Internal and External Communication between Employees of Different Generations: Emerging Problems in Lithuanian, Latvian, and Swedish Tourism Organizations

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Abstract
The paper aims to analyze internal and external communication between employees of different generations and emerging problems in Lithuanian, Latvian, and Swedish tourism organizations. The secondary data has been obtained from scientific literature and the primary data from 12 semi-structured interviews conducted in tourism enterprises of the three countries. The survey sampling method used – criterion sampling. The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis, applying a conventional approach to content analysis using an inductive coding process. The results show both internal and external communication problems of different generations of employees in tourism organizations in Lithuania, Latvia, and Sweden. The qualitative research confirms the cognition in the scientific literature that communication problems are particularly evident between the younger (Generation Z and Generation Y) and older generations (Baby Boomer Generation and Generation X). Based on the study's results, employees of different generations can communicate more effectively in tourism organizations and other organizations with intergenerational employee diversity. The research's added value comprises the matrix of the most effectively applied communication channels and tools recommended for intergenerational employees in a tourism organization, which may be used to improve intergenerational communication.

1. Introduction

The generation gap is increasingly recognised not only by academics but also by companies around the world. Business organizations recognise that the gap between the generations increasingly leads to conflicts, disrupts successful communication, hinders the achievement of the goals of the

organization, and leads to the process of loss of opportunities, which is why synergies between employees of different generations are the key drivers of successful organizations (Desai, Lele, 2017; Jones, Murray, Tapp, 2018; Schroth, 2019).

Direct interaction and personal relationships with a wide range of people are often a key differentiator in almost all tourism processes, especially in hospitality businesses. A key element in bridging the generation gap while recognising the uniqueness of each generation is the ability of tourism managers to create a supportive work environment for intergenerational employees (Gursoy et al., 2008). Today, the tourism sector faces an era of multi-generational workers with significant differences. This poses unique challenges for both individuals and organizations in today's society (Maier, 2011). The impact of multigenerational differences is felt in tourism and other sectors, as people stay in the labour market longer and create an environment where employees often experience confusion, frustration, and stress when working with individuals outside their own generations (Chaprana, 2022). Moreover, multigenerational differences in attitudes create a favourable environment for conflict, which leads to job dissatisfaction, high employee turnover and reduces productivity (Yang, Guy, 2006; Barron et al., 2014; Singh et al., 2021). The tourism sector, and in particular hospitality organizations, are especially sensitive to tensions arising from multi-generational conflict in the workplace (Sakdiyakorn, Wattanacharoensil, 2018), and successful management of intergenerational diversity is therefore important (Baran, Kłos, 2014).

Although workplace communication and the importance of communication in tourism organizations have been highlighted in many studies, far fewer studies examine the intergenerational characteristics of internal and external communication, especially in the tourism sector (Cuic Tankovic et al., 2023).

Most of the research has examined older generations' communication characteristics, while younger generations, especially Generation Z, remain under-researched (Dabija et al., 2018; Goh, Lee, 2018; Entina et al., 2021). The entry of the new Generation Z into the labour market poses new challenges for many companies in the tourism sector (Cuic Tankovic et al., 2022). Due to the different communication skills and communication tools used by different generations, the tourism sector faces intergenerational communication problems (Entina et al., 2021), which result in conflicts in tourism organizations when communicating with different generations.

When employees from several generations are involved in the labour market simultaneously, many organizations face internal and external communication problems. Prior research (Hillman, 2014; Schroth, 2019; Ho, Yeung, 2021) reveals that, communication problems are particularly evident between the younger (Generation Z and Generation Y) and older generations (Baby Boomer Generation and Generation X). The theories of generational differences and the specifics of intergenerational communication form Theoretical Framework of the paper.

In particular, communication problems between intergenerational workers became more pronounced during the Covid-19 pandemic (Raišienė et. al, 2020; Lukoševičienė, Šakytė-Statnickė, 2021; Grueso-Hinestroza et. al, 2022), and their effective resolution became a necessity for tourism organizations - a business that has suffered perhaps the most severe constraints and losses caused by the pandemic (Folinas, Metaxas, 2020; Gössling, Scott, Hall, 2020; Zielinski, Botero, 2020; Syaifudin, Hendarmawan, Novianti, 2022).

