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Communities and local sustainable development

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CONTENTS

- Raffaella AVERSA
Relly Victoria V. PETRESCU
Antonio APICELLA
Florian Ion T. PETRESCU
- 5 **Modern Transportation and Photovoltaic Energy for Urban Ecotourism**
- Aslı BOZDAĞ
Münevver Gizem GÜMÜŞ
Kutalmış GÜMÜŞ
Savaş DURDURAN
- 21 **Accessibility Analysis for the Elderly in an Urban Area from Turkey**
- Adina CANDREA
Cristinel CONSTANTIN
Ana ISPAS
- 38 **Public-Private Partnerships for a Sustainable Tourism Development of Urban Destinations. The Case of Braşov, Romania**
- Laura Maria IRIMIEŞ
- 57 **Lobbying and Social Participation – Key Features for an Effective Public Administration in Romania**
- Daniela Angelina JELINČIĆ
Sanja TIŠMA
Matea SENKIĆ
Domagoj DODIG
- 74 **Public-Private Partnership in Cultural Heritage Sector**
- Alicja K. ZAWADZKA
- 90 **Making Small Towns Visible in Europe: the Case of Cittaslow Network – The Strategy Based on Sustainable Development**

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS FOR A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN DESTINATIONS. THE CASE OF BRAȘOV, ROMANIA*

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Abstract

Considering that there are few success chances for isolated businesses, public-private partnerships represent the basis of tourism businesses' sustainable development, aiming to attract increasing numbers of visitors in tourism destinations. Within this context, the main aim of the present paper is to identify tourism stakeholders' intentions to participate in public-private partnerships for a sustainable tourism development of urban destinations. Focused on the increased importance of partnerships between tourism stakeholders, with the common goal of sustainable tourism development, a survey was conducted among the tourism service providers from the Romanian urban destination, Brașov.

The research results outline the deficiencies in the analyzed destination, which lead to a low notoriety of the destination's management and marketing organization among local tourism stakeholders. In addition, the results show a low level of involvement of tourism operators in supporting the collaboration efforts of this organization. Based on the research results, a theoretical model was proposed for the identification of the significant factors which influence local stakeholders' intentions to participate in public-private partnerships for a sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: public-private partnerships, sustainable tourism development, tourism services providers, stakeholders, Destination Management Organization.

1. Introduction

Sustainability is represented in the 'green argument' as the vital assumption of the model of sustainable development, and therefore tends to be a requirement rather than an optional or differentiating matter for businesses (Gustavo, 2013, p. 14). Tourism requires high quality natural resources but tourism itself places stresses on those very resources that the industry requires if it is to continue (Williams and Ponsford, 2009). Furthermore, a viable model for sustainable tourism must build strong adaptive capabilities and encourage consistent participation of all stakeholders (Tao and Wall, 2009). Thus, in order to advance sustainability in the tourism industry, approaches are needed to promote stakeholder collaboration and learning on an organizational as well as destination or regional level (Schianetz *et al.*, 2007).

The tourism sector includes a wide range of organizations and individuals with different levels of influence who are involved in a complex array of relationships (Pike and Page, 2014). Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) have evolved so that their role has changed from that of a public administration model to one based on partnerships involving local authorities and the private sector (Hall, 2000). Consultation, involvement and participation are also needed, especially when strategic decisions are being made about tourism (Morrison, 2013). Several studies have focused on the examination of the relationships among actors and stakeholders within destinations and the means by which they can collectively better manage the destination (Dredge, 2006; Fyall and Garrod, 2005; Sheehan and Ritchie, 2005).

The maturing nature of many destinations and the changing and growing complexity of forces in the external and internal environments for destinations have served as a catalyst for the emergence of research into the management of destinations *per se* and the closer examination of destination management structures and relationships both within and external to destinations, and the myriad of actors and stakeholders that collectively constitute the destination (Fyall, 2011, p. 342).

Considering aforementioned issues, the main purpose of the present paper is to identify tourism businesses' intentions to participate in public-private partnerships for a sustainable tourism development of a Romanian urban tourism destination, namely Braşov. However, sustainable marketing initiatives cannot be implemented without the cooperation of all tourism stakeholders. The public-private partnerships for a sustainable tourism development must be coordinated by the local management organization in Braşov. In the case of the studied destination, this role is taken by the Association for the Tourism Promotion and Development in Braşov County (APDT).

