

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF CAREERS IN TOURISM

**Abstract.** *Developing sustainable careers in the tourism sector is just as hard as achieving sustainable tourism in general. Our objective was to determine tour guides' attitude to the sustainable development of their careers by tourist agencies as those engaging them. We conducted a survey among representatives of tourist agencies (N = 34). The research showed that the economic pillar of sustainable development is perceived to be the most important when it comes to the sustainable development of careers, followed by the environmental pillar as the second and the social pillar as the least important. In order to achieve the truly sustainable development of careers, the focus must be on the social pillar of development.*

**Keywords:** *career, tourism, sustainability, tour guides, development, HR*

### Introduction

Sustainable development in tourism is a widely discussed subject. Since the mid-1960s this topic has become of interest to researchers and professionals around the world. It was all based on the idea emerging in the 1960s that we cannot live like we used to live if we want to leave this planet for future generations. These debates occurred after disapproval of the fast-paced socioeconomic development following the Second World War. At that point, prosperity was everything and no one was really considering our planet. We could say that sustainable development first evolved from the environmental perspective. The full-scale sustainable development debate came with publication of a document entitled *Our Common Future* in which the World Commission on Environment and Development defined the means of conduct that may be considered as sustainable, namely where development meets the needs of current generations in a way that does not endanger the needs of future generations (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987: 43). The World Commission on Environment and Development's definition of sustainable development prompted a new

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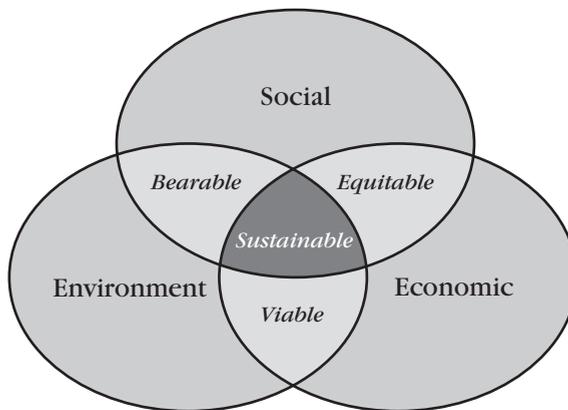
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wave of debates on the subject. The economic crisis in the mid-1980s put the sustainability wave on hold for some time, but since the 1990s it has been moving onwards and now most researchers and professionals worldwide would agree on the definition of sustainable development as:

*a multidimensional concept, that relates economic, environmental and social development on local, national and international level, with stakeholders in current and further generations that have to be recognized by all partners on local, national and international level. (Bahor, 2005: 33)*

As seen in the above definitions, the sustainable development concept has three pillars. The first is considered to be the environmental pillar since the whole idea evolved from there, the second is the economic pillar while the third is the social pillar. It is only at that point where all three pillars meet that we can really talk about sustainable development, and there is no doubt that balancing the different desires emerging from the different perspectives is truly difficult. The most common interpretation of sustainable development was created by the World Commission on Environment and Development and is shown in Picture 1.

Picture 1: WORLD COMMISSION FOR ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT'S VIEW ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



Source: United Nations (2014).

### Sustainable development in tourism

The very width of the definition of sustainable development has itself become an interesting topic to deal with in tourism, although some authors (Wroster, 1993; Wall, 2002) criticise the definition's width that began to

appear in the tourism sphere in the 1990s. When looking from the tourism perspective, it all began primarily with the desire to protect the environment, cultural heritage and the identity of the nation. As pointed out by Rangus and Kurež (2014: 1154): “one of the core concepts of tourism activities are tourist attractions as focal points of tourism industry” and in this light protection of the above-mentioned elements is even more critical. Turnšek Hančič et al. (2013: 18) also stress the importance of reputation in tourism by saying: “word-of-mouth communication on tourism destinations has always been extremely influential for the tourism industry”. It is certainly true that the world has become a global village, as we like to call it, with travel becoming more accessible to a wider population. This prompted the issuing of various sustainability acts as well as practices in tourism. As noted by Kos (2004: 333), sustainability has become a key element of almost every development document published in tourism, based on the notion that with mass tourism we could destroy the environment and heritage for future generations if we do not act at once.