This research aims to identify the problems of internal and external communication between various employees in tourism organizations of three countries (Lithuania, Latvia and Sweden). Consequently, the research question: what are the internal and external communication problems of different generations of employees in Lithuanian, Latvian and Swedish tourism organizations?

The theoretical part of the article presents the theoretical definition of internal and external communication and examines employees of different generations and their communication; the methodological part justifies the methodological approach of the research; the results part presents the problems of internal and external communication between employees of different generations in

Lithuanian, Latvian and Swedish tourism organizations; the discussion part compares the results of the research with the insights gained from other studies.

The scientific novelty and theoretical significance are related to the need to investigate the communication problems of employees of different generations in tourism organizations, i.e., related to Generation Y, which is becoming more and more established in the labour market, and to the new Generation Z, which is entering the labour market, as well as to the differences in communication between them. This study contributes to the generational research based on the Strauss-Howe generational theory. The Matrix of most effectively applied communication channels and tools that are recommended for intergenerational employees in a tourism organization, based on the results of the study, enables tourism organizations to better understand the internal and external communication features of employees of different generations and select the most effective communication tools.

2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical definition of internal and external communication

Communication is a continuous, never-ending, and integral process. Communication is usually defined in scholarly sources as an exchange of spoken and/or written information between two or more individuals in order to reach a common understanding and establish or strengthen relationships with target audiences and receive feedback (Castells, 2013; Blaschke, Schoeneborn, 2017; Keyton, 2017; Kim, 2021). Communication is a tool for transmitting information through interaction; a way of receiving knowledge; a way of building social relations between actors; an exchange of outputs (knowledge, thoughts, judgements, images, experiences, feelings, attitudes, etc.); coordination, mutual influence and mutual understanding. The main objectives of communication in a tourism organization are information, control, evaluation/motivation, learning, emotional impact, etc. (Bucata, Rizescu, 2017; Cornelissen, 2020).

In the tourism sector, the importance of communication is even greater than in other sectors, as communication in tourism is much more than just the transmission and reception of information; it has a much deeper meaning, especially in the interactions and relationships between consumers of tourism services and employees (Jameson, 2007; Lolli, 2013; Cuic Tankovic et al., 2023). Many scholars agree that communication in a tourism organization is one of the most important skills (Brownell, 2016; Wesley et al., 2017; Cuic Tankovic et al., 2023), through which all employees in the tourism sector are able to communicate effectively with tourism service consumers, colleagues and all other stakeholders at all levels in order to shape the right business environment (Lolli, 2013). Communication skills are an important indicator of positive communication with tourism consumers and the formation of a stable relationship with the consumer, ensuring effective feedback and loyalty (Kovanovienė et al., 2021; Cuic Tankovic et al., 2022; Cuic Tankovic et al., 2023).

Examining communication from a systemic point of view, different levels of communication systems are involved. The object of interest is seen as a system, consisting of interrelated elements, which in turn can also be seen as systems. From a systemic point of view, communication is both internal - taking place within a system - and external - taking place between systems. According to this view, communication in tourism organizations is usually divided into two groups (Munteanu, Maciuga, 2021): internal, where the target audiences of communication are within the organization (e.g., the organization's manager, employees and shareholders), and external, where the target audiences of communication are outside (e.g., customers, communities, media, etc.) (Hawn, Ioannou, 2016; Piehler, Schade, Burmann, 2019; Cornelissen, 2020).

Internal communication is designed to create a mutually beneficial relationship between the tourism organization and its employees (Men, Bowen, 2017) and helps organizational leaders communicate the organization's mission, vision, values to employees (Mayfield, Mayfield, 2017).