Aiming to identify tourism businesses' intentions to participate in public-private partnerships for a sustainable tourism development in Braşov, Romania, the present paper starts with a review of the specific tourism literature, outlining the necessity of tourism partnerships in the sustainable development process and the role of Destination Management Organizations as mediators between local authorities and private operators in the management and marketing of tourism destinations. Further on, a theoretical model meant to identify the factors that influence the intentions of tourism

operators to participate in public-private partnerships for a sustainable tourism development was proposed. In order to validate this model a survey has been conducted among the main tourist service providers from Braşov. Using the discriminant analysis and the binary logistic regression we obtained an empirical model, which reveals that the main influence factors are: satisfaction level regarding the marketing of the destination, satisfaction level regarding the tourism spatial planning of the destination, DMO's actions notoriety, and the field of the businesses' activity. The paper is finalized with a series of conclusions which include practical implications for tourism stakeholders (including local public administration) as well as the main limitations of the conducted study.

2. Literature review

Tourism destinations, even with initially high tourism attractiveness and good marketing structures and accessibility, can be unsustainable if management is not built on system understanding and collaboration of stakeholders (Schianetz *et al.*, 2007, p. 1493). Despite recent focus on partnerships, clusters and innovation systems in highlighting the importance of collaboration and stakeholder involvement in urban destination policy and management, it is argued that the relations to sustainability, governance, and quality are fundamental to building competitive destinations (Paskaleva-Shapira, 2007, p. 108).

2.1. The role of tourism partnerships in the sustainable development process

The importance of stakeholders in the implementation of sustainability in tourism has received a growing interest in the academic literature (Frisk and Larson, 2011; Gibson, 2012; Hatipoglu *et al.*, 2016; Hawkins and Wang, 2012; Hultman and Sawe, 2016; Law *et al.*, 2016; McLennan *et al.*, 2016; Soteriou and Coccossis, 2010). At the early stages of studies on sustainable tourism, the emphasis was on the attitudes of local residents (Burns and Sancho, 2003). Recently, tourism scholars (Imran *et al.*, 2014; Waligo *et al.*, 2013) have backed an integrated plan to construct the network and partnership that entail all tourism stakeholders in the development of sustainable tourism (Chen, 2015).

The present study adopts McIntyre's (1993) definition of sustainable tourism as the type of tourism that increases the quality of life of the local people, improves the quality of the tourist's experience, and preserves the environment on which both visitors and the community depend. A critical aspect of sustainable tourism includes the sharing of information, which fosters learning among stakeholders, and the involvement of all interested parties in the decision-making process (Ladkin and Martínez Bertramini, 2002; Wray, 2011). The World Tourism Organization identifies 'informed participation of all relevant stakeholders' as one of the key factors of sustainability (Byrd *et al.*, 2008, p. 193). The participation of the local community in the tourism planning process at the destination is essential, since any tourism development should be aimed at improving the socio-cultural and economic conditions in the community

(Hatipoglu *et al.*, 2016). Cooperation in tourism destinations also requires partnerships to be developed between public and private sector stakeholders (Wray *et al.*, 2010). Nechita (2015) found that in complex projects with impact on tourism development of cities, shared participation of local institutions, private economic agents, and NGOs are needed in order to create an essential and critical mass. Because destinations are made up of a range of different tourism attractions, services, and facilities, it is not surprising that managing sustainable destinations presents many challenges, and requires numerous activities to be coordinated.

2.2. Destination Management Organizations and their role as managers and marketers of tourism destinations

The hospitality and travel industry is a complex mixture of interrelated companies, government agencies, and non-profit organizations. Inter-organizational relations (e.g. co-ordination, collaboration, co-operation, partnerships) have been promoted and researched over the last two decades, in order to overcome problems caused by the diffuse and fragmented nature of tourism (Bramwell and Lane, 2000; Jamal and Getz, 1995). These relations must be coordinated by an organization which is a representative of the local public administration, mentioned in the tourism literature as the Destination Management Organization (DMO).

DMOs are responsible for developing a unique image of the area, coordinating most private and public tourism industry constituencies, providing information to visitors, and leading the overall tourism industry at a destination (Prideaux and Cooper, 2003). Today, DMOs exist less to manage and more to coordinate, not simply to communicate with the consumer but to support the wider destination system – establishing, nurturing, and servicing partnerships between a range of stakeholders (Fyall and Garrod, 2005; Pike, 2004; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2007). One of the recent changes that DMOs undergo in their management practices is the increased collaboration with partners to better cater to destination visitors (Zach and Fesenmaier, 2008). DMOs clearly are the leaders when it comes to collaboration, suggesting that DMOs are at the center of destination development, requiring DMOs to actively search for partners and integrate them into the DMO partner network (Zach and Fesenmaier, 2016). A number of studies have focused on DMOs and their roles in destination-level collaborations (Fyall *et al.*, 2012; Merinero-Rodríguez and Pulido-Fernández, 2016; Morgan *et al.*, 2012; Pike and Page, 2014; Wang, 2008). Fyall, Garrod and Wang (2012) identified three dimensions of destination collaboration: organic collaboration, mediated intra-destination collaboration and mediated intra- and inter-destination collaboration. The present study focuses on mediated intra-destination collaboration.