Several strategies have been prepared in Slovenia to promote sustainable tourism, e.g. in the Strategy of Development of Slovenian Tourism 2012–2016 the Slovenian government (Government of Republic of Slovenia, 2012) stated that:

*In 2016 tourism in Slovenia will be completely based on sustainable development, and it will create as a very successful industry within the national economy a key contribution to social welfare and the reputation of our country in the world.*

The definition itself would be somewhat useless if an explanation of how this will be achieved were not added:

*Successfully implemented principles of sustainable development of tourism will provide a favourable business environment to achieve higher quality and to establish conditions that will lead to higher competitiveness of Slovenian tourism, in order to plan and implement effective and innovative marketing and promotion of Slovenia as an attractive tourist destination.*

While this definition along with the explanation is clearly very promising, it lacks a part defining the roles of the stakeholders that would put the strategy into practice. This is one reason we decided to look at this topic because we firmly believe that people are key to the development of these practices, and since they are key their development should also be considered in terms certain sustainable practices for their careers.

## Sustainable development of careers

When it comes to the sustainable development of human capital, there are quite a few controversies among the views promoted by researchers. As shown by Tisdell (2000), some believe human capital is part of the economic development pillar, others that this is part of the social development pillar. We could argue either way, but there is no doubt that the sustainable development of human capital must be one of the essential points of sustainable development in general. The problem with sustainable development of the human capital concept is that it chiefly focuses on the standard of living and neglects the career development concept.

This leads us to the question: "Is it even possible to develop careers in a sustainable manner?". There are several views on this. For example, Gough and Scott (2003) discuss the sustainable development of learning, a concept that directly affects career development, Van Kerkhoff and Lebel (2006) discuss linking knowledge to practice in the case of sustainable development, while Arbuthnott (2009) talks about workplace attitudes that promote sustainable development.

These are all concepts related to the sustainable development of careers, but it was Iles (1997) who really put it clearly when stating the sustainable development of a career is primarily an issue of the person whose career we are talking about. It seems like the concept of the sustainable development of careers has not been established in the minds of managers in a company even though they talk a lot about how important their people are to their companies.

It would seem that making career development sustainable in tourism, an industry characterised by long working hours, seasonal engagements, demanding working conditions and so on, is almost impossible. We could argue there are many so-called McJobs in the tourism sector, especially when we consider the jobs mostly have a seasonal or part-time employment basis.

In the following part, we focus on tourism as an industry and a very special type of industry in which 'employees' – tour guides – as irreplaceable professionals are often neglected when it comes to career development in tourism.

### Tourism and tour guides

It is widely recognised that the first organised trip that may be considered a tourist product was made in Great Britain when Thomas Cook made an organised trip by train from Leicester to Loughborough that attracted around 570 people. Pond (1993) explains that the first forms of tour guiding

can be seen already as far back as Ancient Greece and Ancient Roman when there was a professional named “interpreter” and upon payment such people interpreted the history of certain towns or areas for people who came through these towns or areas. Similar professionals are also seen in the Middle Ages when there was an escalation of leisure traveling by noblemen who saw these trips as an improvement of education. On the other side of the world in Asia, there are no clear descriptions of similar professionals, although there are some similarities in written testimonies of people who explained history to rulers on their travels, as indicated by Hu (2007: 14). These facts also show that the profession of tour guide, albeit in a very rough form compared to today, was not formalised and these were mostly individuals working for themselves like many tour guides still do today.

It was not until after the two World Wars when we saw a rapid expansion of both infrastructure and the middle class that we can talk about tourism as a business on a bigger scale. This rapid expansion enabled accessible travel to a wider population and this increased the need for more tour guides since traveling had become a popular way to spend free time. As pointed out by Hu (2007: 16), for most tourists tour guides represent someone they can trust. He or she will show them around many interesting sites safely in a relatively short period of time.

Nowadays, in many countries the work of tour guides is somewhat regulated, with countries like Great Britain, Greece, Iceland and also Slovenia requiring various types of certification. Certification is required in order for a person to be given a licence to be a tour guide (Gorenak and Gorenak, 2012: 289). But, in most cases, after this point tour guides are left to themselves when it comes to work and to their career development.

