninske lakes microregion", being funded with EUR 300 million in 2003. A new bridge over the Cirocha river was built, sports facilities, pavements, roads and parking spots around the lakes, as well as new electrical wiring, sewerage, sewage treatment plant, sanitary facilities or administrative building for the tourist-information center. Sninske lakes have become one of the primary recreational areas in the Upper Zemplin. (Euractiv, 2008)

Since attracting visitors has been one of the main goals of Zemplin in the recent years, many other investments have been made in this area. A number of castle ruins was repaired and continues to be restored, while the Vinne castle is important to mention, since this castle is one of the most visited ones in the region. The restoration of this castle began in 2011 and still continues. (SME, 2017)

Investments have high influence on the Hexagon of Competitive Identity, since they help with enhancement and further development of the region.

4.5. Culture

Culture has played a big part in shaping the Zemplin region to its current form. Still in the present times, folklore plays a big role in the lives of Zemplin inhabitants, with many folklore groups being immensely popular, while the Folklore Ensemble Zemplin being the most prominent one. This ensemble is continuously participating in various national and international competitions, taking the leading positions.

It is important to mention, that Andy Warhol's parents were living in Zemplin region before emigrating to the United States. Andy Warhol has become a pride of the region, with the museum of modern art in Medzilaborce carrying his name.

Museums in general are popular in Zemplin, with their exhibits describing the history and culture of the region. Zemplin museum in Michalovce is the leading museum of the region, being on the premises of the aristocratic noble-houses from the 17th century. The museum is divided into several expositions. The historical one exhibits the life of the most notable houses and aristocracy in history of the region, especially during the renaissance. The archeological exhibition consists of

various items and tools used in the region since the prehistoric times. The art history shows mostly sacral art specific for the region, as well as the portrait gallery of the wealthiest aristocratic family in Michalovce, the Staray family, and other art installations. Ethnographic exhibition focuses on skills and crafts specific for the region, such as viticulture, agriculture, pottery or garments. Lastly, the natural exhibition portraits the fauna and flora present in the region. (Zemplin Museum in Michalovce, 2018)

Vihorlat museum in Humenne and Homeland museum in Trebisov are also worth mentioning, as they help to preserve the culture and history and are helpful with understanding the region.

The wooden churches are also a rarity specific for Zemplin region and they are visited by tourists from all around the world. These churches belong to the greek catholic church. 13 of the total 27 wooden churches in Slovakia lie directly in the Zemplin region, while a number of the others lie on the border of the region. Out of the 13, two churches belong to the UNESCO World Heritage. (Slovakia Travel, 2015)

Here, we can see the importance of culture in the Zemplin region and its connection to tourism. Sports, music and arts are also important for the region and will be considered later in the research. The fact that culture in the region is being continuously encouraged and sought-after, expresses its high impact on region branding and the Hexagon of Competitive Identity.

4.6. People

As already mentioned in the introduction, the Zemplin region is a melting pot of people of various descents and language preferences.

Firstly, Hungarian is spoken by the biggest minority in Slovakia. Hungarians inhabit the southern part of Zemplin, counting the total of 40.449. Therefore, people of Hungarian descent form the biggest minority living in the Zemplin region as well.

Secondly, the second biggest minority are the Romas, while the total of 22.823 lives in the region. Romas are subject to very negative perception in Slovakia and other Eastern European countries, mostly because of their unwillingness to adapt and to participate in the working life. However, Roma culture is extremely rich and we see a high potential in its utilization by propagation of Roma dances, music, etc.

Thirdly, 2.242 Ukrainians live in the Zemplin region, mostly because of better living conditions than in Ukraine.

Rusyn, very similar to Ukrainian, is spoken by Rusyns, the descendants of the inhabitants of the former Carpathian Ruthenia. Carpathian Ruthenia was connected to USSR after the WWII, with thousands of Rusyns fleeing to Czechoslovakia, Romania and former Yugoslavia. (Center for the traditional culture, 2019) Currently, Slovakia is the home to the highest number of Rusyns, 33.482, as per census in 2011, while 15.488 lives in Zemplin region.

Lastly, the smallest minority living in the region are the Czechs, counting 1.437 inhabitants. (Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 2011)

Here we can see the true differences between people living in the Zemplin region, where Slovaks along with five biggest minorities live together in the day-to-day life. These differences, cultural, historical and the language differences make the Zemplin region a truly unique place, one of the most diverse regions in Slovakia and in Europe.

Based on the fact, that most people of these minorities have relatives in the countries of their origin, branding of the Zemplin region happens during the communication with these relatives. WOM is present as a communication channel.

People also to a high extent influence the perception of the region, based on their daily interactions with the tourists and visitors, the way they act in their job positions, especially in leisure, hospitality, gastronomy and tourism, towards these visitors.

People also influence criminality rates. Unfortunately, criminality can be considered quite high in the region, due to the difficult integration of Romas.

When looking at Anholt's Hexagon of the Competitive Identity, we could conclude that people have possibly the highest influence on the Competitive Identity in the Zemplin region.

As an outcome of this analysis, we could conclude that tourism, local brands, culture and people have the highest impact on region branding. However, the unpleasant state of local government is holding the branding efforts back and it is of a great importance to focus on improvement of policy making in the region. Local brands and investment components of the Hexagon of Competitive Identity will not be subject to our further research, since most respondents would not be familiar with these.

5. The category flow model of the Zemplin region

In this section, we have chosen to analyse anticipation, complexity and cultural expressiveness of the Zemplin region, in order to provide more insight on the region's characteristics.

Anticipation

As has already been mentioned in chapter 2.4, the anticipation category is based on already existing stereotypes and assumptions about the Zemplin region. Unfortunately, these assumptions are in the most cases negative, since Zemplin is mostly associated with low incomes, higher levels of unemployment and poverty, as well as negatively perceived Romas. For some reason, these characteristics tend to outweigh the region's advantages. Continuous branding of the region needs to be employed in order to change the current stereotypes.

We cannot analyse personal experience of the visitors of the Zemplin region as such, meaning this is very individual, however, the need for these experiences being positive is crucial.

Cultural artefacts, such as movies or books, can also have strong influence on how a place is perceived. Even though not many movies or books have plots happening in the Zemplin region, those that do, are mostly in a slightly negative context, also creating negative image of the region for the potential visitors.

Reputation of the Zemplin region is negatively influenced by its strong connection to Ukraine and again, high presence of Roma and Hungarian minorities, which are not perceived well by general Slovak population. Also, the region's rather rural inclination tends to be frowned upon. Slovakia in general tends to be looked at as a former communist country, strongly influenced by the former Soviet Union. However, its inclusion to the European Union and NATO is perceived well and it is strengthening the economic position of the country and its continuous development.

Complexity

Many regions and countries in the Eastern Europe face the problem of being very homogenous. However, the case of the Zemplin region is completely opposite. Based on the last chapter and the

description of the people living in the region, we can conclude that diversity of the population is very high and needs to be managed accordingly. This can pose a challenge, since the background of each of the minorities living in the region is different, however, if managed properly, an interesting place based on flourishing cohabitation is created.

Figure 8: Distribution of the population of the Zemplin region
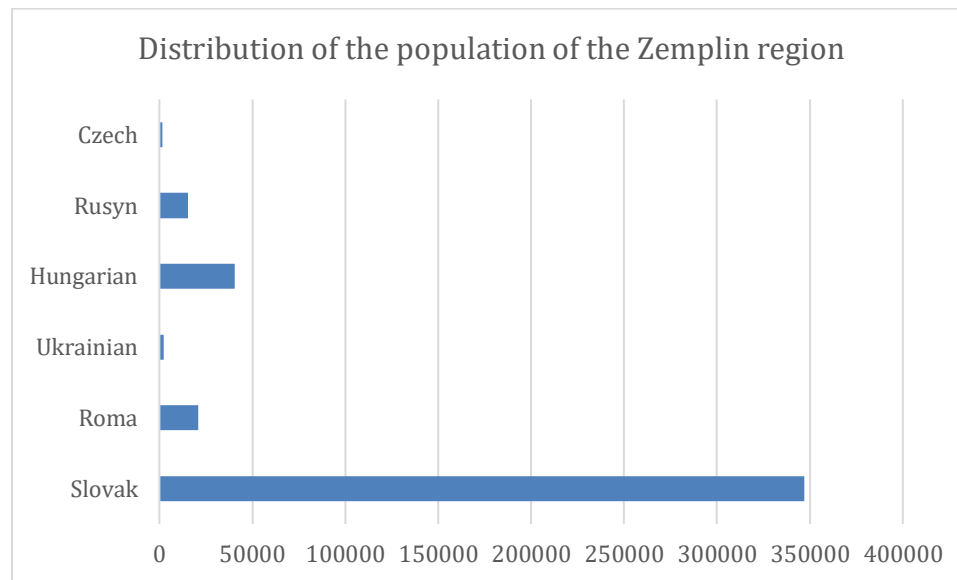
Source: own compilation based on the data obtained from the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 2011

Not only management of diversity of the population is important, we need to address the diversity of the stakeholders involved in the region branding as well. However, the greater the diversity in the region, the harder it is to manage, which is the topic of the uncontrollability theory.

The urban/rural dichotomy can be another strong factor of the Zemplin region. The region is mostly rural, but with a successful incorporation of the urban environment a good level of dichotomy is achieved.

Cultural expressiveness

Cultural expressiveness is without a doubt the strongest part of the Zemplin brand. Based on the analysis in the previous chapter, we can conclude that the Zemplin region is quite specific in its combination of history, traditions and culture.

First mentions about the region of Zemplin come already from the 11th century. (Benuskova, 2005) The region has been influenced by many important European events, since its location in the center of Europe made it vulnerable to occupation by various historical empires. Zemplin was occupied by the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century and later it was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which has strongly influenced its culture and inclination towards adopting some of the Hungarian traditions. (Tajovsky, 1919) After the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Zemplin became a part of Czechoslovakia, while during the WWII its southern part was connected to Hungary. (Benuskova, 2005) Later on, Zemplin, together with Czechoslovakia and other countries of the Eastern Europe, was strongly influenced by the Soviet Union.

From this short description of the historical development of the Zemplin region, we can conclude that the region was strongly influenced by various major historical events and empires and therefore its culture and traditions are truly unique.

Considering the landscape, this consists of many lakes, hills and natural reservoirs. It is, however, crucial to combine appealing landscape and attractive urban environment, ready for incoming investments. Speaking of arts, here literature, music, paintings, or ceramics are playing the leading role. Museums are highly important for preserving the history of the Zemplin region.

6. SWOT analysis of Zemplin region

Based on our previous analysis, in this chapter we will perform the SWOT analysis of the Zemplin region. SWOT analysis is a tool used for strategic planning, it helps to set future objectives and areas to focus on. It can be used to build regional branding strategy and its competitive strategy and further work on its competitive identity. The acronym "SWOT" stands for "strengths", "weaknesses", "opportunities" and "threats".

6.1. Strengths

The strengths of the region result from its rich history and diversity, as well as its beautiful landscape. We have chosen five most important ones that the Zemplin region should focus on and pride in, when branding itself. These characteristics make Zemplin stand out in comparison to many other Slovak regions.

1. Rich natural conditions
2. Voluminous historical development
3. Cultural and architectural sites
4. Number of traditions and folklore groups
5. Cohabitation of people of various descents

6.2. Weaknesses

The biggest weaknesses we see in unused potential of the region and very minimal focus on its branding. The fact that the region is rather unknown and overlooked makes the branding difficult, but not impossible. However, we see challenges in unifying the message by stakeholders involved and in the sole fact of no unified governmental body or social media and web channels.

1. Rather unknown region
2. Negative stereotype
3. Low branding and propagation activities
4. Low cooperation between towns and municipalities, no consistent message

5. Absence of one common website or social media accounts
6. Infrastructure issues

6.3. Opportunities

We see the opportunities of the region in some of its unique features and special types of tourism, as well as a new wave of development and construction of new attractions and accommodation types. We advise the Zemplin region to increase its effort in utilizing the European Structural and Investment Funds towards continuous development, building of the new infrastructure as well as promotion of Roma and other minorities' culture.