Within the framework of Romanian tourism, DMOs have recently started to gain importance both in the academic and practical context. New and improved tourism legislation is currently under debate and should be finalized by the end of 2017. It clearly defines concepts such as tourism destinations, destination management organizations, and sustainable tourism, and mentions the responsibilities of local ad-

ministrations in the field of tourism development. In addition, Romanian tourism academics have studied the role of DMOs and public-private partnerships within the context of national tourism. Băltescu (2011) considered that one of the possible solutions for developing the Romanian tourism resides in the establishment of certain associations (DMOs) to ensure both the collaboration and concentration of marketing policies. Moreover, Țigu (2012) suggested that Romania needs to encourage and support more the initiatives of the local authorities, the public-private partnerships, and the co-operation between the National Tourism Authority and professional associations. Mazilu (2012) highlighted the lack of public-private partnerships to support the sustainable development of national tourism, and Căndea *et al.* (2009) outlined the role of DMOs in fostering destination sustainability.

3. Materials and methods

Considering the increased importance of partnerships between tourism businesses and other tourism stakeholders, with the common goal of sustainable tourism development, a survey was conducted among Braşov tourism service providers. The city of Braşov is located in the center of Romania, at the foot of the Carpathian Mountains, and it offers various natural and cultural tourism development opportunities. Braşov offers a complete mix of visitor services including several excellent hotels, good restaurants, inbound and outbound tour operators, as well as a variety of stores and retail outlets.

The DMO which is in charge with the management and marketing of Braşov is the Association for the Promotion and Development of Tourism in Braşov County (APDT). APDT is a non-governmental organization and was created in 2006 by the Braşov County Council, as the main founder, in a project aiming local development based on a public-private partnership and the integrated promotion of all representative tourism attractions in Braşov County. Thus, APDT represents a public-private partnership between tourism stakeholders from Braşov County (professional associations, public authorities from tourism destinations, other tourism NGOs). In spite of its associative function, APDT is almost entirely financed by Braşov County Council. However, due to its public and private mix of members APDT has a facilitating role in Braşov County's tourism context, and its main purpose is to increase tourism flows by pursuing a sustainable tourism development approach while providing visitors with quality travel experiences, fostering the development of tourism services, facilities and promoting the destination on the national and international markets (Căndea and Brătucu, 2012).

Focusing on APDT as the local DMO and aiming to identify the intentions of Braşov tourism services providers to be involved in public-private partnerships for a sustainable development of this tourism destination, we established the following objectives:

- O1: Measuring Braşov tourism businesses' level of satisfaction concerning the destination's management, marketing and tourism planning;
- O2: Evaluating the notoriety of APDT's actions;

- O3: Identifying previous involvement of Braşov tourism businesses in actions undertaken by APDT and their intentions to participate in future sustainable tourism development actions;
- O4: Measuring the influence of tourism businesses' satisfaction level concerning the destination's management, marketing and tourism spatial planning on their intentions to participate in future sustainable tourism development initiatives;
- O5: Measuring the influence of APDT's actions notoriety, tourism businesses' previous involvement in these actions and their field activity on the Braşov tourism businesses' intentions to participate in future sustainable tourism development initiatives;
- O6: Identifying the needed improvement actions for a sustainable destination marketing, management and tourism spatial planning in Braşov; and
- O7: Identifying the intentions of Braşov tourism businesses to participate in future sustainable tourism development initiatives.

Considering the previously mentioned objectives, we formulated the following research hypotheses:

- H1: The majority of Braşov tourism businesses intend to be involved in public-private partnerships for a sustainable development of this tourism destination.
- H2: The satisfaction level of Braşov tourism businesses regarding the destination's management influences their intentions to be involved in APDT's actions.
- H3: The satisfaction level of Braşov tourism businesses regarding the destination's marketing influences their intentions to be involved in APDT's actions.
- H4: The satisfaction level of Braşov tourism businesses regarding the destination's tourism spatial planning influences their intentions to be involved in APDT's actions.
- H5: The notoriety of APDT's actions influences Braşov tourism businesses' intentions to participate in future sustainable tourism development initiatives.
- H6: Braşov tourism businesses' involvement in APDT actions influences their intention to participate in future sustainable tourism development initiatives.
- H7: The field of activity of Braşov tourism businesses influences their intention to participate in future sustainable tourism development initiatives.

