

# Satisfaction with Experiential Balloon Flights in the Context of Gender Groups: The Case Study of the Czech Republic

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## Abstract

Changes in visitor preferences and lifestyle are giving rise to new forms of tourism. Coming to the forefront are new, unique experiences, which significantly support the development of experiential tourism, including activities such as scenic hot air balloon flights. Balloon flying allows clients to create an emotional experience and also serves as an educational and entertaining element. Even in this segment there is significant competition, companies are forced to offer a product according to the requirements of the clientele, which differ significantly not only by age, but also by gender. The aim of the article was to define the level of experience and satisfaction with the services based on a web review analysis, which was determined through quantitative assessment (scoring), willingness to recommend, and qualitative content analysis of individual reviews conducted using NVIVO (14) software. The research focused on identifying differences between reviews and recommendations of women and men of Czech clientele (226 reviews). Overall, the participants of the balloon flight rated the experience as very positive, most clients associated it with the words great, wonderful or even romantic. A quarter of the participants further recommended this form of experience. As part of the statistical testing, the dependence between the gender of the reviewer and the scope of the review, recommendation, and satisfaction was not confirmed. On the contrary, the dependence between gender and the choice of place for publishing a customer review was confirmed.

## Keywords

costumer experience, satisfaction by gender, experiential tourism, event tourism, balloon flying, Czech Republic

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Definition of experiential tourism

Like other areas of life, tourism is subject to new trends. These new trends have been triggered in recent years mainly by lifestyle changes or the Covid pandemic, which have significantly changed the demand and supply for tourism. As a result of increasing household disposable income and a preference for a healthy lifestyle, postmodern tourists are increasingly favoring an active holiday model that demands authenticity. The basic prerequisites for the competitiveness of individual destinations are thus based on the offer of products that bring emotions, and excitement, based on unique experiences. This trend is a prerequisite for the development of experiential tourism, but also event tourism.

According to company Amadeus, from the supply side, it is necessary for providers in the customer sector to offer more diverse, longer, and more authentic pro-

ducts to customers (Hyland, 2021). According to Yeoman et al. (2009), the customer trend of spending leisure time "on the beach or by the pool" has already passed, and tourists are increasingly turning their attention to consuming highly emotional experiences. Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) and George Washington University (Adventure Travel, 2013) research on international travelers in three regions: Europe, North America, and South America states that 42% of travelers consider an adventure activity as the main activity of their last trip.

When it comes to experiential and event tourism, both involve offering experiences, but they are two different types of tourism. According to Gardiner and Kwek (2016), the term experiential tourism is used to describe travel behavior related to activities that involve risk, excitement, and performance. These are typically activities associated

with adventure and adrenaline, such as hot air ballooning, diving, paragliding, but also with gastronomy, cultural heritage, etc. Another definition states that the goal of experiential tourism is to offer visitors various types of attractions that are meant to be unforgettable (Kiráľová and Straka, 2013). However, unique experiences are also offered through events or activities (sports, recreational, educational, corporate events, festivals, etc.) in tourism. In this case, these experiences are part of event tourism. Event tourism is a form of tourism where *"participants are motivated by the search for experiences different from everyday life, excitement"* (Zelenka and Pásková, 2012). According to Kotíková and Schwartzhoffová (2008), event tourism is often intertwined with cultural, sports and experiential tourism. Among the widely cited works on event tourism is the article "Progress and prospects for event tourism research" by Getz and Page (2016). These authors have been dealing with the issue of event tourism for a long time. Getz (2008) defined event tourism chronologically and thematically, but also expanded the theory of event tourism. Furthermore, Getz and Page (2016) presented a deeper analysis of the development and evolution of the field and the development of the literature, specified a framework for understanding and creating knowledge about events and tourism. In the mentioned work Getz and Page (2016) consider corporate events (in the MICE sector, MICE = Meetings, Incentives, Conferences/congress/convention, Exhibitions/events.), sports, festivals, and other cultural celebrations and entertainment as typical areas of event tourism. Page and Connell (2020) say that *"events are a temporary phenomenon and every event is a unique combination of where and when it is held, its theme, design and style and the participants, spectators and organizers"*. Most definitions agree that event tourism involves providing something exceptional and memorable (Quan and Wang, 2004; Tung and Ritchie, 2011). From the literature, it is possible to observe differences between experiential and event tourism, not only from the perspective of selected target activities. In the case of event tourism, it is an organized, planned activity for a group of consumers, usually with a lower level of participation, on the other hand, experiential tourism is about personal and authentic experiences connected to the destination as a whole, with a high level of participation on the part of the consumer, involving all human senses. Experiential tourism can be more flexible compared to event tourism and is not necessarily tied to a specific date, whereas event tourism is time-bound to the date of the event.