According to Men and Yue (2019), management communication has a significant impact on employees, i.e., it sets the tone of internal communication and shapes the tourism organization's reputation; in addition, management is considered to be the most reliable source of accurate, timely, useful, and work-related information (Dewhurst, FitzPatrick, 2022). The primary organizational function of internal communication channels is to enable the execution and coordination of formal tasks, such as providing employees with work instructions, directions, information on job evaluation, and coordination of work activities, while encouraging feedback between different levels of the organizational hierarchy. Internal communication within a tourism organization can be understood as sharing of knowledge between members of the organization or as interaction between members of the organization in order to achieve a certain goal. In addition, the internal channels of an organization ensure the stability of its functioning. How employees communicate with each other is important for effective internal communication. According to Munteanu and Maciuga (2021), such communication in the workplace involves professional collaboration through a variety of communication channels (e.g., face-to-face conversation, email, video call, etc.).

Communication in the tourism sector is mostly external (Cuic Tankovic et al., 2023). External communication is understood as a way in which an organization communicates with the outside world, including "public relations messages, such as through social media, television or radio; marketing materials; product or service labelling; job postings and recruitment, including LinkedIn postings or recruitment campaigns; communication with stakeholders; and customer service" (Munteanu, Maciuga, 2021, p.142). The use and importance of new technologies for the tourism sector is increasingly highlighted due to the significant benefits they bring to the external communication process (Kuo et al., 2019; Andrlic et al., 2020). External communication is used to maintain relationships with customers, shape the image of the tourism organization and inform the target audience outside the organization. The main objectives of external communication are to ensure the tourism organization's communication with the environment; to shape the image of the organization (or the individual); to manage crisis and conflict situations; to optimise communication within the organization; to explore and respond appropriately to the views and needs of target audiences, etc. (Reilly, Larya, 2018; Piehler, Schade, Burmann, 2019).

Both internal and external communication is important in times of crisis, as demonstrated by the Covid-19 pandemic. According to Kartikawangi and Dahesihsari, "it is known that in the crisis management, organization communication plays a central role in preparation step and response step. Within the case of crisis as the impact of Covid-19 as external factor of organization, the finding shows that internal communication must become main focus" (2020, p. 196). It must also be stressed that internal communication has a significant impact on the external communication of a tourism organization.

2.2. Employees of different generations and their communication

Four different generations of workers are currently meeting and working together in the labour market (Jones, Chauhan, Torabian, 2019; Muster, 2020). In scientific literature, a generation is understood as a group of people born in the same period of time who have lived through the same social, economic, political, cultural, technological, etc. events. (Okros, 2020).

According to the Strauss-Howe generational theory (Howe, Strauss, 2000), every employee in an organization can be classified as belonging to one of the following generations: the Baby Boomer Generation (born between 1943 and 1960); Generation X (born between 1961 and 1981), Generation Millennium or Y (born between 1982 and 2000) and Generation Z (born after 2000). In order to identify only the "purified" members of the generation concerned, a five-year interval between generational boundaries is applied.

Many scholars highlight that each generation has different values (Gabrielova, Buchko, 2021), different attitudes towards work and its meaning (Jones, Murray, Tapp, 2018; Weeks, Schaffert, 2019), and varying levels of organizational loyalty (Rodriguez et. al, 2019), have different favourable and unfavourable traits for the organization (Stewart et. al, 2017; Glazer, Mahoney, Randall, 2019), communicate differently, use different communication tools and channels (Venter, 2017; Munsch, 2021), etc.

Recently, much attention has been paid to the digital division between younger and older employees in the communication process, which has been reinforced not only by the Covid-19 pandemic (Capolupo et al., 2022; Florek, Lewicki, 2022), but also by the increasing use of robots, artificial intelligence and automation of tourism services in tourism organizations, which require specific skills from different generations of tourism employees (Ivanov, 2019; Carlisle et al., 2021). The significant technological advances mean that the tourism sector is nowadays inseparable from the latest technologies, which requires tourism workers not only to update their existing skills, but also to acquire new digital skills (Cuic Tankovic et al., 2023), which are transforming the entire communication process in tourism organizations. With the tourism sector being affected by numerous technological innovations and transformations, tourism workers now need more than just the usual software skills or simply written communication skills (Xiang et al., 2015). While younger generations (Generations Y and Z) have better digital communication skills than older generations (e.g. Baby Boomers), young workers' oral communication skills are insufficient (Coffelt et al, (Jones, 2011), as well as written communication skills (Jones, 2011), so the existing communication skills of younger generations often do not fully match the requirements of the tourism workplace (Lolli, 2013; Cuic Tankovic et al., 2022), which leads to conflicts in communication between different generations of employees, both inside and outside the tourism organization, and the need to identify the most effective intergenerational communication channels and tools.