Based on hypotheses H2-H7, we proposed a theoretical model for the identification of significant factors which influence the intentions of tourism businesses to participate in public-private partnerships for a sustainable tourism development in the analyzed tourism destination (Figure 1).

In order to attain the previously mentioned objectives and to test the proposed model, we collected data from different types of tourism businesses in Braşov, such as: accommodation units, travel agencies, recreational facilities and restaurants. The questionnaire used for data collection includes closed questions, measured with different types of scales (nominal and interval scales). The questionnaire included ques-

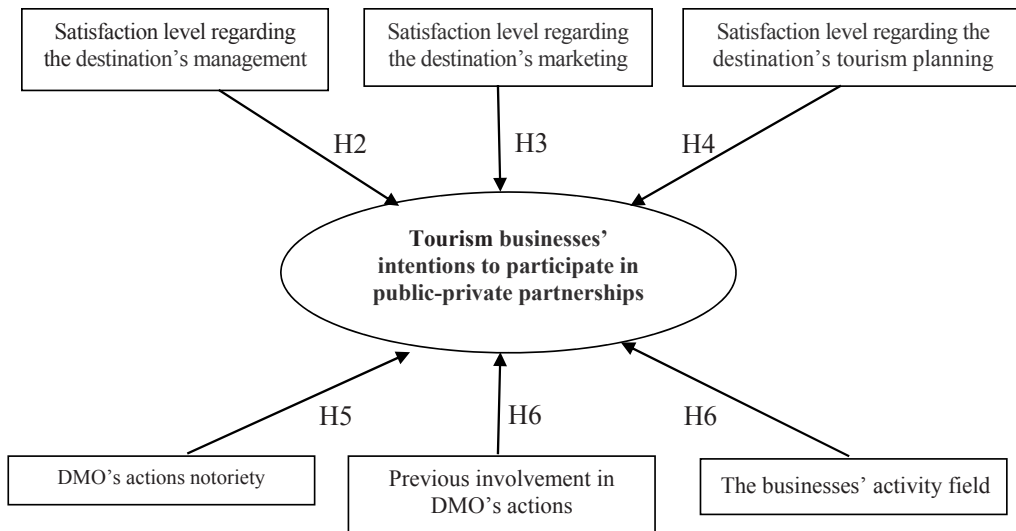


Figure 1: The theoretical model for the identification of significant influence factors

Source: Authors' computations

tions concerning respondents' satisfaction level towards Braşov's marketing, management and tourism spatial planning, as well as requirements of recommendations for the improvement of the evaluated issues. In addition, the questionnaire included questions regarding respondents' intentions to participate in public-private partnerships for a sustainable tourism development of Braşov tourism businesses, as well as in the actions undertaken by APDT in this sense. The questionnaire was sent to different tourism businesses from Braşov, and 212 answers were collected. The collected data was analyzed with the SPSS package, using different univariate, bivariate and multivariate methods such as: frequency tables, cross tables, discriminant analysis and binary logistic regression.

4. Results and discussion

The first research objective (O1) consisted in the evaluation of the satisfaction level of Braşov tourism businesses concerning the destinations' management, marketing and tourism planning. The research results (Figure 2) indicate that the analyzed destination's marketing registered the lowest score, 3 points, on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 5 is the top level of satisfaction), while the destination's management got an average score of 3.3 points. Thus, these two variables were framed in the neutral part of the scale (neither unsatisfied nor satisfied). Respondents' satisfaction level regarding tourism spatial planning in Braşov registered an average score of 3.6 points, thus being situated closer to the fourth level of the scale (4=satisfied).

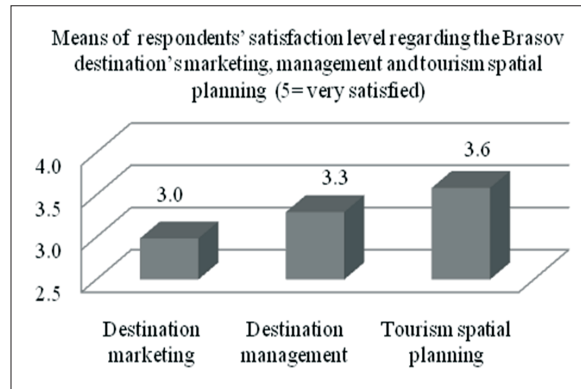


Figure 2: Respondents' satisfaction level regarding the destination's marketing, management and tourism spatial planning

Source: Authors' computations

The second objective of the present research (O2) aimed to identify APDT's notoriety among Braşov tourism businesses, while the third objective (O3) aimed to identify their involvement in the DMO's actions and their intentions to cooperate in future sustainable tourism development initiatives. Table 1 includes the results corresponding to these objectives. As Table 1 illustrates, only 41.5% of the respondents know APDT actions, and quite few of them have participated to the meetings organized by this association (6.1%). Regarding the respondents' interest to get involved in future activities organized by APDT, only 42.5% are willing to sustain the initiatives of the local DMO.