## 1.2 The history and present of sightseeing flights as part of experiential tourism

The journey towards using balloons as an experiential medium has been long. The first mentions of balloons were related to their use in the ritual burial of monarchs in the period from 700 to 900 BC in Peru, or in the context of battles between Romans and Dacians (nowadays Romanians) around 1st century AD. It wasn't until the year 1709 that historical records are associated with human flight in a balloon as we know it today, with a basket attached. However, the concept of balloons as a means of transportation was perceived in 1783 when the Montgolfier brothers constructed the first hot air balloon (Chadbalon, 2023; Hruška, 1911; Spring-Balloons, 2022). The beginnings of experiential balloon flying in the Czech Republic are linked to the Aviatik Club, which tested the first Czechoslovak balloon in 1983 and utilized the first passenger balloon in 1988 (Chadbalon, 2023, since 1989 Kubiček Ballons L.C.). The first balloon-related event held in Prague took place from July to October 1891 (Steinbrenera, 1984). During the Jubilee Exhibition in Prague, the Frenchmen Louis Godard and Edouard Surcour showcased two balloons: the one-person Godard and the four-person Victor Hugo with a cubic capacity of 1250 m<sup>3</sup>. The aeronauts conducted a total of 35 flights. This experiential marked the peak of ballooning in Bohemia. Currently, around 40 companies operate in this tourism sector in the Czech market (Business Register, 2023).

Balloon flying is a highly popular activity around the world. There are numerous events, with balloon festivals and carnivals being significant attractions. For instance, the Taiwan International Balloon Festival (abb. TIBF, Media Out Reach, 2021) has been held in Taiwan since 2011. Among the most renowned locations for hot air balloon festivals globally are Cappadocia in Turkey, Bristol in the United Kingdom, and Saga in Japan. The largest event of its kind in the world is the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, which has been held for 51 years (Osmundson, 2022). A significant service within experiential tourism is scenic flights, carried out as either private flights or in groups, using small or large balloons. Undoubtedly, experiences like getting married in a balloon or the opportunity to become a balloon pilot are truly unique. The duration of a scenic flight varies in different parts of the country. Balloon excursions in the Czech Republic, similar to other regions, typically last for a few hours. To enhance the experience, locations with a "genius loci" (spirit of the place) are usually chosen, such as taking off from the Canavese Castle in the afternoon and

evening (Italy), Cappadocia in Turkey, flying over the peaks of the Slovak High Tatras, and more. The experience is enriched by various supplementary activities, including the opportunity to participate in packing the balloon after landing or obtaining a certificate. For example, in Italy, it's called "Battesimo di Volo", and in the Czech Republic, participants who receive the certificate are also awarded the noble titles "Baroness" or "Baron", which ensure their place within the ballooning community. The title "Baroness of" or "Baron of" is associated with the landing site (Rexter, 2022), adding extra value to the experience itself (Karlíček, 2016).

## 2 Literature review

The importance of experiential activities has grown strongly in the post-pandemic period. In the wake of economic problems (financial obligations to employees and agencies, reduced infrastructure funding, etc.), studies have appeared that have opened up a discussion about the impact of the pandemic on nature conservation, possibly on the protection and importance of communities and businesses. Awareness of critical factors for tourism recovery and sustainability, communities' socio-economic vulnerability, adaptation and destination resilience, was investigated by Chiawo et al. (2023), the study looked at, among other things, the impacts of COVID-19 on destination conservation management. The authors state that the construction of new tourist activities was indicated, among which they also mention air balloons. It is therefore possible to identify significant marketing activities and management activities related to the revival of tourism development.

In this context, in connection with balloon flights, e.g., Cheng et al. (2020) pointed out that important activities related to improving the image of destinations are festivals and events. The authors conducted a study regarding tourists' experiences with emerging services, and a detailed study of famous hot-air balloon festivals was conducted. Based on the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) model, the authors investigated the relationship between the three constructs, namely stimulus: perception of marketing strategies and motivation, organism: positive emotions and satisfaction, and response: revisit intention. According to Kauffmann et al. (2019), the long-term sustainability of experience companies is based on satisfying customer needs, creating quality products, and building a brand. Many companies try to get information from customers about what they think about the company and the product, they try to reach the customer. Nowadays, however, trust in classic communication tools (advertising) and classic marketing research tools, such as questionnaires

or guided interviews, is increasingly declining (Münz and Sergiünaitė, 2012; Kauffmann et al., 2019). With declining customer confidence in communicating with product or service intermediaries, more and more clients are turning to personal (word of mouth) recommendations from friends, acquaintances, or family members (WoM, Word of Mouth). With the dynamic spread of the Internet and communication technologies (mobile phones and computers) in everyday life, not only consumption patterns are changing, but also people's behavior and former social relationships in general (Süle, 2012). The development of the Internet enables the rapid and easy dissemination of information. On the one hand, people require social interaction and increasingly share their positive and negative experiences in the Internet environment, on the other hand, they seek more and more heuristic information (Lee et al., 2008). Companies thus obtain a large amount of data to improve the quality of the product or company processes.