Employees belonging to the Baby Boomer generation are hard-working, career and achievement oriented, loyal and committed to the organization (Martin, Ottemann, 2016; Jones, Murray, Tapp, 2018). Baby boomers equate their job position with self-esteem. Baby boomers are the most likely of all generations to follow and obey hierarchy (Stanton, 2017; Venter, 2017). Often, Baby Boomers criticize younger generations for their lack of work ethic and commitment to the workplace and lack of engagement in their work (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Brock, 2018). Representatives of this generation are most inclined to communicate diplomatically, directly in person, face-to-face, speak frankly - in a direct style (Venter, 2017). In the communication process, they find it harder than other generations to adopt the latest IT communications, compared to other generations, and were the most likely of all generations to face communication difficulties during the Covid-19 pandemic due to working remotely (Puspitasari et. al, 2021).

Employees of Generation X strive for balance, have high job expectations, independence, self-confidence, pragmatism and a lack of organizational loyalty (Petroulas, Brown, Sundin, 2010; Espinoza, Ukleja, Ukleja, 2016; Stanton, 2017; Brock, 2018), and are characterised by a need for career progression (Berkup, 2014). A generation that is sufficiently technologically literate, continuously developing on demand in IT (Jones, Murray, Tapp, 2018). Generation X seeks to communicate immediately, speaks directly, demands facts, uses email as the No. 1 communication tool, uses an informal communication style, and is characterised by the ability to bridge generational differences, i.e., to bring together the oldest and youngest generations in the communication process.

Millennials, or employees of Generation Y, are "hyper-connected, tech savvy, entrepreneurial, collaborative and also favour fast-paced work environments, want quick promotions, and aren't fans of traditional office rules and hierarchies" (Schawbel, 2012, p. 2). Employees of Generation Y are usually narcissistic, neither understanding nor respecting hierarchy and rigid, inflexible rules. Representatives of this generation are looking for interesting, creative, versatile and meaningful work (Gordon, 2011), an attractive online image of their employer (Mičík, Mičudová, 2018), as well as seeking personal feedback

from their manager. Generation Y is less concerned about personal financial benefit than other generations, and they seek global meaning and benefits for the world at work (Berkup, 2014; Brock, 2018). Employees of this generation are important to the organization because of their IT skills (Stanton, 2017), their teamwork, and concern for corporate social responsibility and sustainability. They communicate using the latest technologies (Jones, Murray, Tapp, 2018); social networking is particularly popular among employees of Generation Y, as well as Generation Z (Stanton, 2017). In the communication process, they strive for frequent communication, constant feedback (Venter, 2017) and use a positive (Bejtkovský, 2016), motivating, instant, responsive, flexible, visual, playful style of electronic communication (Liu, 2012; Venter, 2017).

Generation Z is the youngest generation in the labour market. Employees of Generation Z are inseparable from technology, which they take for granted as an integral part of their lives; they are proficient in social networking, multitasking, and can process large amounts of information quickly (Bejtkovský, 2016). This generation has an access to any information on the Internet and is the most connected generation ever born. The easy and fast accessibility and change of information fosters impatience, rapid consumption, interactivity and result orientation in this generation, which is why Generation Z dislikes teamwork, is individualistic, multitaskers, efficient users of technology, show creativity and a global approach and prefers non-standard and personalised work (Berkup, 2014). According to Schroth (2019), this generation is even more likely than Generation Y to use digital tools, apps and social networks in the communication process.