### *Tour guides in Slovenia*

As far as Slovenia is concerned, the work of tour guides was initially completely unregulated but then the Promotion of Tourism Development Act (Promotion of Tourism Development Act, 2004) regulated the work of tour guides by introducing licences. Article 39 of the Act also explains the role of tour guides, stating that the work of a tour guide is: “professional guidance of visitors on a predetermined programme”. The same Act also prescribes that the Slovenian Chamber of Industry and Commerce in agreement with relevant ministries performs examinations in order to grant the licence for a tour guide. Prerequisites are also defined by the same legislation. At least 4 years of high school education and knowledge of a minimum of one foreign language at the high school education level is required.

Legal requirements are placed on the operational context of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce’s licensing programme. Škerbinc (2012)

clarifies the composition of the test, which first consists of a theoretical and later a practical test. Škerbinc (2012) states that for the examination candidates need to write a seminar paper presenting a description of the management of at least a four-day programme in accordance with the instructions for completing tasks. In the theoretical part of the exam, candidates defend their seminar papers and orally answer six theoretical parts from a variety of themes, covering knowledge of tourism geography, cartography, history, ethnology, tourism psychology, art history, archaeology, and the basics of business in tourism. In the exam's practical part, candidates go on a day trip around Slovenia and in practice show their skills on a microphone by explaining all the sights and attractions seen on their leg of the day trip.

When an individual passes both parts of the exam, they are given a licence to be a tour guide. The question that emerges here is whether that individual is in fact trained well enough for such work. Škerbinc (2012) makes this clear by saying: "By acquiring a licence you do only the first step on a long journey of continuous learning. To be a licensed tour guide at this stage means only that you meet the minimum legal requirements, but not necessarily that you can also be an excellent guide. An excellent guide one becomes through practice and constant learning, provided that you have a predisposition for this profession".

To introduce some figures into the perspective within Slovenia: as at 31 December 2014 there were 1,181 licensed tour guides (Škerbinc, 2015: 11-12), not all of them work full-time within this profession, but all hold a valid licence to conduct tours. However, we have to understand the main problems facing the vast majority of tour guides; the first problem is that Slovenian legislation does not recognise tour guides as a profession. Second, a clear majority of tourist agencies cannot provide enough tours to tour guides throughout the year so their work is primarily seasonal. Since tour guides are not a profession and tourist agencies do not have enough work for them to do year round, the tour guides are mostly self-employed. And this all together brings us to our main question: how can there be any sustainability in their careers if they are so dependent on market trends? What can tourist agencies still do within these limits to ensure the sustainable development of their tour guides' careers?

The research question in the present work is: "What is the attitude of tourist agencies as those engaging tour guides to the sustainable development of their careers?".

## Methodology

To answer this research question, a survey was conducted among representatives of tourist agencies. For this survey, a questionnaire was designed

and divided into several parts. In the first part, we asked tourist agency representatives to select five statements out of twenty offered which they believe describe what is sustainable development. In the second part, we gave the tourist agency representatives the same twenty statements and asked them to evaluate to what extent they feel those statements about sustainable development in tourism are true. In the third part, we provided the tourist agency representatives with 15 different services that tourist agencies could provide to tour guides regarding the sustainable development of their careers and asked them to rate to what extent the agencies engaging them actually provide these services to tour guides. In the last, fourth part, we asked the tourist agency representatives for certain data about their employer and themselves for the purpose of demographically presenting the sample.

Interviewees were asked to respond to questions in the second and third parts on a five-level Likert response scale, where 1 meant they did not agree at all with the statement, and 5 that they agree completely with the statement, with grades 2, 3 and 4 providing intermediate values, except those referring to demographic data.

Due to the nature of the work, most tour guides and tour managers are self-employed and offer their services to tourist agencies in an open market. We would expect tourist agencies to provide some means of sustainable development at least to those tour guides with whom they work frequently. For the needs of the research we formulated the following hypotheses:

H<sub>1</sub>: Representatives of tourist agencies value certain indicators of all three pillars of sustainable development with a mean value above 4.00.