Table 1: Response distribution corresponding to O2 and O3

	Response	Absolute frequency	Percent
Respondents' knowledge concerning APDT actions	NO	124	58.5%
	YES	88	41.5%
Participation in APDT's meetings	NO	199	93.9%
	YES	13	6.1%
Respondents' interest to be involved in APDT initiatives	NO	122	57.5%
	YES	90	42.5%

Source: Authors' computations

Based on these results, we used the t-Student test to verify hypothesis H1, concerning Braşov tourism businesses' intentions to participate in public-private partnerships for a sustainable tourism development in this destination (see Table 2).

Table 2 presents the statistical significance of the difference between the percent of the respondents who are willing to get involved in APDT's initiatives (42.5%) and the test value (50%), which can consider that the majority of tourism businesses want to support these actions. The results of the t-Student test indicate a significance level

Table 2: Results of the t-Student test

	Test Value = 0.5					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Respondents' interest to participate in APDT's initiatives	-2.218	211	.028	-.07547	-.1425	-.0084

Source: Authors' computations

of $p=0.028 < 0.05$, which means that we accept the hypothesis that postulates that the percent of affirmative answers is different from 50%. As the difference between the two values is negative, we can guarantee with a probability of 95% that the percent of tourism businesses which intend to participate in APDT's initiatives is lower than 50%, thus rejecting hypothesis H1.

In order to attain the fourth objective – O4, namely measuring the influence of respondents' satisfaction level concerning destination's management (mn_dest), marketing (mk_dest) and tourism spatial planning (tsp_dest) on their intentions to participate in future sustainable tourism development initiatives – a discriminant analysis was used.

The discriminant analysis uses a binary variable as the dependent variable and metric variables as independent ones. Based on the variability of the independent variables, a discriminant function is created, which allows individuals to be included in a certain group (Malhotra, 2004, pp. 535-544). Thus, the first step is to use the ANOVA method, aiming to test the statistical significance of the differences between the groups' means for each of the dependent variables.

In the context of the present research, respondents were divided in two groups: those who intend to participate in sustainable tourism development initiatives and those who don't. The results presented in Table 3 show that there are significant differences among the groups' means ($p < 0.05$) in the case of respondents' satisfaction level regarding destination marketing (mk_dest) and tourism spatial planning (tsp_dest). For this reason, the variable which measures respondents' satisfaction level regarding the management of the analyzed destination will be excluded from the model, as its influence on the dependent variable is not statistically significant.

Table 3: Tests of equality of group means

	Wilks' Lambda	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Respondents' satisfaction level regarding Braşov destination marketing (mk_dest)	.97	5.07	1	209	.025
Respondents' satisfaction level regarding Braşov tourism spatial planning (tsp_dest)	.94	12.92	1	209	.000
Respondents' satisfaction level regarding Braşov destination management (mn_dest)	.99	.79	1	209	.373

Source: Authors' computations

The mean values registered for the members of the two groups (see Table 4) indicate that respondents who are willing to participate in APDT's initiatives are less satisfied with Braşov destination marketing and tourism spatial planning, compared to the other group. For this reason, they are more predisposed to support sustainable tourism initiatives.

Table 4: The correlation between respondents' interest and their satisfaction level

	Respondents' interest to participate in APDT's initiatives	Mean	Standard Deviation	Valid N (listwise)	
				Unweighted	Weighted
No	Respondents' satisfaction level regarding Braşov destination marketing (mk_dest)	3.1322	1.11012	121	121
	Respondents' satisfaction level regarding Braşov tourism spatial planning (tsp_dest)	3.7603	.77486	121	121
Yes	Respondents' satisfaction level regarding Braşov destination marketing (mk_dest)	2.7889	1.07572	90	90
	Respondents' satisfaction level regarding Braşov tourism spatial planning (tsp_dest)	3.3444	.90145	90	90
Total	Respondents' satisfaction level regarding Braşov destination marketing (mk_dest)	2.9858	1.10617	211	211
	Respondents' satisfaction level regarding Braşov tourism spatial planning (tsp_dest)	3.5829	.85440	211	211

Source: Authors' computations

Computing the discriminant analysis, which used the above mentioned variables, we obtained the following discriminant function equation (1):

$$y = -4.692 + 0.364 \cdot mk_dest + 1.006 \cdot tsp_dest \quad (1)$$

Based on the equation (1) we can calculate the 'y' value corresponding to each of the respondents, which allow us to include them in one of the two groups (respondents who are willing to support APDT's initiatives and those who are not).