To summarize, younger generations (Generations Z and Y) are more likely to use IT tools, social networks, etc. to communicate, while Baby Boomers prefer face-to-face communication (Venter, 2017). In addition, Baby Boomers see younger generations as superficial, playful and not serious about work, which also undermines effective communication. Different means of communication can lead to conflicts and generational misunderstandings, creating a generation gap in communication. It is therefore important for the success of an organization to take generational differences into account when communicating, e.g., for Generation Y, a supervisor-mentor and constant feedback are important when communicating and representing the organization (Berkup, 2014); communicating with employees of Generations Y and Z digital tools should be used more often, while Baby Boomers should use face-to-face communication (Hillman, 2014), etc.

When communicating, employees of different generations should strive to see each other as unique individuals and should treat each other with respect despite their differences (Venter, 2017), learn from each other, and develop interpersonal communication and collaboration skills in an intergenerational context.

3. Methods

The aim of the research is based on the identified problems of internal and external communication between various employees in tourism organizations of three countries (Lithuania, Latvia and Sweden), create the matrix of most effectively applied communication channels and tools for efficient intergenerational communication in an organization. The research question: what are the internal and external communication problems of different generations of employees in Lithuanian, Latvian and Swedish tourism organizations?

The theoretical framework consists of the theories of generational differences and intergenerational communication, on the basis of which the qualitative research was conducted which is typically used with interpretivism paradigm. The authors rely on interpretivism paradigm as it enables eliciting various interpretations and meanings which provides lots of information. Furthermore, 'reality is constructed through subjective perceptions and interpretations' (Croucher, Cronn-Mills, 2019, 29), and the social construction of meanings is studied 'through the analysis of individualized purposes, goals, and intentions in communication' (Croucher, Cronn-Mills, 2019, 30). Moreover, the aim of

qualitative research is to find out how subjects perceive a particular phenomenon or social reality (Aspers, Corte, 2019; Allan, 2020) which enables identifying the problems of internal and external communication in tourism organizations.

The semi-structured interview was used to collect the research data, which is a popular method of data collection that has proven to be versatile, flexible and it is distinguished reciprocity between interviewer and participant (Galletta, 2012; Kallio et. al, 2016) as well as provides 'a fair degree of data comparison between participants and more systematic data analysis' (Aurini, Heath, Howells, 2016, 82).

Since the current research was conducted in the "NordTournet-3: Solving Communication Problems of Different Generations in Tourism companies" project (No. NPAD-2020/10015), the research sample had to comprise participants from all three partner countries – Lithuania, Latvia and Sweden. The sampling method used in this study is criterion sampling. It was chosen because, according to Rupšienė (2007), criterion sampling is very effective in collecting high quality data. Criterion sampling is used when sample units are selected from a population according to common predetermined criteria of importance set by the researcher (Aurini, Heath, Howells, 2016; Rapley, 2014). The sample for this study was selected according to the following criteria: 1) the informant has at least 2 years of experience in a tourism organization at a managerial level, 2) the organization employs at least 2 employees belonging to different generations, and 3) the informant has at least 5 years of practical experience working with colleagues and/or clients belonging to different generations. All cases meeting the three criteria were selected for the study. In particular, it was important for the study that the participants had experience of intergenerational communication. To have a more versatile look at the research phenomenon and eliminate biases, the tourism experts represented 4 different tourism sectors: accommodation, travel agency/tour operating, tourist information and catering services.

Research instrument. Based on the analysis of the scientific literature, semi-structured interview questions were designed to obtain data for the study, consisting of four open-ended questions and additional questions to clarify the information. The semi-structured interview questions were aimed at presenting the demographic data of the tourism organization, analysing the internal and external communication of the tourism organization, and identifying the communication problems of different generations of employees. The questions were agreed upon by the partners in a Zoom meeting and a piloting interview was conducted in Sweden. After introducing the changes, the data collection process was conducted.