H<sub>2</sub>: The economic pillar of sustainable development is perceived to be the most important when it comes to the sustainable development of careers, followed by the environmental pillar and the social pillar as the least important.

The empirical data used in this research were collected between 20 July 2015 and 20 August 2015. There are 44 members of the Association of Tourist Agencies of Slovenia; however, we eliminated all members which are not primarily tourist agencies, but associated members such as companies related to selling airline tickets (for example Amadeus Slovenia). We ended up with 37 tourist agencies that represent our population.

We decided to limit our research to those agencies that fit the above-mentioned selection criteria and are members of the Association of Tourist Agencies of Slovenia. Namely, association members generate roughly 75% of all income made by all tourist agencies in Slovenia (Association of Tourist Agencies of Slovenia - Mission, 2015), and in this perspective are those subjects in the market which have 'tourist agency' as their core business and also have a considerable number of tour guides working for them. It is

only with this limitation that we can study the perspective of the sustainable development of careers. According to data from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia (2015), 536 tourist agencies are registered in Slovenia.

We sent the questionnaire to representatives of these selected tourist agencies, asking them to appoint someone who is responsible for the work with tour guides and to answer the questionnaire since they have the best overview of the research subject. We gathered 34 responses, representing a 91.9% response rate among the population. Based on the number of answers gathered, our responses are valid using a 5% confidence interval and a 95% confidence level.

The empirical data were analysed using descriptive statistics, factor analysis, a t-test and one-way ANOVA variance analysis.

Cronbach's alpha was run among variables that were measured on a scale from 1 to 5, with the result being 0.853, which shows a good level of the questionnaire's validity according to Cronbach (1951).

## Research analysis

### *Sample presentation*

The research sample included altogether 34 respondents, of whom 15 (45.5%) were male and 18 (54.5%) were female. The average age of the respondents was 42.6 years. Age distribution and education level data are shown in Table 1.

*Table 1: AGE DISTRIBUTION AND LEVEL OF EDUCATION IN THE RESEARCH SAMPLE*

Age group	N	%
up to and including 34	8	23.5
35 to 42	9	26.5
43 to 50	9	26.5
51 or more	8	23.5
Level of education	N	%
high school education	9	26.5
college education	10	29.4
university degree or higher	15	44.1

Source: Gorenak (2015).

We also found that, on average, respondents had 14.4 years of work experience, of which they had spent an average 9.5 years with the current company.

In relation to company data, we found that on average there are 31 employees in every agency, and that they cooperate with about 45 tour guides on a seasonal contract basis.

### *What is perceived to be sustainable development in tourism*

In the first part of the survey, we asked respondents to select five statements out of twenty offered which they believe describe what is sustainable development. In the second part, we wanted to know how respondents evaluate the importance of the same twenty statements and asked them to assess to what extent they feel the statements about sustainable development in tourism are true. Through these two parts we wanted to see what is generally perceived as sustainable development. Results for parts one and two are shown in Table 2, where part one is represented by the first column (%) and part two by the second (Mean value) and third (St. deviation) columns:

*Table 2: CONCERN FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT*

Variable: Concern for sustainable development is caring for ...	%	Mean value	St. deviation
... higher loyalty of customers.	64.7	4.59	0.74
... the environment.	61.8	4.76	0.65
... satisfaction of customers/consumers.	58.8	4.74	0.57
... quality.	50.0	4.82	0.52
... improving relations with local communities.	47.1	4.62	0.70
... improving relations with business partners.	44.1	4.62	0.65
... satisfaction of employees.	38.2	4.50	0.79
... better financial performance.	32.4	4.14	1.10
... public reputation.	23.5	4.69	0.63
... new market opportunities.	20.6	3.79	0.77
... expanding brand image.	11.8	4.73	0.57
... increasing demand.	11.8	3.37	1.18
... better organisational performance.	11.8	3.94	1.09
... a company's value.	11.8	3.62	1.48
... lowering operating cost.	5.9	2.38	1.61
... companies' profit.	2.9	3.35	1.32
... rationalisation of work.	2.9	3.11	1.22
... goals of our business.	0.0	3.82	0.92
... creation of a better position than the competition has.	0.0	4.09	0.79
... systematic work of our company.	0.0	3.32	1.19

Source: Gorenak (2015).