1. Agrotourism and wine tourism
2. Continuous construction of new hotels and accommodation
3. Support funds from EU
4. Water reservoirs, one of the clearest night skies in Europe (Poloniny)
5. Support and encouragement of Roma culture

6.4. Threats

We have previously pointed out a few problems the Zemplin region is battling with. These obviously pose threats to the region and its development and branding. However, to influence or change these problems would take a lot of effort and this process would be long-term. Despite apparent difficulties, it is needed to continuously work on changing these threats to allow the region to develop and change its stereotype and negative reputation.

1. Economic situation
2. High unemployment
3. Low wages
4. Criminality

7. Findings

Based on the results consequent to the online questionnaire, we aim to answer the initially set assumptions, our research question, as well as get insights on Slovak and Czech visitors to Slovakia in general and to the Zemplin region.

The following chapter will be divided into four parts, as already outlined in chapter *3.6. Structure of the questionnaire.*

Therefore, the first part will provide an overview of the demographics of our respondents, their gender, age and social status. This is done in order to get an insight on the background of the participants in our research, as well as to state who the potential visitors of the Zemplin region might be.

Second part focuses on respondents' preferences when travelling in general, connecting it to Anholt's Hexagon of Competitive Identity.

Travelling to Slovakia is the main topic of the third part, while in the last part we will focus on the Zemplin region and how it is perceived between the potential visitors. Here we will again analyse the Hexagon of Competitive Identity and focus on already performed SWOT analysis.

Lastly, we will conclude with possible options and recommendations on how to brand the Zemplin region and we will outline possibilities for further research.

7.1. Overview of respondents' demographics

After the questionnaire has been distributed, it has gotten 152 responses. As already mentioned, we do not possess data on the response rate, since we are not able to see how many people opened the questionnaire and left without answering it. However, we have been able to obtain a pretty extensive sample.

Nationality

The purpose of the first question was to determine nationality of the respondents. Since our research focused only on Slovak and Czech nationals and as has already been mentioned, the questionnaire was made in Slovak language, this has assured us that only nationals of these countries were able to respond. However, for some reason Czech nationals only constitute 4% of the respondents, which could mean that they simply are not familiar with the Zemplin region and closed the questionnaire right after opening.

Slovak nationals constitute 96% of the respondents, which accounts for 146 respondents in absolute numbers. Czechs then form already mentioned 4%, corresponding to 6 respondents in total.

Figure 9: Respondents's nationality
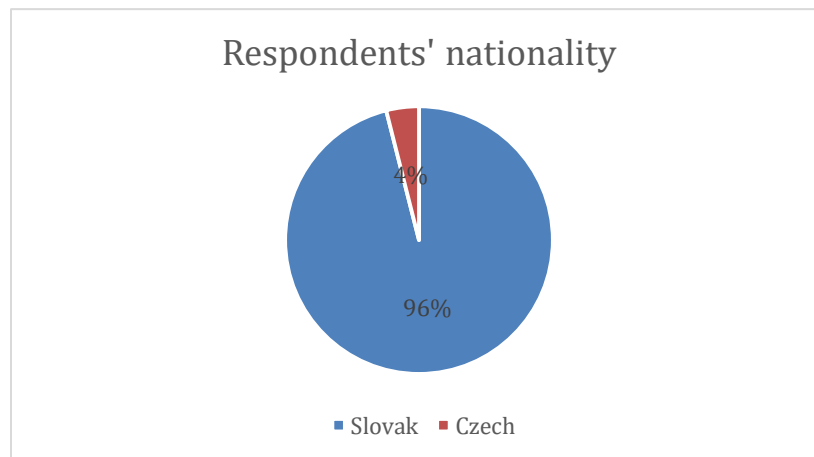
Source: own compilation

Gender

Females were represented by slightly more than double in our survey, counting 101 of the total of 150 respondents. Therefore remaining 49 respondents were males, while 2 respondents did not answer this question, even though an option "I do not wish to state" was available.

Figure 10: Respondents's gender
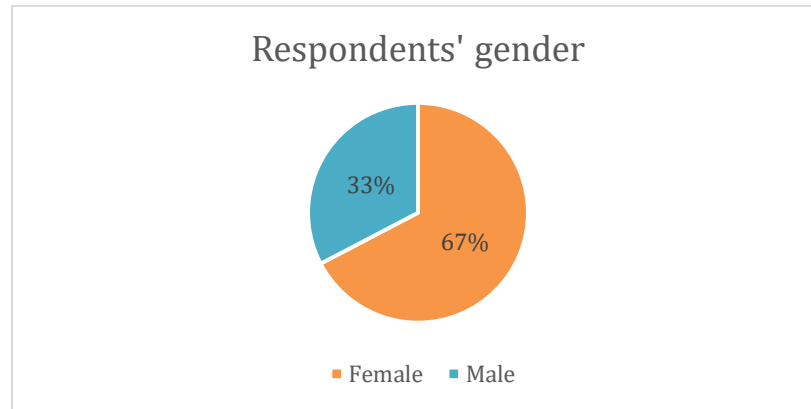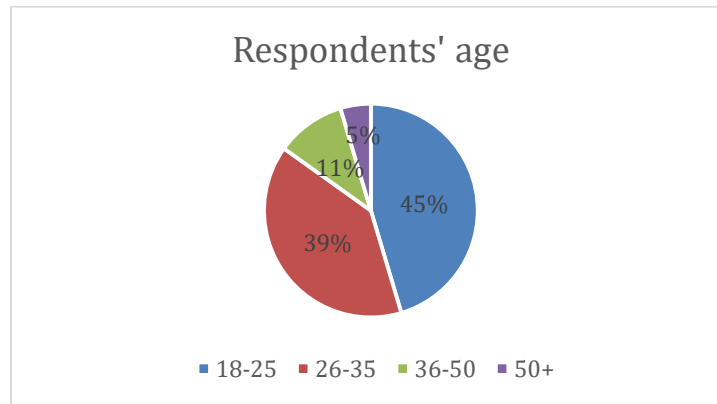

Source: own compilation

Age

Age was an important metric in our research, since it might determine types of vacations taken by different age groups, their budget and preferred type of accommodation, factors that change with higher age and higher requirements.

Majority of our respondents were young people between the ages 18-25, constituting 45% and 69 respondents in total numbers. These are followed by respondents aged 26-35, accounting for 39% of the dataset. Thirdly, age group 36-50 was represented by 11%, while the last age group, 50+ counted only for 5%.

For the purpose of this research we are targeting younger visitors in the 18-35 age group, we are pleased with these forming the majority of our respondents.

Figure 11: Respondents' age

Source: own compilation

Social status

Social status has been the last of demographic metrics in this research. We found out, that the majority of participants were childless employed people, counting for almost 47%. These were followed by students forming 35% and employed people with children accounting for 14,5%. Unemployed participants constituted 2,5%, while two respondents (1,3%) were retired.

We could assume that the students will have very limited budget for travelling and will probably choose less costly accommodation. On the other hand, since over 60% of participants are working, these will be of the highest interest in our case, since there is a potential of them wanting to explore unknown regions, such as Zemplin.

Figure 12: Respondents' social status
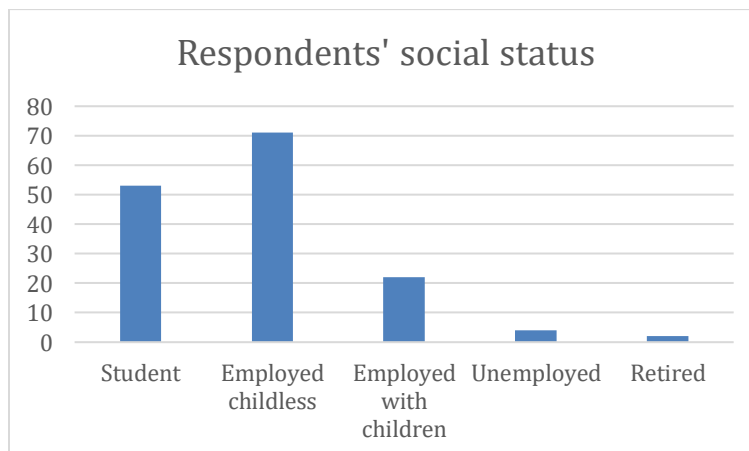
Source: own compilation

After analysing the demographics of our respondents, we could conclude that the majority is formed by students and employed childless people between 18 and 35 years. The mentioned social group will be likely to be willing to travel and explore, therefore is highly relevant for the purpose of this thesis. The fact that the majority of our respondents belongs to the specific social group can be explained by younger generation being present on Facebook and in general, using the internet most often and therefore being reached by our questionnaire more easily. Even though our sample is possibly not representative, this would be a convenience sample. "*A convenience sample is one that is simply available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility.*" (Bryman, 2015) We will not be able to generalize the findings after using this type of sample. However, pre-testing makes convenience sample more acceptable. As already mentioned, pre-testing has been done before the official roll-out of the survey, as well as the snowball method was used after distributing the questionnaire to the initial convenience sample.

7.2. Respondents' general travel preferences

Requirements for choosing a vacation place

In this section, firstly, respondents were asked what determines the place they choose for their vacation, whether it is nature, history, people, or the like. This was a multiple choice question with no limit on how many options can be chosen. Nature has been identified as the most important aspect responsible for choosing a vacation place by 77% of the respondents. Since Zemplin offers many places with untouched nature, we can see a high potential. Secondly, relax (waterparks, spa hotels) has been chosen by 62% of participants, followed by historical sites with 47%. As mentioned in the SWOT analysis, Zemplin offers a few spa hotels as well as a recently built waterpark and its rich history is to be seen everywhere in the region.

37% of the respondents consider culture to be important when choosing their holiday, good food is crucial for 20%. Around 14% have chosen traditions as well as low prices to be important, while the inclination towards low prices is understandable with a high percentage of student respondents. Lastly, people living in the destination are a choosing factor for 12% and the shopping opportunities only for 3,3%. One of the respondents did not answer this question.

Figure 13: Vacation place requirements
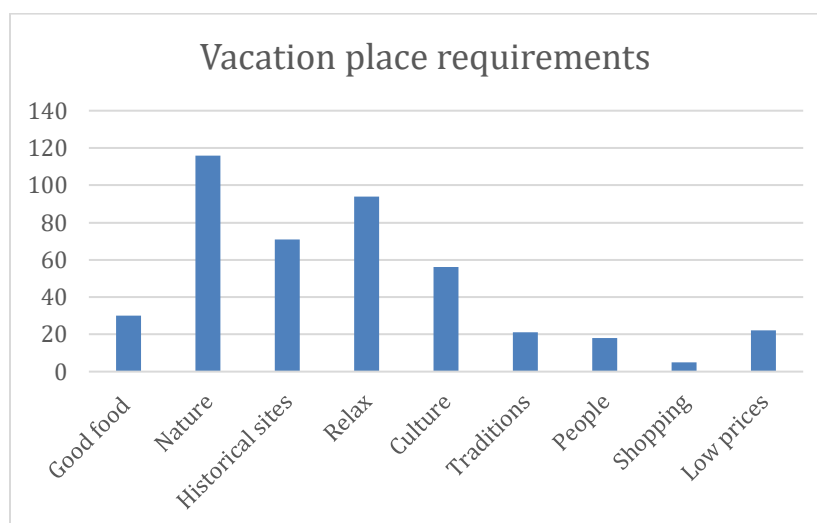
Source: own compilation

Preferred type of a vacation

To be able to determine whether Zemplin could be a suitable place for a vacation, the respondents were asked about their preferred vacation type. Majority (65%) preferes city breaks, closely followed by stays in the nature (62,3%). Zemplin could therefore suit the needs of the majority of our participants, since it offers both cities with a rich history as well as an unspoiled nature.