Research process. 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted in three countries - Lithuania, Latvia and Sweden - between January and July 2021. The average length of the interviews was one hour and 37 minutes. Considering the restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the interviews were conducted face-to-face and on electronic platforms such as Cisco Webex and Zoom. Initially, it was planned to have 15 interviews – 5 per each country, but since data saturation point was reached and no new data emerged, the interviewing process was stopped (Croucher and Cronn-Mills, 2019). The demographic data of the informants participating in the study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. **Demographic data of the organizations and informants participating in the qualitative research**

Informant's No.	Country	Organization's activities	Period of operation of the organization	Generational structure in the organization	Duties of the informant in the organization	Informant's generation
LT1		Accommodation	Since 2012	Generations X, Y, Z	Personnel Manager	Generation Y
LT2	Lithuania	Tour operating	Since 1992	Baby Boomer, X, Y	Director	Generation Y
LT3		Tourist information	Since 1964	Generations X, Y, Z	Manager	Generation X
LT4		Catering	Since 2021	Generations Y, Z	Co-owner of	Generation Y

						a business
LV1	Latvia	Tour operating	Since 2011	Generations X, Y	Managing director	Generation Y
LV2		Accommodation	Since 2015	Generations X, Y	Owner, the Board member	Generation X
LV3		Tourist information	Since 2018	Generations X, Y	Manager	Generation X
LV4		Tour operating and travel agency	Since 2007	Generations X, Y	CEO, head of the Board	Generation X
LV5		Accommodation	Since 1993	Baby Boomer, X, Y	Director	Generation X
SE1	Sweden	Accommodation	Since 2010	Baby Boomer, X, Y	Owner of a business	Baby Boomer
SE2		Accommodation and catering	Since 2016	Generations X, Y	Co-owner of a business	Generation Y
SE3		Tourist information	Since 2018	Generations X, Z	Owner of a business	Generation X

Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of the research results.

The data analysis was done by applying qualitative content analysis. This strategy was chosen based on the research process: data collection, organization, coding and analysis. In this study the data was analysed using qualitative content analysis, applying the conventional approach to content analysis (Hsieh, Shannon, 2005; Roller, 2019) using inductive coding process as it enables remaining open and discovering new thematic directions (Hansen, Machin, 2019; Croucher, Cronn-Mills, 2019). During the data analysis process, the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews were first transcribed, then the transcribed text was read, organised, and categories and subcategories were identified. In the final stage of data processing, the categories and subcategories were described and supported by the evidence provided by the informants during the semi-structured interview in the form of supporting statements (Assarroudi et.al, 2018; Lindgren, Lundman, Graneheim, 2020; Schreier, 2020).

Qualitative research has focused on research ethics (Flick, 2018), which is closely linked to the validity, reliability, and quality of research data and results. The semi-structured interviews followed the ethical principles recommended by Žydžiūnaitė and Sabaliauskas (2017): confidentiality, anonymity, respect for the privacy of the individual, goodwill, willingness to do no harm to the subject and the principle of justice.

4. Results

In order to identify the problems of internal and external communication between different generations of employees in tourism organizations in Lithuania, Latvia and Sweden, the study first aimed to identify the internal communication goals of the tourism organizations participating in the study.

Table 2. **Internal communication objectives of tourism organizations**

Category	Subcategory	Supporting statements
Internal communication objectives of tourism organizations	Communicating information to staff	"Communicate the necessary information..." (EN2, LV2, SE2, SE3) "Communicate our expectations and decisions to staff..." (LT1)" "To keep track of the services purchased by a client so that if a person working with that client suddenly becomes ill, the necessary information can be accessed by their co-workers" (LV4) "...effectively communicate information to staff" (LV5)
	Ensuring the stability of the	"Our main objective is to make a good tourism product" (LT2, SE1) "[...] to perform well the functions and activities of the organization" (LT3,

organization	SE2) "... exchange information" (LT1) "To have the same understanding of the standard of service, regardless of the location of the tourism service" (LV1) "To have a clear vision of what steps to take and what people to involve in order to achieve the set objectives in the development of new tourism products" (LV3) "Brainstorming new projects and ideas" (LV4) "...to ensure the day-to-day functions and development of the company" (LV5, SE3)	
Creating a mutually beneficial relationship between the organization and employees	"... get feedback from employees on their job satisfaction and needs..." (LT1) "...to ensure effective cooperation between colleagues..." (LV3) "...ensure problem solving" (LV5, SE2) "...create a positive climate..." (SE1)	

Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of the research results.