The positively charged feelings that customers get from a purchase positively influence customer decision-making. Customer behavior becomes a tool for gathering information and arousing their emotions (Güzel, 2013). Evaluation of customer success of events can be based on many criteria: number of participants, comparison of profit with the previous period, or based on satisfaction. Information about satisfaction can then be obtained based on a questionnaire survey or personal interviews.

In the age of the Internet, it is then possible to use eWoM (Word-of-Mouth), which is considered one of the best marketing tools. Reputational risk is increasingly important for companies, especially against the background of the growing importance of social media and the Internet (Lee et al., 2015).

In addition, a study by Aprilia and Hidayat (2024) shows that the propensity to trust has a positive effect on the acceptance of information. Theoretically, this research contributes to the discussion on the propensity to trust and adopt eWoM information. From a managerial perspective, the study suggests that marketing managers drive marketing strategies related to information quality, information usefulness, and argument quality through eWoM.

Pan and Chiou (2011) found that negative messages for experiential goods are considered more credible than positive messages. The authors explain that this result may occur because negative information makes it easier for consumers to predict a product's actual performance.

WoM is positively influenced by perceived destination quality and tourist satisfaction (Wang et al., 2017). In particular, when examining the impact of moderating

variables such as gender and visit frequency, this study also found that the impacts of perceived destination quality on WoM differ between genders and this impact is stronger for women tourists than for men tourists, the effect of perceived destination quality on tourist satisfaction is stronger on the first visit than on later visits.

Satisfaction or dissatisfaction is an expression of customer experience; it involves comparing expectations with the actual state. When the actual service meets or even surpasses the expectations, the customer is satisfied. On the other hand, if the reality falls short of expectations, the customer becomes dissatisfied. Determining satisfaction, however, is more complex, as it relies on purely subjective consumer evaluations. When a customer is satisfied, they tend to be loyal to the service, use it repeatedly, and recommend it to others. Customer satisfaction represents the relationship between customer loyalty and service quality. According to empirical research by Surahman et al. (2020), service quality influences loyalty, which in turn is a prerequisite for repeat visits (Li et al., 2020). Customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth promotion are cost-effective for a company, primarily due to reduced costs in marketing communication (Public Relations), achieved through the spread of referrals both verbally and through online platforms. Conversely, an unsatisfied customer can lead to negative communication outward, which can significantly impact the company's brand, result in customer loss, and reduce demand for the service. According to the Zendesk Blog (2023), 61 percent of consumers have switched to a competitor after just one bad experience. In the current age of the internet, many potential clients express their experiences, both satisfaction and dissatisfaction, on various review platforms (Richards et al., 2020) such as Booking, TripAdvisor, and others. Subsequently, potential clients seek information about products and services and base their decisions on these references. According to Fuchs (2022), consumers trust these reviews more than the companies selling the service. 78% of adventure travelers mentioned that they belong to some Facebook group (Adventure Travel, 2013).

Satisfaction can be understood as a psychological state resulting from various factors (Chalupský, 2001). One model for assessing quality based on customer satisfaction is the SERVQUAL model, which evaluates factors such as reliability, assurance, trustworthiness, understanding, and others (Půlpánová and Šimová, 2012). Güzel and Şahin (2019) focused their research activities on the realm of balloon experiences and noted that there is a research

gap in the current literature. Information about tourists' experiences with newly emerging events (in Taiwan) was analyzed based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model (Cheng et al., 2020). The goal was to explore the relationship among the three determinants, specifically "Stimulus: perception of marketing strategies and motivation; Organism: positive emotions and satisfaction; and Response: revisit intention". Content analysis was employed to analyze reviews from TripAdvisor. Yan et al. (2022), also utilized reviews evaluating tourism on TripAdvisor within their tourism research. In a study by Serkan (2020) focused on balloon flying through a questionnaire survey, it was found that happiness, satisfaction, and expenditure level influence the support for balloon flying. Within positive and negative interactions, seven emotions are recognized: joy, happiness, mistake, respect, belongingness, disappointment, and anger.

### 3 Methodology and data

For the analysis of satisfaction, a variety of methods can be employed such as regression analysis, factor analysis, descriptive analysis etc. (Serkan, 2020). Content analysis appears to be a suitable method for processing qualitative data, encompassing processes of "coding" and "theming", aiding in extracting meaning from extensive datasets (Atabay and Çizel, 2020). Content analysis allows the examination of various textual formats, such as words, phrases, paragraphs, themes, and finds utility in numerous fields including education, social psychology, and sociological research. This method takes center stage and is crucial for content marketing. It's also suitable for analyzing (evaluating and interpreting) sociological research and extensive internet research (Vespestad and Clancy, 2021). Content analysis has been utilized by researchers such as Gavrilov (2021), Liang et al. (2013), Oser and Oser (2021) and Vladi et al. (2022).