Considering the correlation between the discriminant function and each of the dependent variables (see Table 5), one can observe that the variable with the best discriminant power is the respondents' satisfaction level regarding Braşov tourism spatial planning (tsp_dest) as its correlation coefficient with the discriminant function is the highest (0.921).

Table 5: The correlation coefficients between the independent variables and the discriminant function

	Function 1
Respondents' satisfaction level regarding Braşov tourism spatial planning (tsp_dest)	0.921
Respondents' satisfaction level regarding Braşov destination marketing (mk_dest)	0.577

Source: Authors' computations

Based on the results of the discriminant analysis, we validated hypotheses H3 and H4 and rejected hypothesis H2, as the discriminant power of respondents' satisfaction regarding Braşov destination management is not statistically significant.

The fifth research objective aimed to measure the influence of APDT's actions notoriety, tourism businesses' previous involvement in these actions and their activity field on Braşov tourism businesses' intentions to participate in future sustainable tourism development initiatives. We used the model of binary logistic regression as the considered variables were measured on a nominal scale. The model of binary logistic regression allows the quantification of a multiple choice variable's influence on a binary variable, and the probability to obtain an affirmative answer is calculated: $P(y=1)$. The general equation of this model is (Hair *et al.*, 1998, pp. 276-278):

$$P(y = 1/x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4) = \frac{\exp(\beta_0 + \beta_1x_1 + \beta_2x_2 + \beta_3x_3 + \dots + \beta_kx_k)}{1 + \exp(\beta_0 + \beta_1x_1 + \beta_2x_2 + \beta_3x_3 + \dots + \beta_kx_k)} \quad (2)$$

where:

P = the probability to obtain a certain behavior or intention (the 'yes' answer);

x_1, x_2, \dots, x_k = the independent variables included in the model; and

$\beta_0, \beta_1, \dots, \beta_k$ = the model coefficients resulted in depending on the independent variables' values.

The independent variables included in the binary logistic regression model are: the notoriety of APDT's actions (not), tourism businesses' previous involvement in these actions (involv), and their field of activity (field). These variables were used for testing the hypotheses H5-H7. The distribution of the respondents' answers corresponding to these variables is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Responses' frequencies for the independent variables

Variable	Frequency
Do you know the actions undertaken by APDT Braşov? (not)	No 124
	Yes 88
Have you participated in APDT organized meetings so far? (involv)	No 199
	Yes 13
The company's activity field (field)	Recreational facility (recr) 29
	Restaurant (rest) 32
	Accommodation unit (accom) 88
	Travel agency (tr_ag) 59
	Others 4

Source: Authors' computations

From the above mentioned variables, only two variables were considered in the model due to their significant influence on the dependent variable: the notoriety of APDT's actions (not) and the activity field of tourism businesses (field). As the later mentioned variable had several categories, distinct binary variables were computed for each of them: recreational facility (recr), travel agency (tr_ag), accommodation unit (accom) and restaurant (rest). The 'Other' response was converted to a reference variable and included in the Constant coefficient. The estimation of the model's pa-

rameters was undertaken using the step by step method and the results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: The coefficients of the binary logistic regression model

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 ^a	dom			18.009	4	.001	
	dom(recr)	-.198	.630	.099	1	.753	.821
	dom(rest)	-.922	.567	2.647	1	.104	.398
	dom(accom)	.245	.538	.208	1	.648	1.278
	dom(tr_ag)	-1.644	.693	5.634	1	.018	.193
	Constant	.118	.486	.059	1	.808	1.125
Step 2 ^b	not	2.120	.828	6.553	1	.010	8.327
	dom			19.546	4	.001	
	dom(recr)	-.485	.649	.560	1	.454	.615
	dom(rest)	-1.138	.579	3.865	1	.049	.320
	dom(accom)	.209	.538	.151	1	.697	1.233
	dom(tr_ag)	-1.644	.693	5.634	1	.018	.193
	Constant	.118	.486	.059	1	.808	1.125

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: dom.

b. Variable(s) entered on step 2: not.