55,6% of the respondents prefer spa vacations and 47% enjoys exploring castles or castle ruins. Again, as mentioned in the SWOT analysis, Zemplin offers various spa hotels and it has number of continuously maintained castle ruins.

26,5% chooses a vacation depending on possibility of exploring local traditions and culture, while 22,5% likes to visit places with rich sports presence. Wine tourism is preferred by 13,2%. Even though this might not be a high number, Zemplin and its Tokaj wine area can fully satisfy this type of travellers.

Lastly, only 1,3% chose agrotourism as a favourite type of vacation, ending with 0,7% (1 respondent) who added an answer "swimming". This answer could probably be added to the spa vacations.

Again, one respondent chose not to answer this question.

49

Figure 14: Preferred vacation type
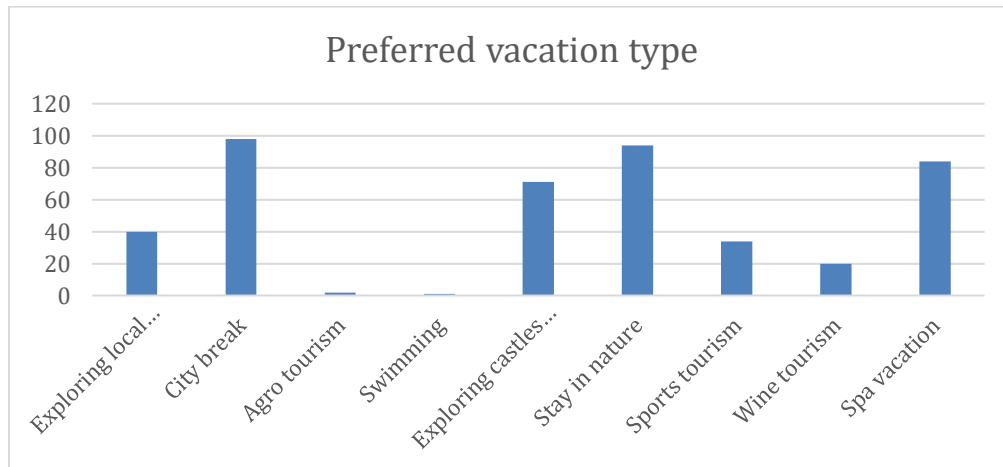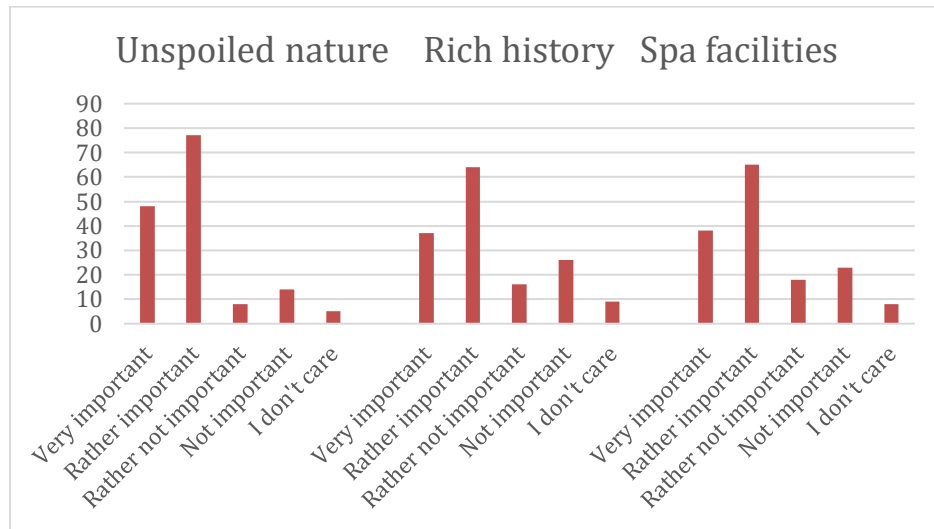

Source: own compilation

Importance of individual options when choosing a vacation destination

This question has been based on the 5 point Likert scale, where the respondents were able to choose the importance of individual options when choosing a destination for a potential vacation. Participants were asked to choose one of the options "very important", "rather important", "rather not important", "not important" and "I don't care" for each of the stated elements.

Again, similarly to the previous questions, "unspoiled nature", "rich history" and "spa facilities" were the most important factors. 48 of the respondents consider an unspoiled nature to be very important, while 38 and 37 respondents respectively state spa facilities and rich history to be very important to them.

Based on these results, the combination of these three factors plays a big role in choosing a potential vacation destination and therefore Zemplin seems to be very suitable region for most of our survey participants.

Figure 15: The importance of individual factors when choosing a vacation place

Source: own compilation

After the main three factors, "cultural options", "people and traditions" and "shopping opportunities" were also considered very important by a number of respondents. 108 respondents state the importance of cultural options, compared to 95 respondents who consider people and traditions important to some extent. A lower number of participants, 47, expresses the importance of shopping opportunities when choosing a place for spending a vacation. Especially the "people and traditions" factor could be the reason why visit the Zemplin region. The region also offers numerous cultural options, listed in the analysis of the Hexagon of Competitive Identity.

Figure 16: The importance of individual factors when choosing a vacation place

Souce: own compilation

51
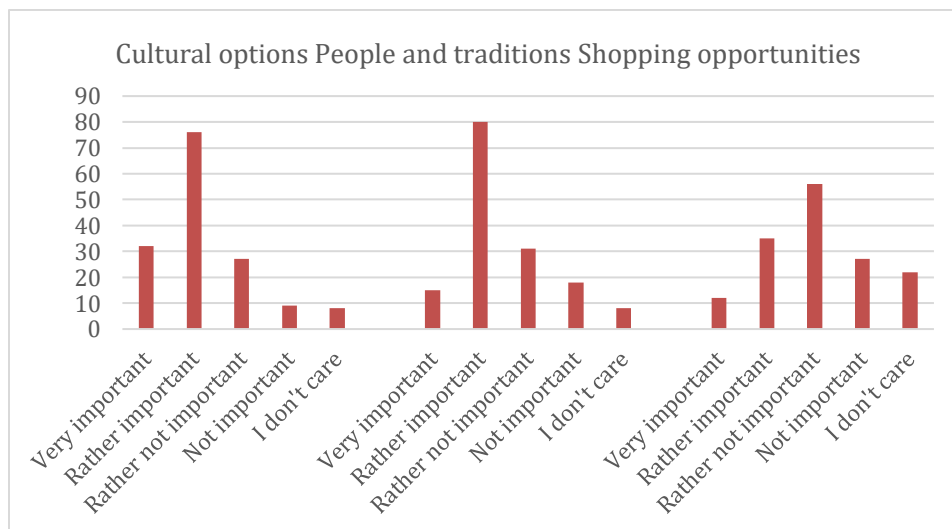
Majority of the respondents consider "wine tourism", "agro tourism" and "sport" as rather not important factors for choosing a vacation place. While only 39 survey participants state the importance of wine tourism and agro tourism is important to 42 participants, these two special types of tourism in Zemplin probably need higher promotion in order to become a tourism target. Sport is somewhat important to 72 respondents. Currently, Zemplin can become interesting for sports fans as well, since the hockey club Dukla Michalovce has won the last season of the Slovak Extraliga (1st league) and can therefore become a prominent team to watch. Handball team Iuventa Michalovce has won the Slovak national championships several times in the recent history. (Iuventa Michalovce, 2018)

Figure 17: The importance of individual factors when choosing a vacation place
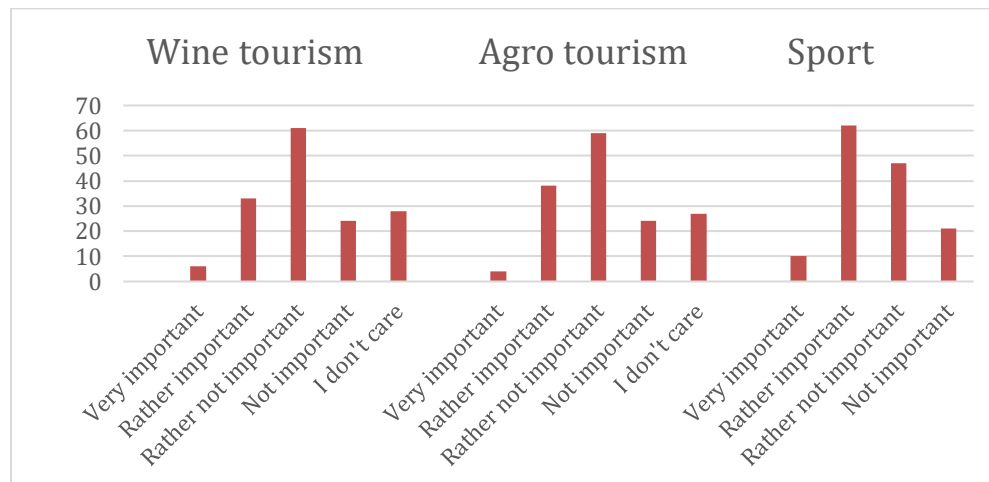
Source: own compilation

7.3. Respondents' preferences when travelling to Slovakia

**Frequency of vacations in Slovakia**

In the third section, respondents were firstly asked about the frequency of vacations spent in Slovakia each year, including the weekend breaks.

Most of the survey participants (47,7%) spend 1-2 vacations yearly anywhere in Slovakia, while 34,4% travel for a vacation 3-5 times. Almost 18% of the respondents spend more than 5 vacations in Slovakia yearly.

Here we can see a high potential of travelling to an unknown region, as Zemplin might be, since 52% of the participants in total travel around Slovakia more than 3 times. They could therefore each time experience a new place. A proper branding of Zemplin is needed to reach these potential visitors.

Figure 18: Respondents' yearly vacations in Slovakia
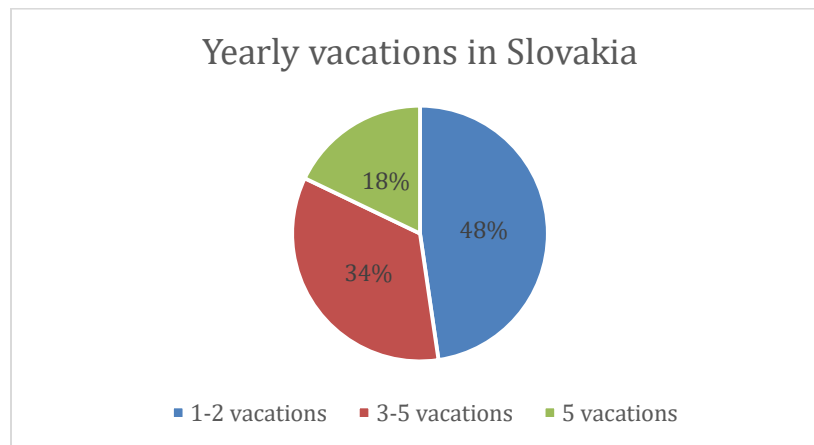
Source: own compilation

Budget for a vacation in Slovakia

Since, as we identified in the beginning, 35% of the respondents were students, it is likely that this social group will have limited budget for a vacation. About one quarter of the respondents therefore states that their maximum budget for the whole family (if travelling with one) is 300 EUR (Euro is an official currency in Slovakia). About a half of the participants (47,7%) consider 300-500 EUR to be an appropriate amount spent for each holiday anywhere in Slovakia. 20,5% would spend between 500-1000 EUR, while 7,3% would allocate 1000 EUR to be spent for a holiday. Since Zemplin is not an expensive location, all groups would be able to visit the region, when choosing an accommodation and activities fitting an allocated budget.