As Table 2 shows, most respondents selected the answer “higher loyalty of customers” as their main concern when it comes to sustainable development in tourism, followed by the “environment” and the “satisfaction of customers/consumers”. It is somewhat alarming to see that none of the respondents selected the answers “goals of our business”, “creation of a better position than the competition has” and “systematic work of our company” as their main concern regarding sustainable development in tourism.

When the respondents had to evaluate how important certain concerns for sustainable development were, the highest mean value is seen with the variable “quality” (4.82) followed by “environment” (4.76) and “satisfaction of customers/consumers” (4.74). Higher loyalty of customers that was selected as the most frequent answer was also rated relatively highly with a mean value of 4.59. Lowest average values are seen with the variables lowering operating cost (mean value 2.38), followed by rationalisation of work (mean value 3.11) and systematic work of our company (mean value 3.32).

This gave us an insight into how respondents see sustainable development in tourism in general. Further, we wanted to see how they evaluate the sustainable development of careers in tourism, specifically how they assess if their company is taking care of the sustainable development of a certain group of ‘employees’: tour guides.

### *What is done for the sustainable development of careers in tourism?*

We initially performed a factor analysis on all 15 variables in this part of the questionnaire. The factor analysis produced three factors which we labelled as follows, factor 1: Personal services, factor 2: Business services and factor 3: Health services. The results of the factor analysis are shown in Table 3.

*Table 3: FACTOR ANALYSIS FOR VARIABLES MEASURING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF CAREERS OF TOUR GUIDES*

Variables For tour guides we enable ...	Factor value	Mean value	Standard deviation
<b>F1 - Personal services (28.41% var.)</b>			
... recreation outside work.	.898	1.56	1.05
... child care services while at work.	.889	1.47	.99
... alternative work at the agency in off season.	.795	2.00	1.12
... 24/7 emergency telephone services.	.758	4.79	.54
... meals that are not part of the tour.	.630	1.67	1.16
<b>Factor values</b>		<b>2.32</b>	<b>0.76</b>

Variables	Factor value	Mean value	Standard deviation
<b>For tour guides we enable ...</b>			
<b>F2 – Business services (18.20% var.)</b>			
... promotion system.	.948	3.29	1.19
... ability to cooperate in tour design.	.766	4.35	.69
... rewards system for extraordinary performance.	.765	3.15	1.31
... tour selection when possible.	.607	3.85	1.37
... career orientation.	.595	2.35	1.15
... education system.	.520	3.85	1.13
... system attendance at learning tours.	.475	4.62	.78
<b>Factor values</b>		3.64	0.73
<b>F3 – Health services (12.42% var.)</b>			
... preventive vaccination for travel diseases.	.505	2.29	1.45
... alert system for health threats while traveling.	.431	3.18	1.29
... payment of additional health insurance.	.429	3.53	1.54
<b>Factor values</b>		3.00	1.09
<b>Sum of factor values F1 + F2 + F3 (59.02% var.)</b>			

Source: Gorenak (2015).

As seen in Table 3, we were able to explain altogether 59.02% of variability of the sustainable development of the careers of tour guides. Next, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (better known as the KMO test) and the Bartlett test have values of 0.811 and  $p < 0.000$ , respectively. These values indicate the factor analysis yielded characteristic and reliable factors. Based on this analysis, we created three new variables that we used in further analysis. We named the first factor “personal services” (mean value 2.32, St. deviation 0.76), the second factor “business services” (mean value 3.64, St. deviation 0.73) and the third factor “health services” (mean value 3.00, St. deviation 1.09). The next step was to analyse what kind of statistically significant differences would occur between the newly formed variables and some collected demographic data. Thus, we performed a t-test analysis whose results are shown in Table 4.

*Table 4: T-TEST ANALYSIS BETWEEN FACTORISED VARIABLES AND DEMOGRAPHIC*

Variable	t	p	Mean value	
			Men	Women
Personal services	2.741	.015	2.76	2.01

Source: Gorenak (2015).