The aim of the article was to identify the experience of balloon flights in the Czech Republic based on content analysis of reviews. Specifically, the focus was on evaluating the satisfaction with services provided by a significant Czech company (this company has a significant share of the investigated market) in the segment of balloon flights. Within the realm of verbal evaluations, Czech customers expressed their opinions on the organization of the experiential activity, safety, the extent of the experience/feeling, and the approach of the service staff (pilot, accompanying crew, etc.). The data was pre-processed on individual review portals (adrop.cz, nicelocal.cz, Facebook, etc.)



according to the possibilities of these portals (sorting, filtering) and then copied to MS Excel for further processing and for subsequent use in the NVIVO (14) program. A research question was formulated to ascertain whether tourists' experiences with balloon flights align with the theoretical framework of event tourism and whether the experiential factor is perceived as a priority for participants in the context of balloon flying.

For the analysis of qualitative information (open-ended responses from reviews), content analysis and frequency analysis. Frequency analysis involves determining the occurrence frequency of characters (words, letters) in a given language. Güzel and Şahin (2019) proceeded similarly in their study. They used content analysis of TripAdvisor web pages (172 respondents) to establish various dimensions of experiences. The NVIVO (14) software (free version, Lumivero, 2023) was used for content analysis. A total of 226 reviews were analyzed, comprising 108 reviews from males and 118 from females (47.79% males, 52.21% females). These reviews were drawn from sources where clients evaluated their experiences in numerical or verbal forms. The study encompassed review platforms recenze.mapy.cz (Mapy.cz, 2023), adrop.cz (Adrop.cz, 2023), facebook.com (Facebook.com, 2023), nicelocal.cz (Nicelocal.cz, 2023), firmy.cz (Firmy.cz, 2023) and google.cz (Google.cz, 2023) for the period from 2022 to July 2023. Given the use of multiple review sources, individual evaluations were decoded based on a personal identifier (name and surname). In cases where the gender of the reviewer or their nationality to the Czech Republic could not be discerned, the review was excluded from the analysis. Duplicate data were also removed to ensure accuracy and reliability of the analysis.

Subsequently, a numerical evaluation expressing the degree of satisfaction and willingness to recommend the service was analyzed. The numerical rating in the interval 1 to 5 (where the highest rating is 5 stars and the lowest 1 star) is fixed by review portals and the occurrence of the word (not) recommended. This assessment reflects the willingness for potential revisits and loyalty towards the service or company offering the experiential activity (Eusébio and Vieira, 2013). A number of authors, for example, Hong and Pittman (2020), dealt with the issue of evaluating satisfaction using a 5 to 10 "star" scale. In his contribution, he states that "*several scholars have regarded star rating as argument valence* (Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006; Qiu et al., 2012), *while others considered star rating argument strength, with some even using them as peripheral*

*cues* (Sundar et al., 2008)". Li et al. (2019) considers star ratings as a critical factor in product and sales decisions. Also, Sung et al. (2023) state that the most important attribute for consumers when choosing an online shopping service is the star rating, which increases trust. Furthermore, Sung et al. (2023) report that consumers attach high importance to star ratings when purchasing an unfamiliar brand. Literature further reports that the persuasiveness of star ratings increases with the use of other eWoM tools (Kauffmann et al., 2019, Hong and Pittman, 2020).

Furthermore, relationships between variables such as loyalty and satisfaction were identified, and the demographic characteristic of gender was examined. To ascertain overall satisfaction, statistical methods such as weighted average, medians, and standard deviations were utilized and the frequency of referrals was expressed using absolute values and percentages. For investigating the relationships between satisfaction and gender, the chi-squared method was employed. This involves examining associations in two-dimensional contingency tables of size  $n \times m$  (number of rows x number of columns). The non-parametric Chi-squared method is based on comparing observed and expected values (Holčík and Komenda, 2015). Decisions about the dependence between qualitative variables are determined through comparing the test statistic ( $\chi^2$ ) and critical value ( $\chi^2(1-\alpha; (r-1)(s-1))$ ) or  $p$ -value (Holčík and Komenda, 2015) is based on the condition stated in Eq. (1). In case of  $p$ -value (otherwise take a Sig.) comparison, the value is compared with the  $\alpha$ -value, which is usually set at level 0.05, 0.01, or 0.1 (Tošenovský, 2013:p.88):

$$\chi^2 \leq \chi^2_{1-\alpha; (r-1)(s-1)} \text{ or } p\text{-value}(\text{Sig.}) > \alpha, \quad (1)$$

where:

- $r$ : rows,
- $s$ : column,
- $\alpha$ : significance level.