Figure 19: Respondents' budget for a vacation in Slovakia

Budget for a vacation in Slovakia

24%

21%

7%

48%

■ Less than 300 € ■ 300-500€ ■ 500-1000€ ■ More than 1000€
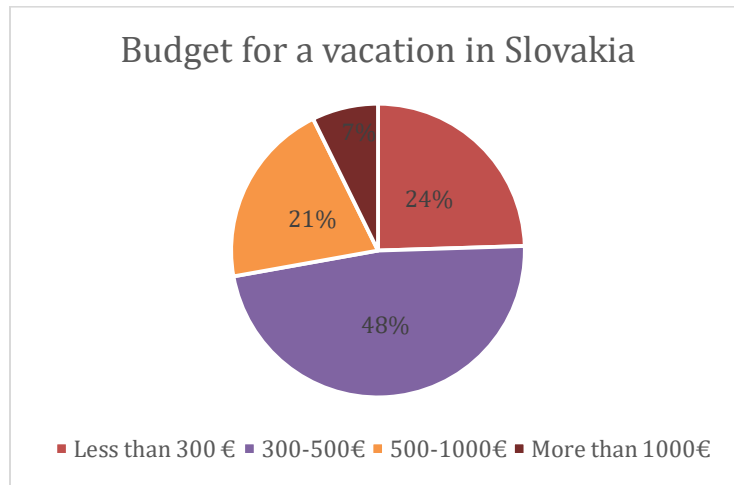
Source: own compilation

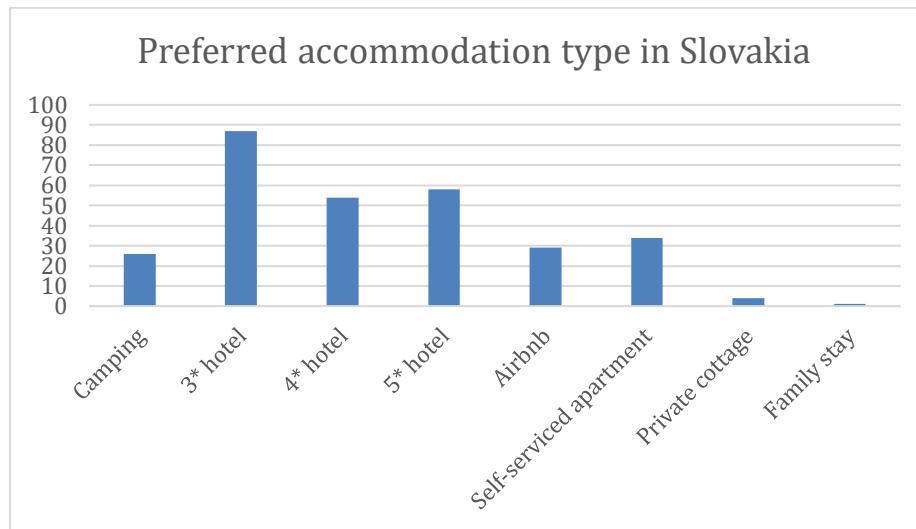## Preferred type of accommodation in Slovakia

In this multiple choice question, the respondents were asked to state the preferred type of accommodation when spending a vacation in Slovakia, while having an option to add their own answer under an option "other".

Based on the results, majority (87 respondents) preferred self-serviced apartments. Hotels in general were also a popular option, while 54 respondents prefer 3* hotels, 58 respondents would choose 4* hotels and 29 respondents would prefer luxury of a 5* hotel. Airbnb and camping seemed to be similarly popular options, with 34 and 26 respondents choosing Airbnb and camping respectively.

In addition to these options, participants who chose to answer "other", stated private cottages and family stays as an option.

Here, Zemplin offers all of the mentioned types of accommodation, except of a 5* hotel, in various price ranges intended to satisfy any type of a traveller.

Figure 20: Respondents' preferred accommodation type in Slovakia

Source: own compilation

## Preferred type of transportation for a vacation in Slovakia

In this question respondents were to state the preferred transportation type when travelling to a destination in Slovakia. This question again offered an option to add own response under "other". Own car is a preferred way of transport for 64,5% of the survey participants. Convenience and freedom of an own car could help visitors travelling to Zemplin to explore more parts, since it lies on a quite vast area. However, the road network is not fully developed and still requires improvements, which could pose a drawback for potential visitors.

Trains constitute the second most popular option for travelling, as 28,3% chooses trains as a preferred transportation type. Here, the rail network between the three biggest cities - Michalovce, Humenne and Trebisov is well developed and equipped with modern trains. On the other hand, locations off this path are not accessible by train, therefore other means of transport would be needed.

Third most popular option, but yet with a quite big percentual difference after trains, was an airplane, chosen by 3,3%. Here, flying might not be an appropriate way of visiting Zemplin, since the closest airport in Kosice is still an hour away and an additional mean of transport would be required. It can, however, help to reach the east of Slovakia faster.

Lastly, a bus, carsharing and a car rental were the least popular options, chosen by 2%, 1,3% and 0,7% respectively.

Figure 21: Respondents' preferred type of transport
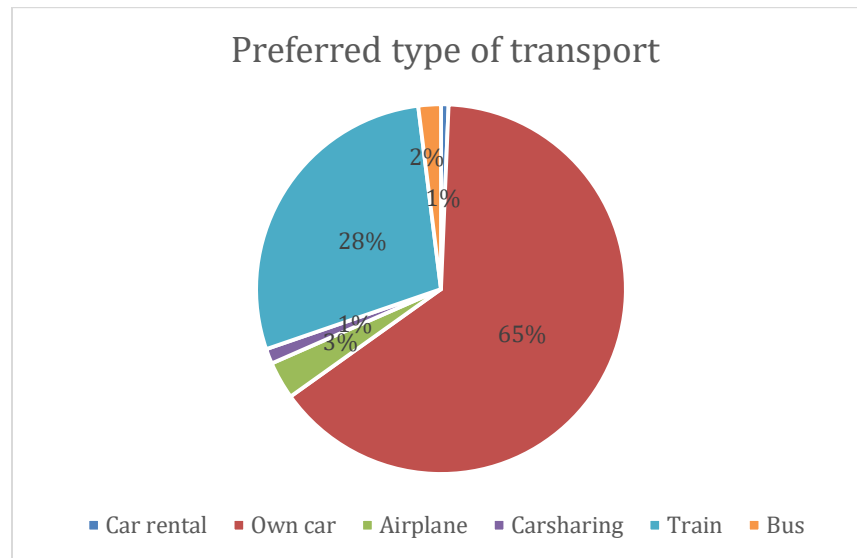
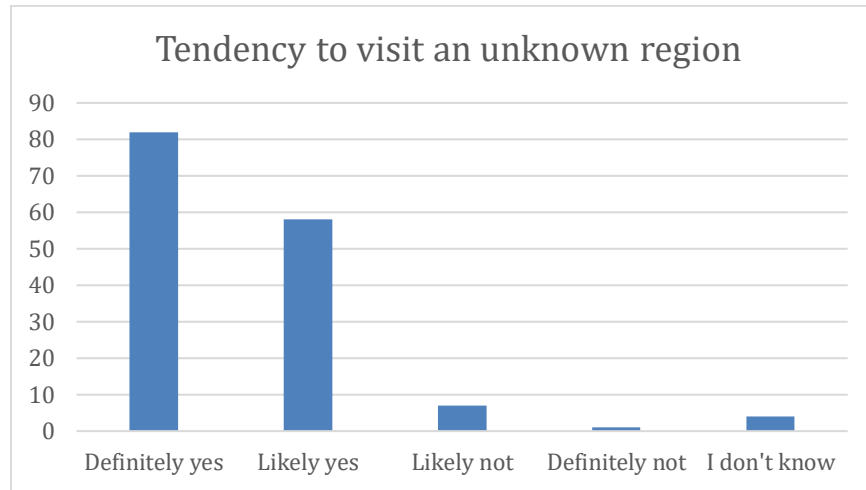

Source: own compilation

Tendency to visit an unknown, but interesting region

In the last question of this section, survey participants were asked whether they would consider visiting a region that might not be specifically popular, but it has a lot to offer. The purpose of this question was to find out whether the respondents would give a region like Zemplin a chance, even if they are not familiar with it.

A 5 point Likert scale was applied. More than a half (54%) of our respondents chose "definitely yes" when asked this question. Together with 38,2% who chose "likely yes", we can conclude that almost an absolute majority would like to explore an unknown region. This gives Zemplin hope, but also a high level of responsibility when branding itself in the future.

Only 4,6% have chosen "likely not", followed by 0,7% "definitely not" and 2,6% "I don't know".

Figure 22: Respondents' tendency to visit an unknown region

Source: own compilation

7.4. Respondents' view of Zemplin as a tourist destination

In this section respondents' knowledge of Zemplin was measured in relation to the Hexagon of Competitive Identity. Last section of our survey comprised of seven questions, both closed and multiple choice.

Filter question: Zemplin residents

Firstly, respondents were asked whether they live in Zemplin, since we questioned both Slovak and Czech nationals. Participants who lived in the Zemplin region were still able to answer some of the following questions, but not all of them.

Out of 152 respondents, 24 (15,8%) were either currently living in Zemplin or having their permanent residency there. This could be due to the fact that a high number of residents leaves Zemplin for work or studies, but still keeps their residency.

Figure 23: Respondents living in Zemplin
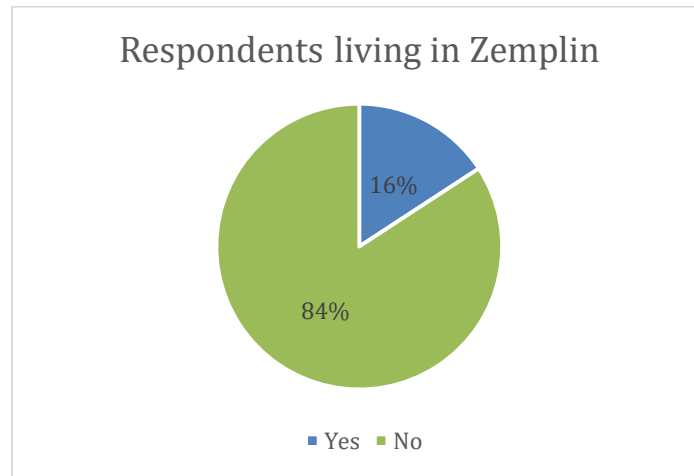
Source: own compilation

Rate of visits of the Zemplin region

In the following question, the respondents were asked whether they have already visited Zemplin. Here, the percentage of those who already visited and those who never did was almost identical. Firstly, residents of Zemplin were identified, counting for 15,1%. Out of the number of remaining respondents, 129 to be exact, 65 respondents (43%) have already visited Zemplin, while 64 (42%) have not. The rate of already performed visits has therefore turned out to be quite high. The result of this question poses a goal for the future branding of Zemplin - to brand it for both returning and new visitors. The region needs to make sure to attract new visitors, but also to make the people that already visited willing to come again, by improving, developing and offering new possibilities.

Figure 24: Rate of visits of the Zemplin region

Source: own compilation

58
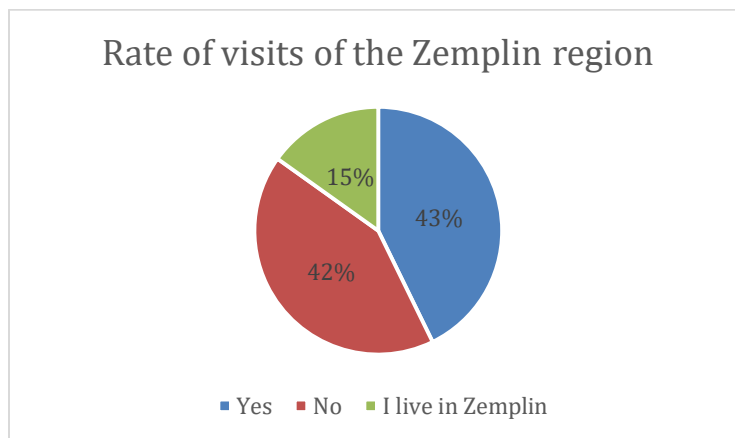
Perception of Zemplin between respondents

Perception of the Zemplin region was the topic of the third question in this section. Participants were asked whether they perceive Zemplin positively or negatively. Last option "I can't judge" was also available.