Source: Authors' computations

Based on the model's coefficients (B) from Table 7 we computed the binary logistic regression equation (equation 3).

$$P(y=1/x_1, \dots, x_5) = \frac{\exp(0.118 + 2.12 \cdot \text{not} - 0.485 \cdot \text{recr} - 1.138 \cdot \text{rest} + 0.209 \cdot \text{accom} - 1.644 \cdot \text{tr_ag})}{1 + \exp(0.118 + 2.12 \cdot \text{not} - 0.485 \cdot \text{recr} - 1.138 \cdot \text{rest} + 0.209 \cdot \text{accom} - 1.644 \cdot \text{tr_ag})} \quad (3)$$

According to these results, the respondents' probability to participate in future initiatives organized by APDT increases for the businesses which are familiarized with the DMO's previous actions and for accommodation units. The same probability decreases in the case of travel agencies, restaurants and recreational facilities.

Taking into consideration the results obtained after the application of the binary logistic regression model, we can state that for a 95% confidence level, hypotheses H5 and H7 are validated while hypothesis H6 is rejected.

Based on the empirical testing of the theoretical model proposed starting from the research hypotheses, we obtained the model presented in Figure 3. This model includes the relevant factors which resulted from the discriminant analysis and the binary logistic regression.

In order to identify potential ideas for the improvement of Braşov's management, marketing and tourism spatial planning (O6), a series of multiple-choice nominal variables were included in the questionnaire; Table 8 includes the results of data analysis in their case.

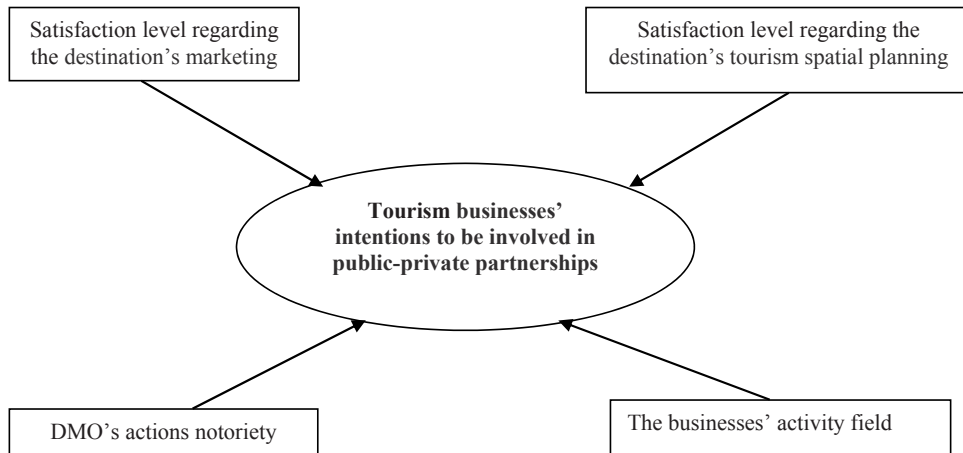


Figure 3: The model resulted from the empirical testing

Source: Authors' computations

Table 8: The distribution of respondents' answers concerning possible improvement

	Response	Frequency	Percent of total cases
Sustainable destination management actions	Formulating a sustainable tourism strategy	146	69.2%
	Consulting local stakeholders and stimulating networking	70	33.2%
	Attracting investments and infrastructure development projects	131	62.1%
	Registering and monitoring tourists' complaints	84	39.8%
	Informing tourism businesses	85	40.3%
	Evaluating the impact of tourism activities on the local economy, residents and environment	76	36.0%
	Other	18	8.5%
	Total responses	610	
Sustainable destination marketing actions	Conducting research among tourists and stakeholders	85	40.1%
	Identifying and targeting attractive market segments	97	45.8%
	Different strategic approaches for each targeted market segment	90	42.5%
	Promoting local events	183	86.3%
	Other	4	1.9%
	Total responses	459	
Sustainable destination tourism spatial planning actions	Spatial planning for natural areas	92	43.4%
	Developing tourism infrastructure	129	60.8%
	Respecting esthetical principles in the urban design	53	25.0%
	Signing and promotional graphics	73	34.4%
	Restoring the historical city center	133	62.7%
	Other	9	4.2%
Total responses	489		

Source: Authors' computations

Concerning the improvement of Braşov's destination management, the majority of the respondents consider that a sustainable tourism strategy is necessary, as well as investments and infrastructure development projects. For the improvement of Braşov's destination marketing, a special attention must be given to the promotion of local events. In the case of Braşov's tourism spatial planning, the majority of the respondents consider that it is crucial to restore the historical city center, and to develop the tourism infrastructure.