In the context of this analysis, a significance level of 0.05 has been established (Přivara and Kiner, 2020). The dependence between two qualitative features (rejection of the null hypothesis  $H_0$ , acceptance of the null hypothesis  $H_1$ : there is a dependency between the variables (Holčík and Komenda, 2015). Otherwise, the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted, indicating that the qualitative variables are dependent. The chi-squared test is valid when the expected values are greater than 0 and there are no more than 20% of values less than 5 among them. Otherwise, logical combination of values

or conclusions about (in) dependence may be questioned (more on Machová et al., 2021; Meloun et al., 2012).

Four hypotheses were formulated for identifying relationships:

- H1: There is a relationship between gender and the frequency of *sightseeing flight recommendations*.
- H2: There is a relationship between *satisfaction with the experience* and gender.
- H3: Gender affects the *choice of place for publishing a customer review* (website, domain, social networks, etc.)
- H4: Gender affects the *length of eWoM*.

#### 4 Research results

Participants of the sightseeing flights evaluated the activity in terms of organizational arrangements, satisfaction, and the intensity of the experience with an average score of 4.68 (median 5). A total of 188 reviewers (83.19%) rated the balloon flights with a five-star rating. Out of total only 11 customers (4.87%) rated the services within the range of 1–2 stars. Women attributed higher ratings to the experience (see Table 1) and were also less critical, with 5.56% of men giving ratings of 1–2, compared to only 4.24% of women. Men also gave the experience a lower rating on weighted average (4.74 for women and 4.63 for men). Although there is a very small percentage of dissatisfied clients, it is necessary to deal with the situations that caused this condition. Customers identified several issues that contributed to their dissatisfaction. One of the main concerns was the change of type of balloon (flight with a small balloon is replaced by a large one). Another significant factor of dissatisfaction was a change of flight route due to weather, rush in the final ritual, adverse conditions at the landing site or problems with cancellation by the customer, or an unfavorable web environment within the online order. If the service was rated 4 points, it was usually due to bad weather and the subsequent transfer of flights, but the customers spoke positively and understandingly about the balloon flight. Based on the standard deviations, it is evident that a higher percentage of

women than men rated around the mean value, i.e., ratings of five were more frequently given by women (lower standard deviations among women (0.83) than men (0.94). The median (middle value) is higher than the weighted mean in both cases, indicating that the values are concerted around higher values. We can also confirm this conclusion based on the equality of the mode and the median (the most frequently repeated value is the rating 5 = highest satisfaction). This high customer rating of balloon experience offerings according to Sung et al. (2023) increase the credibility of the service. According to the literature (Fuchs, 2022), it can be observed that dissatisfied customers tend to spread their dissatisfaction more intensively, which supports the occurrence of duplicate negative reviews (same title and content of the message). However, Fusch's conclusions were not confirmed in our research, only 9 duplicate customer reactions (out of a total of 226) were presented on three different review portals, which is a negligible amount (negative duplicates were 4 in total, positive duplicates were 5 in total). Therefore, there was no evidence of a tendency for negative reviews to predominate among duplicate reviews.

As stated above, the perception and attitude of the customer towards the provided service, as well as their subsequent presentation, are crucial factors. Recommendations were categorized into three groups: recommended, strongly recommended (with intensified adjectives such as "gladly", "warmly", or "definitely"), and not recommended. Regarding recommendations, out of the total number of reviews, 54 (23.89%) customers recommended the experience of a balloon sightseeing flight, while 6 reviewers (2.65%) did not recommend the service, with 2 being women and 4 being men. In proportion to the total number of reviewers in each group, men were more active in making recommendations compared to women. However, a higher percentage of women emphasized their recommendations, indicating a more emotional behavior. Conversely, a higher percentage of men expressed their dissatisfaction through not recommending the service (see Table 2). It was found that Turkish participants

**Table 1** Point rating of the experience based on the analysis of customer reviews

Sex	1	1.5	2	3	4	4.5	5	Σ	Φ*	Median/Mode	Standard deviation
Male	5	0	1	2	13	1	86	108	4.63	5/5	0.94
Female	4	1	0	1	9	1	102	118	4.74	5/5	0.83
Σ	9	1	1	3	22	2	188	226	4.68	5/5	0.88
Σ (%)	4.0	0.4	0.4	1.3	9.7	0.9	83.2	100	×	×	×

Source: own processing. Note: \* Weighted average

**Table 2** Frequency of recommendations to use the offer of Balloon EU

Sex	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
	ABS			%		
Recommend	20	13	33	16.95	12.04	14.60
Recommend to everyone	14	7	21	11.86	6.48	9.29
Total recommendations	34	20	54	28.81	18.52	23.89
Do not recommend	2	4	6	1.69	3.70	2.65
No opinion	82	84	166	69.49	77.78	73.45
Σ	118	108	226	×	×	×

Source: own processing.

of sightseeing flights are more active in recommendations (2019, 57.5% of recommendations).