Based on the outcome of the survey, more than a half of the respondents chose the last option "I can't judge" which could indicate low knowledge and low level of promotion of the region.

39% of the participants perceive Zemplin positively, while only 5,3% view the region strictly negatively. One of the respondents chose not to answer this question.

While the low level of negative perception is a good indicator, we could also, based on the majority of the responses, conclude that Zemplin is rather unknown and the need for its promotion is evident.

Figure 25: Perception of Zemplin between the respondents
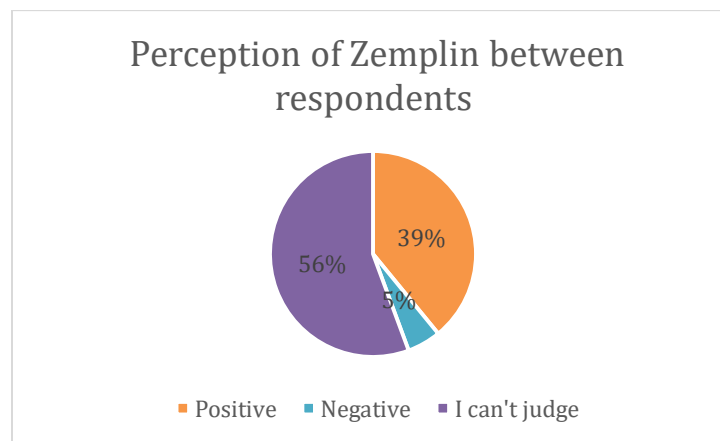
Source: own compilation

Does Zemplin have anything to offer?

Respondents were also asked whether they feel Zemplin has anything to offer to the potential visitors. Again, similarly as in the previous question, we have only seen very little negative response.

94 of our respondents, accounting for 62,3% think Zemplin could be an interesting place to visit with several offerings. As already mentioned, only 5 respondents (3,3%) state that Zemplin has

nothing to offer. The remaining 52 survey participants (34,4%) were indifferent towards this question.

In the next questions we have focused on actual factors that might make Zemplin attractive in order to find potential areas of a future region branding process.

Figure 26: Does Zemplin have anything to offer?
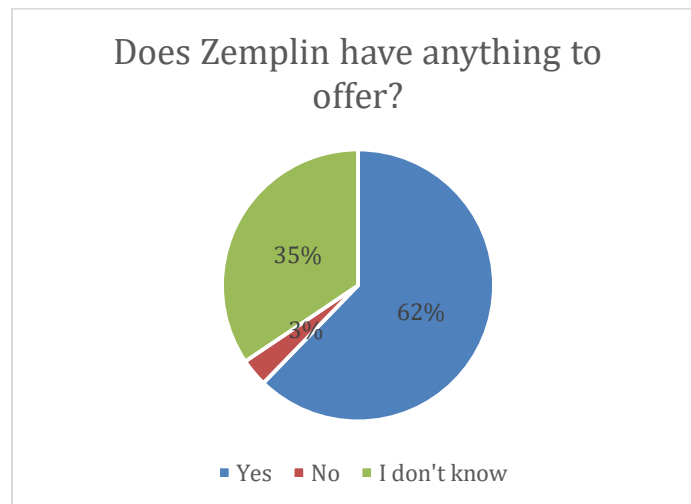
Source: own compilation

Zemplin's biggest advantages

In order to be able to select the most important factors to brand in Zemplin, the respondents were asked to state the most interesting and advantageous facts about the region.

Seven respondents chose to skip this multiple choice question.

Rich traditions and folklore seemed to be the most popular between the survey participants, while rich traditions were selected by 70 respondents and 68 respondents chose folklore. 60 respondents consider the diversity of Zemplin's inhabitants to be the region's advantage.

Above 50 out of 145 respondents that answered this question have chosen unspoiled nature (59 participants), wooden churches (56 participants) and castle ruins (52 participants) to be the most interesting parts of the Zemplin region.

Good food accommodates the needs of 47 respondents, while the wine regions seem interesting to 34 respondents and the regional culture was chosen by 33 respondents.

Survey participants that chose an option "other" usually either could not mention any interesting characteristics (5 respondents) of the region or were not familiar with Zemplin at all (3 respondents).

Based on these responses we can conclude that all previously mentioned characteristics of the region that we analysed in chapters 4, 5 and 6 are immensely important and recognized by the potential visitors. Zemplin needs to increase its branding efforts, especially to draw attention towards its specific traditions and folklore.

Figure 27: Zemplin's biggest advantages
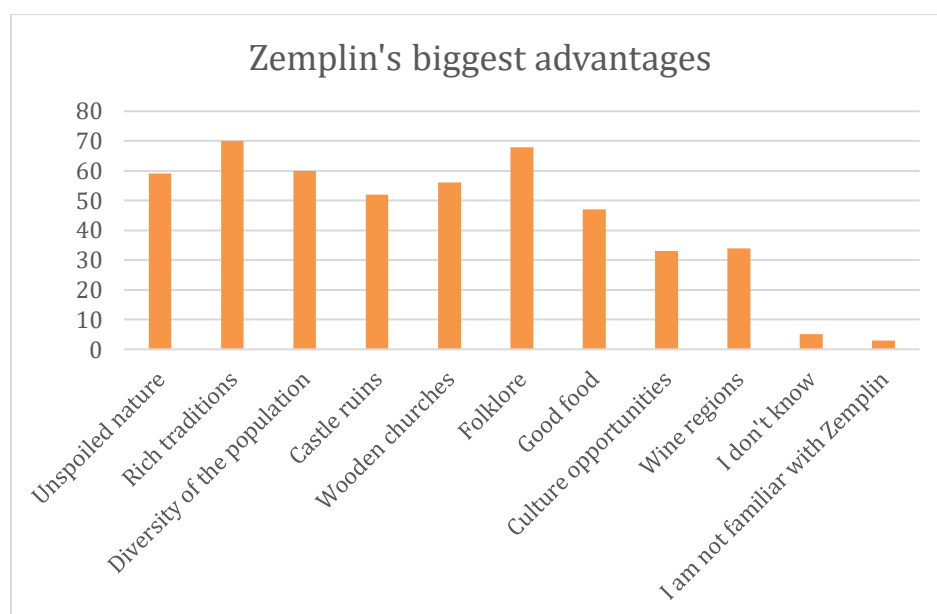
Source: own compilation

Zemplin's biggest disadvantages

As previously mentioned, Zemplin might not have a fully positive reputation between Slovak and Czech citizens. In this question we have therefore sought to determine the factors that need immediate attention and incorporation into both short and long term strategy for the development of the region.

Similarly to the previous question, ten participants have chosen to skip this question.

76 respondents identified "bad infrastructure" as the biggest disadvantage of the region. As we have mentioned in *"Preferred type of transportation for a vacation in Slovakia"* question, rail

network is in a poor condition. Zemplin also does not possess any airport within its area. No highway is currently connecting the Zemplin region to the other parts of Slovakia or its neighbouring countries, which makes car transportation rather slow.

"Major social differences" were mentioned by 71 respondents, while the same number has mentioned "poverty". These two factors are highly interconnected in case of the Zemplin region. As identified in the chapter 4.3., Zemplin indeed is one of the poorest regions in Slovakia with around 13% rate of unemployment. This is connected to the integration problems of Romas.

"Romas" as such have been identified as a disadvantage of the region by 65 respondents. Further efforts for integration of this minority are needed as well as the promotion of Roma culture and traditions.

28 respondents have chosen "tendency of majority of Zemplin's population towards preference of one political party". As mentioned in *4.3. Policy and government,* a specific political party tends to be preferred in Zemplin more than in other Slovak regions, which tends to be seen as a drawback.

"Criminality" is a disadvantage mentioned by 19 respondents.

6 respondents could not mention any disadvantage of the region, while 2 survey participants have stated "bad level of services".

Lastly, one respondent answered "low level of propagation", after choosing an option "other".

Figure 28: Zemplin's biggest disadvantages
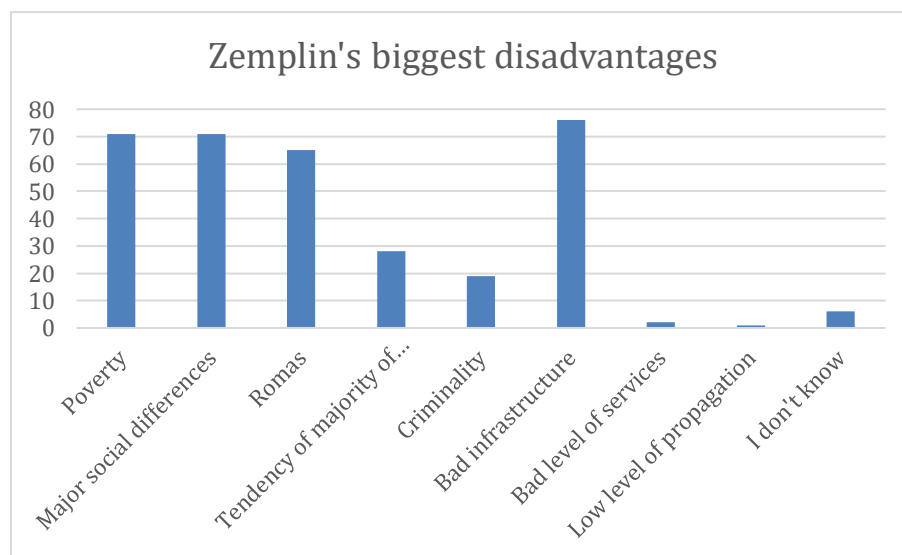
Source: own compilation

Respondents likelihood of visiting Zemplin

Lastly, survey participants were asked whether they would consider Zemplin as their future travel destination.

13,8% of the respondents were living in Zemplin, therefore we will not take these 21 participants into consideration.

27% of the respondents would consider visiting Zemplin after filling out the questionnaire. This gives us quite high percentage of the potential visitors and therefore the need for region branding is evident. 23% would not like to visit Zemplin based on their response to this question.

Lastly, 36,2% of the survey participants answered "I don't know", which could again point towards the need of branding and higher level of region propagation to make it stand out and to attract the potential visitors.

Figure 29: Respondents' likelihood of visiting Zemplin
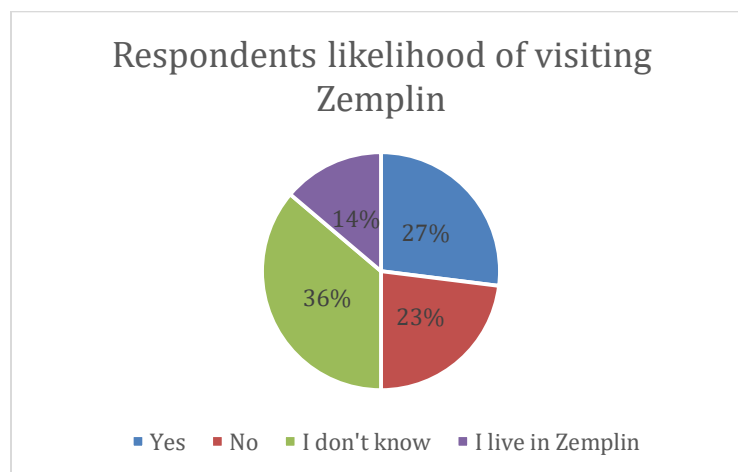
Source: own compilation

7.5. Preferred vacation type based on the age category

This section will focus on analysing preferred vacation type and its potential dependency on the age category of the respondents.

The type of the preferred vacation type based on the age category could help us determine whether Zemplin could be a destination for the particular age group, mainly our target 18-35 age group. We have therefore collected all answers and divided them based on age groups.