As presented in Table 4, we found a statistically significant difference between genders when assessing the variable personal services ( $t = 2.741$ ,

$p = 0.015$ ). Male respondents evaluated this variable statistically significantly higher (mean value 2.76) than female respondents (mean value 2.01). There was no statistically significant difference with the two other factors with respect to gender.

Next, we performed a one-way ANOVA test where we searched for statistically significant differences between the newly formed variables and the level of education. The results are shown in Table 5.

*Table 5: ONE-WAY ANOVA ANALYSIS BETWEEN THE FACTORISED VARIABLES AND THE LEVEL OF EDUCATION*

Variable	F	p	Mean value		
			average	Level of education	
Personal services	3.543	.042	2.32	high school	2.07
				college	1.98
				university or more	2.68
Business services	4.095	.025	3.64	high school	3.10
				college	3.91
				university or more	3.78
Health services	6.385	.005	3.00	high school	3.11
				college	2.13
				university or more	3.51

Source: Gorenak (2015).

As revealed in Table 5, there is a statistically significant difference between the three different education levels with all three newly formed variables. With the variable personal services ( $F = 3.543$ ;  $p = 0.042$ ), respondents holding a university degree or higher evaluated this variable above average (mean value 2.68), it was evaluated below average by respondents with a high school education (mean value 2.07) and those with a college education (mean value 1.98). With the variable business services ( $F = 4.095$ ;  $p = 0.025$ ) respondents with a college education (mean value 3.91) and respondents with a university degree or higher evaluated this variable above average (mean value 3.78), while it was evaluated below average by respondents with a high school education (mean value 3.10). With the variable health services ( $F = 6.385$ ;  $p = 0.005$ ) respondents holding a university degree or higher (mean value 3.51), and those holding a high school education (mean value 3.11) evaluated this variable above average, while it was evaluated below average by respondents with a college education (mean value 2.13).

## Interpretation of the results and results of the hypothesis testing

Some interesting findings emerged from the survey. In the first part, we found that high loyalty of customers (64.7%) is the biggest concern when it comes to sustainable development in tourism, followed by the environment (61.8%), satisfaction of customers/consumers (58.8%), quality (50.0%) and improving relations with local communities (47.1%). This is somewhat expected since we can say these values promote all three pillars of sustainable development directly: economic, environmental and social. It is on the other hand alarming to see that statements like the goals of our business, creation of a better position than the competition has, and systematic work of our company were not identified as the main concern regarding sustainable development in tourism since sustainability must be promoted from within the organisation itself first before it can be shared onwards. When looking at the mean values when evaluating the importance of sustainable development for tourism, we found the highest mean value was given to quality (4.82), an indicator of the economic pillar, followed by the environment (4.76), an indicator of the environmental pillar, and satisfaction of customers/consumers (4.74), an indicator of the social pillar. This can be regarded as positive since it shows that the perceived importance of certain sustainable development variables is strong and focused in the right direction.

Based on these findings, we can *confirm* our first hypothesis:  $H_1$ : *Representatives of tourist agencies value certain indicators of all three pillars of sustainable development with mean a value above 4.00.*

In the second part, we focused on tour guides as a specific group of collaborators in tourism. The mean value of the factor personal services was calculated at 2.32 with a standard deviation of 0.76, for the factor business services the mean value was calculated at 3.64 with a standard deviation of 0.73 and for the last factor health services the mean value was calculated at 3.00 with a standard deviation of 1.09. Our factors are similar to three pillars of sustainable development, the factor personal services could be linked to the social pillar and the factor business services to the economic pillar, the third factor health services has some similarities with the environmental pillar as well since health also depends on the environment we live and work in.

Further, we conducted an analysis of statistically significant differences and ascertained that when it comes to the personal services factor (linked to the social pillar of sustainable development) men evaluate this factor statistically significantly higher than women. In relation to the level of education, all three factors showed statistically significant differences between different education levels. Namely concerning personal services (linked to

the social pillar of sustainable development) respondents with a university degree or higher evaluated this factor above average, it is evaluated below average by those with a college education or high school education. When looking at the business services factor (linked to the economic pillar of sustainable development) this factor is evaluated above average by respondents with a college degree and respondents with a university degree or higher and below average by those with a high school diploma. In the last factor health services (partially linked to the environment pillar of sustainable development) respondents holding a university degree or higher and respondents with a high school diploma evaluated this factor above average but those with a college degree evaluated this factor below average. We could simply say that the results are quite mixed but, when looking carefully, we can see that the education level generally does affect how a certain factor is evaluated, and clearly shows that a higher education promotes a better understanding of the importance of all of the factors.