For example, on a blog where writers want to share their thoughts, men tend to be brief, often using factual summaries. On the other hand, women imbue their texts with more social interaction, resulting in a higher word count (Textbroker, 2018). In the case of this research, there appears twice the rating without comment (only asterisks) for men (men 12, 11.1%; women 5, 5.1%). The longest post was written by one woman (234 words) and one man (210 words). The shortest evaluations (1–2 words) prevail among men (6 evaluations: 5.56%) compared to women (3 evaluations: 2.54%). Both in absolute values and in percentages, evaluations with a small range of words predominate among women, while men have a similar result (see Table 3, women: up to 50 words – 81.36, men: 79.63%). Sung et al. (2023) defines reviews with more than 300 words as premium reviews and general reviews those under 20 words, they state, reviews should be at least 20 words and no more than 5,000 words. Premium reviews contain more information about the consumer's experience with the product, which can increase consumer trust and support purchase decisions (Sung et al., 2023). There are no premium reviews in the research (more than 300 words), reviews with less than 20 words (undecisive) occur in 56.4% of men (61 men out of 108) and 52.5% of

women 62 women out of 118). It can therefore be assumed that according to the classification of Sung et al. (2023), female reviews are more trustworthy, as 47.5% of reviews lie in the 21–300 word interval. For male reviews, only 43.4% of reviews are in this interval.

The largest number of contributors (reviewers) were on the review portal adrop.cz (134 reviews), the least on nice-local.cz (6 reviews) and Facebook 7 reviews. Other internet sources oscillated at 40 reviews. It is obvious that women are more present in the environment of social networks. In 2018, it was in the ratio of 64% of women to 43% of men, women generally like to find out information about products, and they also like to shop on the Internet (Idnes, 2018). Men are more likely to follow on portals current actions and information (politics, sports, etc.), which is why the Google portal (Witek, 2018) and news searches prevail.

No differences between gender and willingness to recommend, i.e., the level of loyalty, and gender and scoring the quality of provided service were found through relationship analysis. Based on calculations, it was determined that the test criteria were smaller than critical values, and the  $p$ -values were also higher than the significance level  $\alpha$  (see Table 4).

In the first case, the null hypothesis of independence was not rejected. When evaluating the relationship between gender and satisfaction (expressed by point

**Table 3** The length of the text assessment of women and men

Interval	Male		Female	
	Abs.	(%)	Abs.	(%)
1–20	61	56.4	62	52.5
21–50	25	23.22	34	28.85
51–100	14	12.96	16	13.56
101–150	6	5.56	4	3.39
151–200	1	0.93	1	0.85
201–250	1	0.93	1	0.85
Total	108	100	118	100

Source: own processing.

**Table 4** Results of chi-squared test ( $\alpha=0.05$ )

	Test criterium $\chi^2$	Critical value	Sig.	Result
Gender x recommendation	1.45	5.99	0.43	Accepted H0
Gender x satisfaction	3.88	7.82	0.47	Cannot decide
Gender x review site	14.83	11.07	0.01	Accepted H1
Gender x word count	0.53	7.82	0.96	Cannot decide

Source: own processing.

evaluation), the condition for using chi-square was not met (see methodology), therefore the point evaluation of the demographic segment was adjusted and logically divided into groups: low satisfaction (score 1 to 2), medium satisfaction (score 3) and high satisfaction (score 4 to 5). Even in this case, the 20% condition was not met, and alternative grouping would be illogical, therefore it is not possible to determine the relationship between gender and the level of satisfaction. Based on the result, whether the gender of the respondent affects the location of the review, hypothesis H3 about the dependence of gender and the source (location) of the review was confirmed (see Table 4). Similar to H2 (There is a relationship between satisfaction with the experience and gender.), the relationship between gender and the choice of target source could not be decided for H4 (Gender affects the length of eWoM). Expected values are less than 5 in more than 20%, so dependency cannot be decided. If the group "151–200" and the group "more than 200" were to be merged, the condition of 20% above 5 would also not be met. If we were to proceed from Sung et al. (2023) and created two intervals of reviews with word counts of 1–20 words and 21 or more words then we would reject the hypothesis of dependence and accept the hypothesis of independence H0 (Sig (0.6 > 0.05).