All the tourism initiatives outlined in the present study should be founded on extensive networks of tourism stakeholders within the destination. What is very important in such initiatives is seamless coordination of actors, activities and resources, preferably guided by comprehensive policies formulated and applied by public authorities (e.g. the City Hall and County Councils, the Metropolitan Agency, governmental authorities). For example, within the new tourism law, which is currently under debate, the role of the DMOs should be outlined and a series of financial incentives need to be created. At a local level, tourism businesses' involvement in the local DMO's activities could be stimulated by redirecting all the collected tourism taxes towards the DMOs, instead of being left into the common pool of local budgets, where they are most of the times used for other purposes which are not related to tourism. Such an approach as well as the possibility of deciding how these sums are spend would surely increase tourism businesses' trust and interest in local DMOs. In order to redirect the collected funds towards destination marketing, the DMO needs to prepare a very good marketing program on an annual basis.

5. Conclusions

As the literature suggests (Hatipoglu *et al.*, 2016; Ladkin and Martinez Bertramini, 2002), collaborative institutions and frameworks are essential for ensuring participation of all interested parties, leading to sustainability. In the case of Braşov, the APDT has the role of coordinating public-private partnerships for a sustainable tourism development in the destination. The research results outline the deficiencies in the analyzed destination's marketing, which lead to a low notoriety of the APDT among tourism stakeholders. In addition, there is a low level of involvement of tourism operators in supporting the efforts of this association aimed at supporting public-private partnerships. These results are in line with Hatipoglu, Alvarez and Ertuna (2016) findings, which state that those stakeholders who participate more in the planning of tourism are more knowledgeable concerning sustainable tourism, more supportive of participation of locals, and advocate more representative models of governance. Thus, knowledge sharing and learning between various stakeholder groups in Braşov might facilitate gradual incorporation of non-participating groups into the planning process. This is also in line with Budeanu *et al.*'s recommendation regarding the critical importance of communication and learning for effective stakeholder engagement and issues of empowerment and governance (Budeanu *et al.*, 2016). Other authors suggested that local universities can be involved in common projects with local authorities for des-

ination marketing purposes (Nechita and Tanaka, 2016; Nechita *et al.*, 2014). Thus, Transilvania University of Brasov could be a specialized provider of marketing research services and a partner in sustainable tourism development initiatives.

Although we found few involvement efforts of local tourism stakeholders, there is a certain level of interest, which is influenced mainly by the businesses' activity field, the level of notoriety of APDT's actions and by the complaints concerning the destination marketing and tourism spatial planning. The research results outline a series of future actions in which Braşov tourism operators would be interested to be involved in; among these actions, the highest level of interest was registered for the following measures: formulating a sustainable tourism strategy, attracting investments and infrastructure development projects, promoting local events, developing tourism infrastructure, etc.

The results of the present study are relevant for both Braşov tourism services providers and the organization which is responsible for the destination's management and marketing (APDT) in the sense of future strategic partnerships building for a sustainable tourism development. Thus, APDT can direct its efforts towards creating public-private partnerships, especially with accommodation units' managers, who showed the most interest to be involved in such actions. This interest might be motivated by their constant need to attract increasing numbers of visitors in the destination. In this sense, building strategic partnerships for a sustainable tourism development in Braşov may lead to the sustainable development of tourism businesses. On the other hand, APDT needs to continue its efforts to identify local tourism businesses' complaints and to involve them in sustainable tourism development initiatives, as these respondents have shown an increased interest for such a collaboration. This recommendation is reinforced by previous research conducted among Braşov tourism stakeholders (Albu *et al.*, 2016), which highlighted the necessity of informing local actors about the concerns related to sustainable development of the tourism sector in the area.

These changes need to be performed within the destination with a strong involvement and commitment from the local and county administration. The local and county public authorities (City Hall, Metropolitan Agency of Braşov Area and Braşov County Council) should be in charge of the restoration of the historical city center and the development of tourism infrastructure, and they should closely collaborate with the local DMO in order to formulate and implement a sustainable tourism development strategy in the destination. Moreover, they should promote APDT as the local DMO, and show their support in all of the activities dedicated to improving the destination's management, marketing and spatial planning, within the framework of a sustainable approach of tourism planning.

However, it is important to also consider the limitations of the present study. The first limitation of the present research is given by the sample size, which is quite small, as a consequence of a low response rate, which also leads to a process of self-selection of the respondents. However, the answers we obtained have a significant relevance

for the research objectives and they open the path for future research directions, aimed at overcoming these limitations.

Second, as the surveyed data were collected in a Romanian urban destination, other international surveys may produce different results and conclusions in terms of the magnitude and directions of relationships among the constructs studied in this study. Tourism stakeholders in other countries and cities may have different perceptions, attitudes and behaviors.

Furthermore, a longitudinal analysis of the model resulted from the empirical testing may reveal interesting information on the dynamics of public-private partnerships aimed at fostering a sustainable development of tourism destinations.

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