Figure 30: Preferred type of a vacation by 18-25 age group
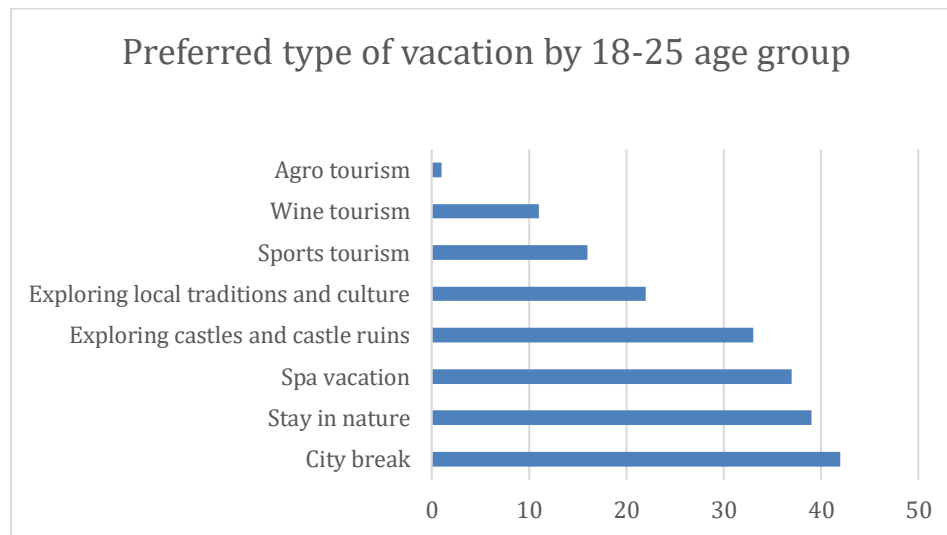
Source: own compilation

The youngest age group present in our survey was represented by 69 respondents. Based on the results of our analysis, city breaks, stays in the nature and spa vacations are the most popular types of a vacation amongst respondents in the said age category. A visit of Michalovce, Humenne or Trebisov, as the biggest cities of the region, can therefore satisfy their needs, as well as the availability of spa facilities within the vicinity of each of these cities. As previously mentioned, Zemplin also boasts unspoiled nature.

Figure 31: Preferred type of a vacation by 26-35 age group

Preferred type of vacation by 26-35 age group

Type	Value
Agro tourism	1
Wine tourism	6
Exploring local traditions and culture	12
Sports tourism	13
Exploring castles and castle ruins	31
Spa vacation	33
Stay in nature	43
City break	44

(Axis: 0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50)

Source: own compilation

The second largest age group, 26-35, had 60 respondents in our survey. We see almost identical tendencies, with very minor differences.

Figure 32: Preferred type of a vacation by 36-50 age group

Preferred type of vacation by 36-50 age group

Type	Value
Agro tourism	0
Wine tourism	3
Sports tourism	3
Exploring local traditions and culture	5
Exploring castles and castle ruins	5
City break	5
Spa vacation	8
Stay in nature	9

(Axis: 0, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10)

Source: own compilation

The third age group, 36-50, was represented by 16 respondents. Here we see the tendency to prefer more relaxing type of a vacation with focus on history and local traditions. The importance of maintaining the quality of regional spa facilities as well as building new ones becomes apparent.
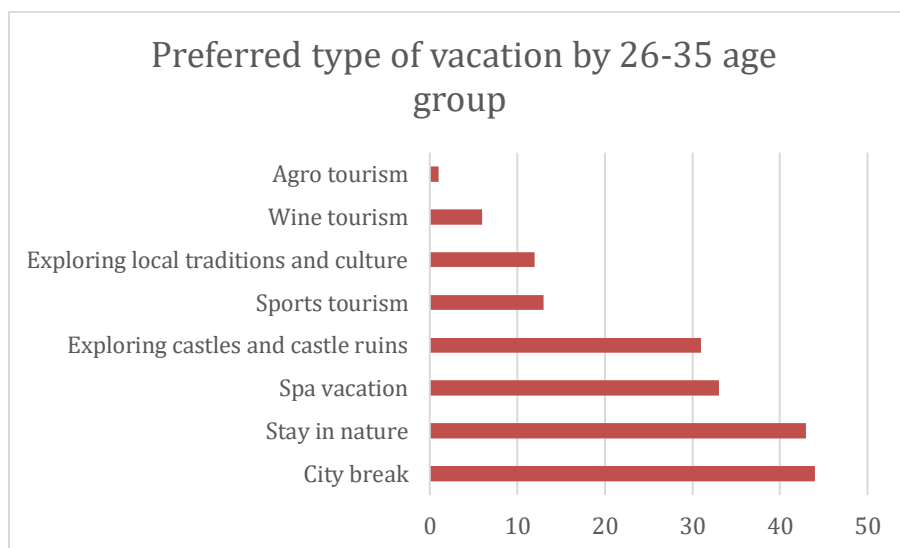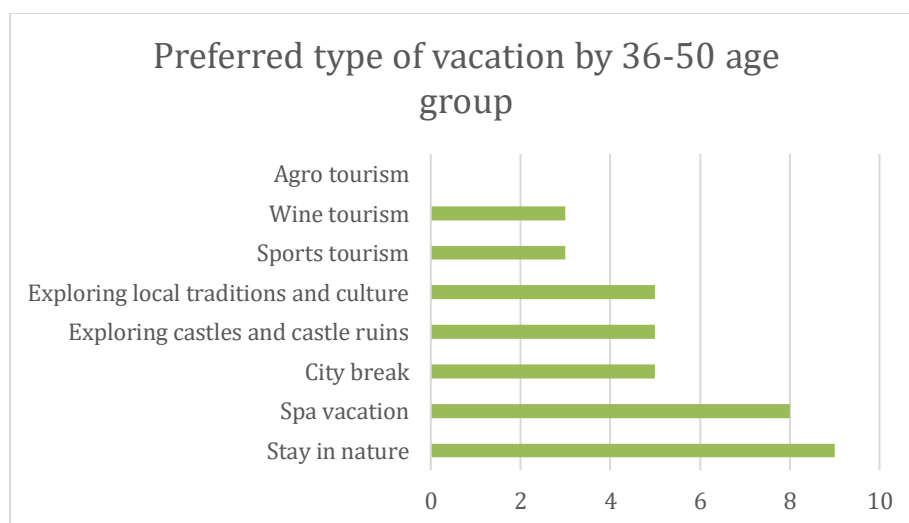
Figure 33: Preferred type of a vacation by 50+ age group
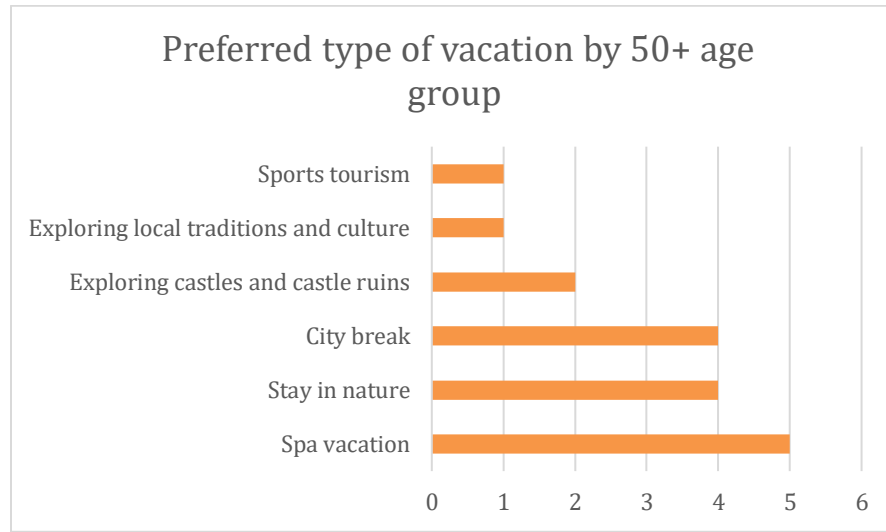
Source: own compilation

The oldest age group present in our survey was only represented by 7 respondents, which is not a statistically valid sample. We will, however, use these results as an illustration of this age group's tendencies. Similarily to the previous age group, the need for relaxing vacation is apparent. Zemplin therefore needs to make sure that both spa facilities and recreational areas are easily accessible.

This analysis has shown very similar preferences between all present age groups. Spa vacations, stays in the nature and city breaks are generally the most popular types of vacations and the Zemplin region is able to accommodate these preferences. We have addressed the need for maintaining and increasing the level of services within these areas and adapting to the needs of each particular age group.

7.6. Results of the questionnaire and their connection to the Hexagon of Competitive Identity

The performed questionnaire has confirmed the importance of the individual components of the Hexagon of Competitive Identity - a model made by Simon Anholt (2014) in region branding process.

In this questionnaire, four components - tourism, policy and government, culture and people were tested to some extent with an exception of investment and local products. It has been proven that the Zemplin region offers an interesting combination of all these factors and that the survey participants were mostly aware of these offerings.

We have especially gained a valuable insight on the importance of tourism, people and culture and its specific components. The respondents repeatedly identified Zemplin's advantages in these areas.

Tourism

Wine tourism, castle ruins and the importance of unspoiled nature in the region are the main takeouts for the tourism component of the Hexagon of Competitive Identity. We suggest to mainly focus on promoting these region specific tourist attractions and to continuously improve and nurture them. It might be beneficial to create new accommodation opportunities in these areas, however, in coexistence with the specific type of environment they would lie in. Better infrastructure to reach these areas is also needed.

Culture

Culture seems to be the most significant component of the Hexagon of Competitive Identity in the Zemplin region. Unique rich traditions in combination with highly developed and maintained folklore are largely attractive to the respondents of the questionnaire.

With the combination of the people factor described in the next paragraph, we suggest not only to focus on nurturing already existing specific parts of the cultural life, but to try to incorporate the cultural opportunities resulting from high diversity of the population of the region. The mix of the cultures available could be immensely special for the Zemplin region and attractive not only to domestic visitors, but also abroad.

Wooden churches tend to draw attention towards the region and need more propagation as again, something unique, not only in Slovakia, but worldwide.

People

Diversity of the population has been identified as one of the biggest advantages of the region. As previously mentioned, five different minorities live in the region next to Slovak inhabitants. This makes Zemplin truly unique and offers immense opportunities, already mentioned in the section above.

7.7. Visit Zemplin Instagram page and its engagement

Visit Zemplin Instagram page was created as a part of this research. This page is to promote Zemplin on social media through posting pictures from the region.
The logo for the page was created, consisting of castle ruin, nature and lake images, all features of the region.

Figure 34: Visit Zemplin logo

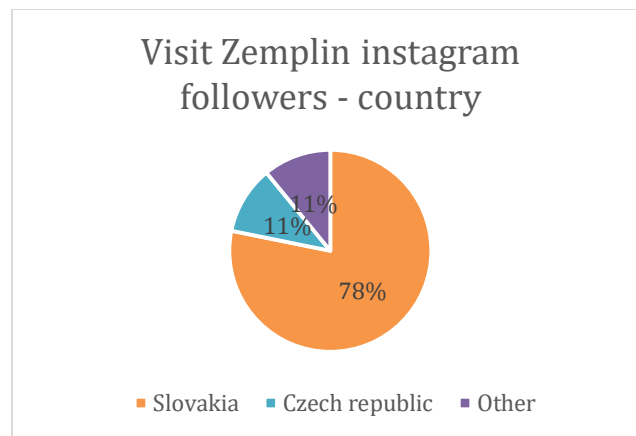Source: own creation

To this date (6th of May 2019), the Instagram page Visit Zemplin has 110 followers, with an average engagement rate 7,89% per post with the total of 22 posts. *(An equation for an average engagement rate: Total engagement / follower count / number of posts x 100).* This is considered to be a high engagement rate, showing interest of followers in the account. *"Social media*

engagement is characterized by soliciting user-generated content, responding to citizen suggestions and concerns, or any other attempt to include citizens into a discussion" (Mossberger, Wu, & Crawford, 2013).