From a total of 226 reviews, a matrix of 3555 words was created. Based on content analysis, 60.75% (316) of positive statements were identified, including 44.50% moderately positive and 16.26% highly positive words. In the reviews, only 5.97% (37 occurrences) of negative words were deciphered, out of which 22 (3.80%) codes were moderately negative and 15 (2.17%) were highly negative. Content analysis revealed that among the 226 reviews, words of positive character were the most prevalent (see Table 5 and Fig. 1). The most frequently used expression in the reviews was "Experience". Clients often associate the word "experience" with adjectives like "great" (28 instances), for example, "wonderful" (25 instances). The word "balloon"

was also commonly mentioned (30 times). In 11 cases, the word "experience" was combined with the adjective "unforgettable", and once with "romantic". Customers expressed the word "experience" with adjectives such as "Hello, thank you for a wonderful experience from the company Balony.cz... and beautiful flights and peaceful landings. We recommend". Additionally, there were expressions like "...wonderful experience, just great...", "beautiful, pleasant atmosphere", or "...simply divine. Wonderful experience..." The word "pilot" is associated with "experience", "great", and "excellent". Here, we can observe the professionalism of the pilot. In many reviews, the pilot is characterized as pleasant and professional. However, in one case, the balloon pilot was considered arrogant. The adjective "flight" was associated with the word "balloon" in 45 instances. Some customers criticized the price and organization, saying, "Not for me, not for 3000 CZK per hour of flight, and then an hour to fold the balloons just to get to the car, sorry but you're just padding your pockets". "Getting the flight is almost impossible. You drive hundreds of kilometers with the hope of taking off, and most of the time it gets canceled".

In contrast to the Czech Republic balloon flight research, the Turkish analysis also prominently featured the names of locations. This is because the sources of the Turkish analyzed content were associated with scenic flights over Cappadocia. The word "Recommendation" appeared a total of 60 times, of which 6 were of a negative nature, associated with phrases like "I cannot recommend".

From Table 6 and Fig. 1, it is evident that there is a slight difference in positive expressions between men and women. Women expressed themselves more within the context of evaluating experiences. On the other hand, men used the word "flight" more frequently, followed by the term "experience". The occurrence of the word "great" was equally prominent among both genders. This phenomenon may be explained by a higher emotional engagement of women compared to men (Table 6).

## 5 Discussion

The proportion of word occurrences in the evaluations allows us to conclude that scenic flights are clearly associated with a positive experience, namely a positive experience characterized by terms such as "wonderful" and "great", as well as a unique experience. This fully corresponds meaning that tourists' experiences from balloon excursions align with the theoretical framework of experiential tourism. Similar results were also observed

**Table 5** Frequency of occurrence of words in reviews and TOP6, comparison with research

Own research		Research Güzel and Şahin (2019)			
Frequency	Abs.	(%)	Frequency	Abs.	(%)*
Experience	153	4.30	Experience	297	×
Flight	137	3.85	Cappadocia	176	×
Great	116	3.26	Balloons	149	×
Pilot	92	2.58	Pilot	149	×
Balloon	79	2.22	Amazing	135	×
Recommend	60	1.68	Flight	124	×

Source: own processing. Note: \* Not specified



**Table 6** Frequency of word occurrence by gender

Male			Female		
Frequency	Abs.	(%)	Frequency	Abs.	(%)*
Flight	67	3.90	Experience	93	5.04
Experience	60	3.49	Flight	70	3.80
Great	51	2.97	Great	65	3.52
Pilot	44	2.56	Balloon	48	2.60
Balloon	31	1.80	Pilot	48	2.60

Source: own processing.



**Fig. 2** Comparison of Word Occurrences of Words in Turkish research (left side) and Czech Reviews while (right side)

(Based on: Güzel and Şahin (2019), own processing, (Botlíková and Botlík, 2023))

experiences make it possible to generate sufficient income from business, i.e., to stimulate the positive development of experiential tourism (Bertan, 2020).

Based on the results of the non-parametric chi-square test, null hypothesis H1 was confirmed, indicating no significant difference in the occurrence of recommendations between men and women. Regarding overall satisfaction, it was not possible to confirm or refute hypothesis H2, similar to hypothesis H4 regarding the dependence of gender and length of review. Hypothesis H3 about the difference in the use of review location between women and men was confirmed. However, according to Kül Avan and Karaküçük (2020), relationships exist between the quality of recreational activities (such as hot air balloon flying) and demographic characteristics, including perceptions of reliability, empathy, and family status (161 respondents, ANOVA test). Within the context of reviews, differences in loyalty between men and women were not confirmed. The analysis and identification of customer satisfaction regarding scenic balloon flights is a relatively underexplored topic. Conducting such analyses will allow for the creation of a product of desired quality based on the obtained findings, thus ensuring the success and profitability of the business in the market.