Based on the findings in this second part, we can *confirm* our second hypothesis:  $H_2$ : *The economic pillar of sustainable development is perceived to be the most important when it comes to the sustainable development of careers, followed by the environmental pillar and the social pillar as the least important.*

### Implications for practical use and limitations of the research

Two basic issues emerged in this research which can be addressed in practice more or less at once. The first is the issue of making sustainability alive in practice. In the first part, we saw no respondent selected statements like the goals of our business, creation of a better position than the competition has, and systematic work of our company as the most important for sustainability. This is alarming, but in the second part we saw these same statements were attributed with relatively high average values of importance. This indicates that respondents realise these issues are important, but do not perceive them to be on top of their priority list. While it is quite simple to say that managers need to create an environment in which their employees will 'live' sustainability, it is quite difficult to actually do this.

The second issue emerges when we look at the mean values of the personal service factor (linked to the social pillar of sustainable development) where we can see that, with the exception of the mean value for the variable 24/7 emergency telephone services, the mean values are extremely low. This indicates that tourist agencies do not provide many services in support of tour guides. While we understand that tourist agencies are not legally bound to provide any of the services emerging in this factor, it is important that tourist agency representatives realise that tour guides are

very important collaborators and that, although in most cases they are external contractors, they are one of the key links between the tourist agency and their customers. In all cases, regardless of the legal arrangements, social well-being is very important for the satisfaction of employees/collaborators and affects their performance to a great extent.

We therefore recommend that representatives of tourist agencies focus on these factors intensively to provide better conditions to support the sustainable development of tour guides.

As far as the limitations of this research are concerned, one of them is the size of the sample although we can say that through the selection of the sample we managed to minimise the influence of the sample size and in this respect the results can be useful. The other limitation is clearly the fact we only performed the survey among representatives of tourist agencies, thereby acquiring their opinions and views on the subject. While we did not address this issue in the article, on the other hand this creates a possibility to do further research on the same subject from the different point of view that surely emerges from the tour guide perspective.

## Conclusion

The sustainable development of careers is a challenge for any organisation. This challenge grows even harder with professions that are subject to extreme seasonal fluctuations. The job of tour guides is such a case. Thus, tour guides are clearly important collaborators of every tourist agency. This raises a question concerning the attitude of tourist agencies as those engaging tour guides to the sustainable development of their careers? Due to certain legal obstacles in Slovenia, the vast majority of tour guides are self-employed, yet their relationship with tourist agencies is still so strong that tourist agencies must focus on the sustainable development of their careers where possible. Through our research we determined that tourist agency representatives perceive certain elements ("quality" (4.82), "environment" (4.76), "satisfaction of customers/consumers" (4.74), ...) of sustainable development very highly. However, when it comes to the sustainable development of careers things become more complicated. In the aspect of economic sustainability, the results show that this part is covered sufficiently since we calculated a mean value of 3.64 for indicators in the factor named business services. But in relation to social stability, a lot more remains to be done since the calculated mean value of indicators in the factor named personal services is just 2.32. We must always keep in mind that a satisfied collaborator is a reliable collaborator and will try to do his or her best to perform their job correctly. This all points to quality, which is in fact perceived to be the most important. The importance of employees/collaborators within

service-oriented companies was also clearly stressed by Branson (2015) when stating: "Clients do not come first. Employees come first. If you take care of your employees, they will take care of the clients". With this in mind, the main challenge for managers in the future is to put their employees/collaborators up front as the most important people within the company. Sustainability must not just be a distant idea, it must be 'lived' in all aspects of any service-oriented business, tourism especially, regardless of it being sustainable practices in the development of new tours or the sustainable development of collaborators/employees.

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