The page attracts around 1.500 weekly impressions and targets mostly audience in Slovakia - 78% of page followers come from Slovakia, while 11% of followers are Czech, based on Instagram statistics. The last 11% comes from other countries.

Figure 35: Visit Zemplin Instagram followers based on the country

Source: own compilation based on Instagram statistics

Instagram statistics also offers an overview of the locations most followers come from. Top target locations are Bratislava (11%) and Kosice (11%), two biggest cities in Slovakia. These are followed by Michalovce (7%), the biggest city in Zemplin.

Figure 36: Visit Zemplin Instagram followers based on the location

Source: own compilation based on Instagram statistics

Considering the age range, 44% of the followers are in the 25-34 age category, followed by 29% in the 18-24 age category, which corresponds with our survey respondents as well as our target age group. This statistics also shows lower presence of older generation on social media, which therefore again helps with our initial targeting.

Figure 37: Visit Zemplin Instagram followers based on the age

Source: own compilation based on Instagram statistics

Gender-wise, both genders are rather equally distributed, with a slight lead by male followers, accounting for 54%, while females constitute 46% of the total followers.
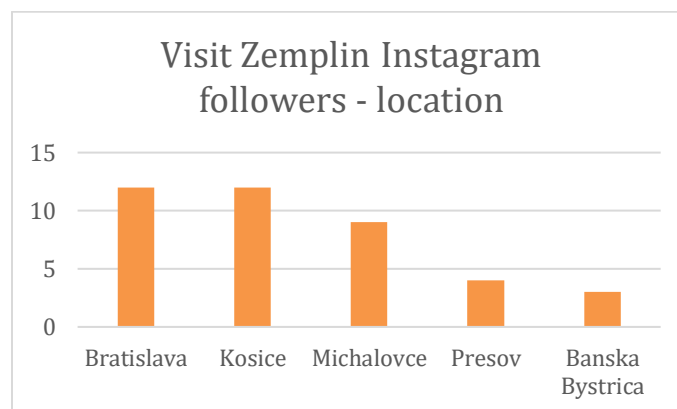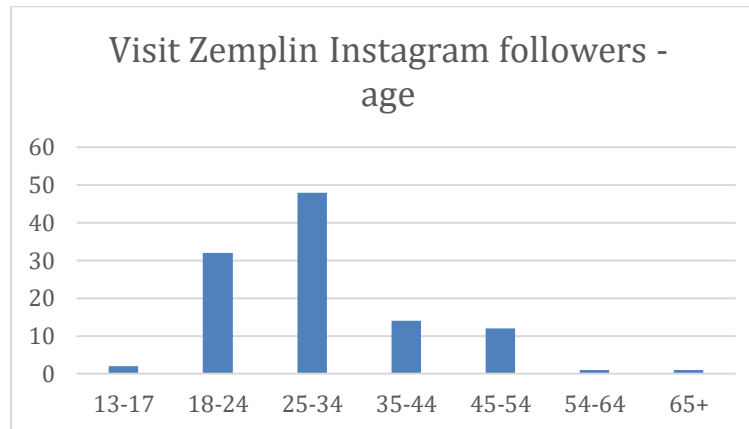
Figure 38: Visit Zemplin Instagram followers based on the gender
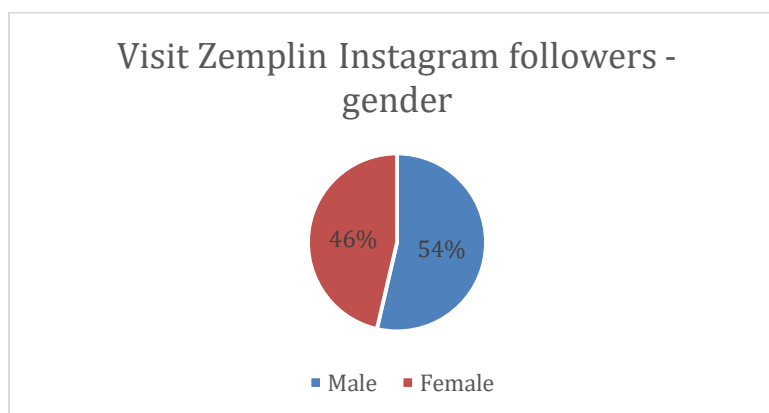
Souce: own compilation based on Instagram statistics

Based on the chapter 2.8, we could discuss that not all of the independent variables are present on the Visit Instagram page so far. The page is focusing on Information to create interest and increase

following before proceeding towards incorporation of other variables. However, the intention behind the Visit Zemplin page is to grow and continue to attract attached users. The future possibility of working together with the local brands and providing free experiences in form of occasional giveaways and therefore incorporating "remuneration" independent variable is a part of the strategy for this page. Re-purchase intentions in form of re-visiting the Zemplin region would be an ultimate goal of the page.

8. Discussion and recommendations

This chapter will present the most important takeaways from this research.

Firstly, we will present the domestic travelling habits of the Slovak and Czech travellers and their perception of the Zemplin region.

Secondly, we will focus on the Visit Zemplin Instagram Page, which is the author's own initiative.

Lastly, we will offer future recommendations in the shape of possible short-term and long-term branding strategy.

8.1. Slovak and Czech visitors of Slovakia and the Zemplin region

The majority of the respondents participating in our research belongs to the younger generation, between 18 to 35 years, which is in harmony with our initial targeting. This majority is also comprised of mostly female students and employed childless professionals. The vast majority of the research participants were Slovak citizens.

City breaks, spa vacations and stays in the nature are the preferred types of vacations based on our sample, while unspoiled nature, rich history and availability of spa facilities seem to be the determining factors for choosing a vacation place. This proves our initially stated *A4: Nature and the history of the place are the factors by which a potential vacation place is chosen by our respondents.* However, based on our research, culture and people of the place are also important factors, which proves *A7: The components of Anholt's Hexagon of the Competitive Identity are important factors when choosing a vacation place.* The respondents are willing to pay 300-500 EUR for a vacation in Slovakia, which should be sufficient based on rather lower price levels in the country.

3*, 4* and 5* hotels are the most popular accommodation options, closely followed by self-serviced apartments and campings. The majority of domestic travellers prefers to use own car for the transportation.

Over 90% of the survey respondents would visit an unknown region if it had anything to offer. This proves our *A2: Potential visitors are interested in visiting a region that is not particularly*

popular, but has a lot to offer. The Zemplin region could therefore pose an affordable and interesting option.

While one third of the respondents views Zemplin positively, 55% of the survey respondents could not state their perception of the region, which is probably due to low levels of recognition of the region and its branding. This has therefore answered the *A1: Zemplin region is not well recognized between Slovak travellers and it is rather unknown by the Czech travellers.*

When asked about advantages of the Zemplin region, respondents state folklore, rich traditions and unspoiled nature to be the biggest ones. Bad infrastructure, poverty and major social differences are perceived as the biggest disadvantages of the region. The initial *A5: Not everyone will be able to name advantages and disadvantages of the region, which would mean a low level of knowledgeability* was neither confirmed nor disproved, since the respondents were already provided with a set of possible advantages and disadvantages to choose from.

When asked about the likelihood of visiting Zemplin in the future, 23% respondents would not consider visiting, while 36% were indifferent. This proves the *A3: Zemplin region is rather unattractive to the potential visitors.*

Lastly, we analysed preferences for different types of vacations based on the age groups. While minor differences were present, most age groups in our sample prefer identical types of vacations, which does not prove the *A6: Different age and social groups will prefer different types of vacation.*

8.2. Visit Zemplin Instagram page

Visit Zemplin is the author's own initiative to create engaged following on social media and attract possible Zemplin visitors between younger people using these. The page has 110 followers to date and a high average engagement rate of 7,89% per post.

The Visit Zemplin page is targeting mostly young Slovak followers, between 18 to 34 years, which is in accordance with the targeting of our questionnaire as well.

Instagram page Visit Zemplin has mostly informative character and is set to continue after the end of this research as a regional initiative and a part of proposed long-term branding strategy.

Inclusion of other independent variables, notably "remuneration" is planned for the future, with a goal of higher visits to the region and later re-visit intentions.

8.3. Future recommendations for a branding strategy

Based on the performed research, we are to present suggestions that the authorities of the Zemplin region could implement in order to improve and promote the Zemplin brand and attract more visitors.

We have previously presented the SWOT analysis of the region, which could be a starting point for branding strategy. Combined with the results of the questionnaire and the existence of Instagram page, we can outline possible future steps to take.

In accordance with presented strengths, which have later been confirmed by the survey participants, we suggest to focus on folklore and rich culture, as well as the traditions the region has to offer. This is already done on municipality levels, we however suggest creation of fairs or festivals presenting various folklore groups, including workshops on traditional craftsmanship and cultural exhibitions. Here we also strongly encourage inclusion of Romas and their rich culture. Local food as well as locally produced wine should be a part of these fairs in order to underline the local production.

We also recommend higher focus on architectural sites and their preservation, these being castle ruins, as well as wooden churches, which do currently not get enough exposure.

Parts of the region with an unspoiled nature need to be looked after with the goal of nurturing the environment and creating a healthy natural habitat for regional flora and fauna.

In the context of regional weaknesses, with the low propagation being the biggest one, we again suggest creation of one unified continuously updated website with information on the region, as well as higher focus on promotion through social media. Visit Zemplin will continue to promote region on Instagram, while we strongly suggest creation of accounts on other social media, which will help attracting younger generations. With the influence of social media and the website, current negative stereotype can be changed.

Furthermore, we encourage stronger cooperation between the cities and the municipalities of the region, as well as between all the important stakeholders.

The need for better infrastructure is apparent, therefore we suggest allocating a part of the budget towards improving existing and building new roads, as well as railroads.

In order to create a successful branding campaign, we suggest creation of a skilled branding team, which will cooperate with all stakeholders and municipalities to avoid inconsistent messaging. Involvement of citizens spreading positive messages through WOM is also one of the goals.

To summarize, we suggest several short-term, as well as long-term initiatives.

Short term plan:
- Creation of a unified website with updated information about Zemplin
- Creation of social media accounts for promoting Zemplin on Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest
- Establishment of a uniform tourism organization for the whole region
- Improvement of the damaged roads in the region
- Establishment of a team responsible for the region branding
- Zemplin's cultural and folklore fair
- Presentations of locally produced wine, ceramics and other products

Long term plan:
- Maintenance and further development of the Zemplin's website
- Increased social media management efforts and continuous effort to increase the engagement of the followers
- Construction of new and better infrastructure
- Inclusion of Romas into the regional culture, as well as their integration into the public life
- Preservation of the architectural sites
- Continuous cooperation between main stakeholders in the region
- Promotion of the Zemplin region in the media and by the tourism boards

9. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to describe potential region branding process of the Zemplin region in Slovakia and to outline possible actions to take in order to attract more domestic visitors.

This thesis contributes to the practical world by the description of travelling habits of the Slovak and Czech travellers, their requirements and preferences as well as perceptions of the Zemplin region. During the research process, it has been proven that the region is rather unknown and does not represent a typical tourist destination. However, Zemplin has unbeaten potential and therefore the need for branding and promotion is apparent.

As a part of this thesis, a social media profile Visit Zemplin was created and is set to continue informing about the region through Instagram.

Future steps in branding and developing the region have been recommended, these including embracing the presence of the long-standing traditions and developed folklore, as well as emphasis on the local products and historical sites.

10. Limitations and future research

The present thesis has a set of limitations.

Firstly, the sample in our research is not demographically representative. This is due to the distribution of the questionnaire on the social media and therefore higher response rate between the younger population, while the older population presence is very limited.

Secondly, the length of the study, especially the short existence of the Visit Zemplin profile poses a limitation in this thesis. More data would be subject to analysis in case of longitudinal study.

Future research could focus in depth on all the possible age groups in order to obtain more reliable data.

The option of including the Hungarian part of the Zemplin region in the study could be an interesting option for the future research, which could offer different views of the region, similarities and differences between these two parts.