It is evident that scenic balloon flights are truly unique "experiences", and their quality is maintained at a high level, with customer satisfaction averaging at 4.68 (median 5). The overall impression is marred by the reservation process, weather influence, and customer communication methods. It is evident that not only the balloon pilots create the flight atmosphere, but a comprehensive service provision approach must be adopted. A significant issue is the shortened flight duration. The company will need to work on time management as there is considerable competition in experiential tourism. Moreover, due to inflation, the consumption of these resources, especially non-essential ones, will be heavily constrained. Given that the financial



**Fig. 1** Most common words used in balloon experience reviews (Botlíková and Botlík, 2023)

in the study by Güzel and Şahin (2019). The highest values were associated with expressions like "Experience" along with positive adjectives such as 'good, fantastic, beautiful, amazing, great, breathtaking', etc. A quarter of the statements (23%) emphasized that hot air balloon flying is an amazing, fantastic, and the best life experience. In Güzel and Şahin's (2019) study "Experiential Aspects of Balloon Tourism within the Context of Destination Marketing: A Qualitative Study" the recommendation of the experience appeared only in the 23<sup>rd</sup> place, and the word 'great' ranked 8<sup>th</sup>, unlike the evaluation of Czech hot air balloon flying. Furthermore, as depicted in Fig. 2, it is evident that Czech reviews contain a similar list of words as Turkish reviews (Fig. 2, Table 4).

Similarly, a positive relationship was found between the effects of visitor happiness, satisfaction and spending levels and support for hot air balloon activities. Positive

resources intended for the promotion (advertisement) of the company are limited, it is necessary to carefully consider the effectiveness of the chosen promotional mix, i.e., communication media, as well as their effectiveness in different markets (Dóra and Szalkai, 2022).

The development of event and experiential tourism cannot be viewed solely from the perspective of travel and tourism. The significance of event and experiential tourism plays a crucial role in destination development. Not only do experiential activities showcase the hosting locations, but they also attract visitors to the destination, generating profits. For instance, balloon flying draws visitors to destinations, such as the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, generating over 150 million USD in revenue. These profits are subsequently reinvested into the development of the local area. As the essence of even and experiential tourism revolves around discovering new things and learning, it is considered a factor contributing to the enhancement of educational structures and the strengthening of local communities, among others (Gardiner and Kwek, 2016). The provision of experiential travel, offering unforgettable and adrenaline-fueled experiences, has become a competitive advantage for destinations. There is a growing potential for balloon flights, driven by its positive development within adventure travel. The Czech Republic, consistently holding the top position for the last four years, ranks first among developing countries in adventure tourism potential, based on the TOP10 Destination Ranking for the years 2018 and 2020 (CDN-Research, 2020). This trend underscores the increasing appeal of adventure travel, positioning the Czech Republic ahead of countries like Slovakia, Poland, Romania, and others in the region. Furthermore, it is necessary to mention the behavioral reactions of guests to the received requests to write a review, which is a widespread strategy of some hotels, which consists in encouraging guests to write online reviews. This is a controversial technique because it can cause an increase in reviews, but it can also alienate a significant number of customers, especially if they are asked to write positive reviews. According to Llorens-Marin et al. (2023), some authors have previously documented the growing popularity of new strategies for manipulating online reviews. Managers should try to identify the most sensitive customers and encourage them to write reviews for altruistic reasons. Llorens-Marin study *"relationship between being influenced by reading reviews and the propensity to write reviews"*. Our study confirmed different gender approaches to writing reviews and different gender reactions to experiences.

## 6 Conclusion

Our study did not confirm different gender approaches in writing reviews and different gender reactions to experiences.

This research dealt with the satisfaction and perception of the service provided in the framework of experiential tourism, specifically it was a case study within the evaluation of important Czech company based on content and frequency analysis. The evaluation was based on the analysis of the point evaluation of the service quality and the content of the eWoM reviews on selected Web portals.

The research has certain limitations, the examined sample was not very large, however, the experiential tourism market has different connotations, an analysis with more customers should be carried out. Therefore, it is necessary to pronounce the results of the research with some caution. Similar to other products or services, a one-sided communication with customers is no longer sufficient in the case of offering experiences. It is necessary to implement not only personalized communication within corporate strategies but also to focus on client feedback. A positive step for the future can be considered the expansion of research on experiences through other communication platforms (questionnaire, oral WoM). It can also be observed from professional works that experiential tourism is considered an indicator of the destination's competitiveness, and its success depends on the offer of tourism products. However, introducing an experiential tourism product requires knowledge of the demand side, market knowledge, and interaction with it. Therefore, it would be appropriate to expand the research on satisfaction and attitudes towards balloon flights by analyzing and testing the dependence of other demographic factors, such as income groups or the educational structure of service consumers. Additionally, it is important to identify the willingness to share their experiences based on the Net Promoter Score method.

Despite certain limitations, it can be stated that the article brings new insights into the area of satisfaction and perception of the experiential product in the form of balloon flights in the Czech Republic.

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