A possibility of including international visitors of Zemplin could also be argued, in order to understand their expectations and requirements when travelling to an unknown destination.

Bibliography

1. Anderson, J. E. (2003). *Public policymaking: An introduction.* Boston: Houghton

2. Anholt, S. (2014). *Competitive identity: The new brand management for nations, cities and regions*. Palgrave Macmillan.

3. Anholt, S. (2016). *Brand new justice*. Place of publication not identified: Routledge.

4. Aronczyk, M. (2008). *Branding the nation: Mediating space, value, and identity in the context of global culture*. New York, NY: New York University.

5. Beňušková, Z. (2005). *Tradičná kultúra regiónov Slovenska: Prehľad charakteristických znakov*. Bratislava: Veda, Vydavatelstvo Slovenskej Akad. Vied.

6. Brioschi, A. (2006). *Selling dreams,* in: J. Schroeder and M. Salzer-Morling, eds, *Brand Culture,* London and New York, Routledge

7. Bryman, A. (2015). *Social Research Methods - 5th Edition*. Oxford: OXFORD University Press.

8. Campelo, A. (2017). *Handbook on place branding and marketing*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

9. Demek, J. (1987). *Teoretická geografie.* Praha (SPN).

10. Doyle, P. (1989). *Building Successful Brands : the Strategic Options.* Journal of Marketing Management, 5 (1)

11. Hankinson, G. (2007). *The management of destination brands: Five guiding principles based on recent developments in corporate branding theory.* Journal of Brand Management, 14

12. Hollebeek, L. (2011). *Exploring customer brand engagement: Definition and themes.* Journal of Strategic Marketing. 19.

13. Huaiqin, L. and Hong, J. (2013). *Factors Influencing Consumers ' Online Repurchasing Behavior : A Review and Research Agenda.*

14. Jobber, D., Fahy, J. (2003). *Foundations of Marketing,* Mcgraw-Hill Education

15. Kaľavský, M. (1991). *Jazykové a náboženské zloženie obyvateľov Zemplínskej župy v polovici 18. storočia.* Bratislava: Národopisný Ústav SAV.

16. Keller, A., Kotler, P. (2015). *Marketing Management.* Pearson Education, 15

17. Kotler, P., Haider, D. H., & Rein, I. J. (2008). *Marketing places: Attracting investment, industry, and tourism to cities, states, and nations*. New York: Free Press.

18. Lehu, J.-M. (2006). *Brand Rejuvenation: How to Protect, Strengthen and Add Value to your Brand to Prevent it from Ageing.* Kogan Page

19. Macrae, C., Parkinson, S. And Sheerman, J. (1995). *Managing marketing's DNA: The role of branding.* Irish Marketing Review, 18, 13-20

20. Mossberger, K., Wu, Y., & Crawford, J. (2013). *Connecting citizens and local governments? Social media and interactivity in major U.S. cities.* Government Information Quarterly

21. Myers, M. D. (2013). *Qualitative research in business et management*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

22. O'Shaughnessy, J., Jackson, N. (2000). *Treating the nation as a brand: Some neglected issues.* Journal of Macromarketing, 20

23. Ortony, A., Clore, G. L., & Collins, A. (1994). *The cognitive structure of emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

24. Park, N., Kerk, K., & Valenzuela, S. (2009). *Being Immersed in Social Networking Environment: Facebook Groups, Uses and Gratifications, and Social Outcomes.* CyberPsychology and Behavior, 12 (6), 729–33

25. Tajovsky, J. G. (1919). *Malý Kultúrny zemepis vychodného Slovenska Stolice Spišska, Šarišská, Zemplínska, Užhorodská a Abanovozamska*. IIekaterinburg: Nakl. Ceskoslovenskej Tlacovej Kancelarie v Rusku.

26. Thomson, M., MacInnis, D. J. and Park, C. W. (2005). *The Ties That Bind: Measuring the Strenght of Consumers' Emotional Attachment to Brands.* Journal of Consumer Psychology, 15(1)

27. Tourangeau, R., & Smith, T. W. (1996). *Asking sensitive questions: The impact of data collection mode, question format, and question context.* Public Opinion Quarterly, 60(2)

28. Tsai, W. & Men, L. (2013). *Motivations and Antecedents of Consumer Engagement With Brand Pages on Social Networking Sites.* Journal of Interactive Advertising, 13(2)

29. Unknown author. (2001). Majstri hliny*: Osobnosti pozdišovskej hrnčiarskej dielne.* Obecny urad

30. Wallace, E., Buil, I., & de Chernatony, L. (2014). *Consumer engagement with self-expressive brands: brand love and WOM outcomes.* Journal of Product & Brand Management, 23(1)

Web-based resources

1. American Marketing Association. (2014). *Dictionary*. Retrieved April, 2019, from https://www.scirp.org/reference/ReferencesPapers.aspx?ReferenceID=1379315

2. Caldwell, N., & Freire, J. R. (2004). The differences between branding a country, a region and a city: Applying the Brand Box Model. Retrieved April, 2019, from https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/palgrave.bm.2540201

3. Centrum pre tradičnú ľudovú kultúru. (2019). Rusíni na Slovensku. Retrieved April, 2019, from https://www.ludovakultura.sk/polozka-encyklopedie/rusini-na-slovensku/

4. Dolny Zemplin. (2016). Retrieved April 2019, from http://www.dolnyzemplin.sk/detail-keyword.html?p=e9592dfec3a88dd7c6ebd39272984ef2

5. Drevené kostolíky. (2015). Retrieved April, 2019, from http://slovakia.travel/co-vidiet-a-robit/kultura-a-pamiatky/drevene-kostoly

6. Družobné mestá. (2017). Retrieved May, 2019, from http://www.michalovce.sk/sk/clanok/druzobne-mesta

7. Finding Common Ground: The Importance of Place Attachment. (2003). Retrieved April, 2019, from https://my.vanderbilt.edu/perkins/files/2011/09/ManzoPerkins.2006.Neighborhoods-as-common-ground.JPL_.pdf

8. História. (2018). Retrieved May, 2019, from https://iuventa-zhk.sk/?page_id=306

9. Inštitút zamestnanosti (IZ Bratislava). (2018). Región Horný Zemplín. Retrieved April 2019, from https://www.iz.sk/sk/projekty/regiony-slovenska/horny-zemplin

10. Ivánková, S., & Tasr. (2017). Obnova Vinianskeho hradu pokračuje už šiestym rokom. Retrieved April, 2019, from https://domov.sme.sk/c/20625784/obnova-vinianskeho-hradu-pokracuje-uz-siestym-rokom.html

11. Múzeum, Z. (2017). Historical Exhibition. Retrieved April, 2019, from https://www.zemplinskemuzeum.sk/en/permanent-exhibitions/historical-exhibition

12. Nationalist consciousness. (1998). Retrieved April, 2019, from https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10402659808426144

13. O Beli. (2012). Retrieved April 2019, from http://www.bel-slovakia.sk/docs/O_Beli.pdf Obyvateľstvo trvalo bývajúce v okresoch SR podľa pohlavia. (2011). Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. Retrieved April, 2019, from https://slovak.statistics.sk/wps/wcm/connect/1fc3b7fc-54bb-4cda-8c68-398e8fb8d287/Tab_1_Obyvatelstvo_trvalo_byvajuce_v_okresoch_SR_podla_pohlavia_SODB_2011.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=knLH.LV&CVID=knLH.LV&CVID=knLH.LVhttps://slovak.statistics.sk/wps/wcm/connect/1fc3b7fc-54bb-4cda-8c68-398e8fb8d287/Tab_1_Obyvatelstvo_trvalo_byvajuce_v_okresoch_SR_podla_pohlavia_SODB_2011.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=knLH.LV&CVID=knLH.LV&CVID=knLH.LV

14. Potocký, M. (2014). Michalovce získali z eurofondov už vyše 18 miliónov eur. Retrieved April 2019, from https://dolnyzemplin.korzar.sme.sk/c/7130002/michalovce-ziskali-z-eurofondov-uz-vyse-18-milionov-eur.html

15. Press Release No 17/14, Court of Justice of the European Union. (2014). Retrieved April, 2019, from https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2014-02/cp140017en.pdf

16. Tourism supports 1 in 10 jobs, outpacing global economy for 6th consecutive year, WTTC. Retrieved April, 2019, from https://www.wttc.org/about/media-centre/press-releases/press-releases/2017/tourism-supports-1-in-10-jobs-outpacing-global-economy-for-6th-consecutive-year-wttc/

82

17. Turisti chcú poznať Slovensko. Retrieved April, 2019, from https://www.mindop.sk/media-5144/tlacove-spravy-2726/turisti-chcu-poznat-slovensko

18. Understanding tourism: Basic glossary, UNWTO. Retrieved April, 2019, from http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/docpdf/glossaryenrev.pdf

19. What Is Globalization? (2018). Retrieved April, 2019, from https://piie.com/microsites/globalization/what-is-globalization.html

20. Zemplín v očakávaní megaprojektov cestovného ruchu. (2008). Retrieved April 2019, from https://euractiv.sk/section/regionalny-rozvoj/news/zemplin-v-ocakavani-megaprojektov-cestovneho-ruchu/

Appendix 1 – Pozdisovce ceramics

Source: http://www.pozdisovce.wbl.sk/Hrnciari.html, Retrieved May 2019

Appendix 2 – The questionnaire distributed to the respondents (translated to English)

Brand Zemplin

1. Where do you come from?

Slovak republic

Czech republic

2. Your gender?

Male

Female

I do not wish to state

3. Your age?

18-25

26-35

36-50

50+

4. What is your social status?

Student

Employed childless

Empoyed with children

Unemployed

Retired

5. How often do you spend your vacation in Slovakia in a year? (including weekend trips)

1-2 times

3-5 times

More than 5 times

6. How much would you pay for a vacation in Slovakia for an entire family?

300 EUR maximum

300-500 EUR

500-1000 EUR

More than 1000 EUR

7. What type of accommodation do you prefer for a vacation in Slovakia?

Camping

Self-serviced apartments

3* hotel

4* hotel

5* hotel

Airbnb

Other

8. What type of transport do you prefer for a vacation in Slovakia?

Own car

Train

Bus

Carsharing

Car rental

Airplane

Other

9. What factors are important for you to choose a vacation?

Good food

Nature

Historical sites

Culture (museums, exhibitions, concerts)

Relax (spa hotels, waterparks)

Traditions

People

Shopping opportunities

Low prices

10. What type of a vacation do you prefer?

City breaks

Wine tourism

Spa vacations

Agro tourism

Stays in the nature

Sports tourism

Exploring local traditions and culture

Visiting castle, castle ruins, etc.

11. State, how important particular factors are when choosing a vacation. (very important, rather important, rather not important, not important, I don't care)

Unspoiled nature

Rich history

Cultural experiences

Spa facilities

Wine tourism

Agro tourism

People and traditions

Sport

Shopping opportunities

12. Would you consider visiting a region that is quite unknown, but it could be interesting?

Definitely yes

Rather yes

Rather not

Definitely not

I don't know

13. Do you live in the Zemplin region?

Yes

No

14. Have you previously visited Zemplin?

Yes

No

I live in Zemplin

15. How is your perception of Zemplin?

Positive

Negative

I don't know

16. Do you think Zemplin has anything to offer?

Yes

No

I don't know

17. What are the advantages of Zemplin, according to you?

Unspoiled nature

Rich history

Diversity of the population (Slovaks, Rusyns, Ukrainians, Hungarians, Romas)

Castle ruins

Wooden churches

Folklore

Good food

Culture opportunities

Wine regions

Other

18. What are the disadvantages of Zemplin, according to you?

Poverty

Major social differences

Romas

Tendency of the majority of the population towards the preference of a particular political party

Criminality

Bad infrastructure

Other

19. Would you consider Zemplin as a potential vacation destination?

Yes

No

I don't know

I live in Zemplin