As can be seen from Table 2, all the responses of the informants can be grouped into three main subcategories, reflecting the main objectives of internal communication in tourism organizations: communicating information to staff, ensuring the stability of the organization and creating a mutually beneficial relationship between the organization and employees.

This study aimed to identify the main channels of internal communication in tourism organizations. The analysis of the results of the study reveals four main internal communication channels used in tourism organizations (see Table 3).

Table 3. **The main channels of internal communication in tourism organizations**

Category	Subcategory	Supporting statements
Channels of internal communication in tourism organizations	Meetings and face-to-face communication	"Day-to-day communication and the transfer of information is mostly oral..." (LT1) "... direct oral communication..." (LT2, LV1) "We communicate with each other verbally, face-to-face..." (LT3, LV4, SE3) "Any communication at work is face-to-face..." (SE1) "Employees usually receive all information verbally, face-to-face communication during meetings" (LT4, LV3)
	Telephone communication	"Employees communicate information to supervisors over the phone" (LT1) "Most often an email is followed by a call, i.e., double communication with the supervisor..." (LT2) "...by phone..." (LT3, LV2, LV3, SE2, SE3)
	Email communication	"Most of our communication is by email..." (LT2, LV3, LV4) "...by e-mail..." (SE2, LV2); "...we now report in writing by email..." (LT3) "Receptionists have a group email" (LV5)
	Digital communication	"Colleagues use Messenger to communicate with each other, because it is faster than email" (LT2) "...we have a Facebook Messenger group..." (LT4) "We also use WhatsApp" (LT3, LV3, SE2) "Employees also use WhatsApp to communicate" (LV5) "We would like to have the information systematised to put it on Google drive..." (LT1) "Last year we started using Google drive..." (LT3) "During non-working hours, if something is important, we text" (SE1) "...there are remote meetings via Zoom..." (LT3) "...virtual meetings..." (SE2)

Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of the research results.

Regardless of the number of dominant generations and the proportions of employees from different generations in the tourism organizations surveyed, meetings and face-to-face communication are the most prevalent forms of internal communication. In addition to telephone and e-mail, digital communication tools such as social networks, various applications, etc. were highlighted as additional communication channels used for internal communication in tourism organizations.

The study identifies the main internal communication problems between different generations of employees. When communicating within a tourism organization, there are generational differences in terms of communication channels, e.g., The differences in communication between the generations are different in terms of: differences in communication channels (social networks) (LT1, LT2, LT3, LT4, LV1, SE1, SE2, SE3); insufficient provision of effective feedback to the employees (LT1, LT4; LV3, LV5, SE2); non-compliance with the agreements and rules in communication (LT2, LV5, SE1, SE3); hierarchy problems in communication (LT2, LV1, LV3, LV4); lack of information, lack of sharing information (LT3, LT4, LV2, SE1, SE2, SE3), language barriers (LV2, LV5), etc.

As can be seen from Table 4, the study identified several objectives of external communication in tourism organizations: to provide information externally of the organization; to establish and maintain relations with the organization's customers; to establish and maintain relations with various organizations externally; to shape the image of the organization; to manage crisis and conflict situations, and to resolve problems externally.

Table 4. **External communication objectives of tourism organizations**

Category	Subcategory	Supporting statements
External communication objectives of the organization	Providing information outside the organization	"...so that all information reaches..." (LT2) "... to provide only correct and verified information..." (LT3) "...working in different markets and in different languages, we provide a lot of information...", "...to provide information about the destination" (LV1) "Communicate and provide information effectively" (SE1) "...provide the necessary information..." (SE2, SE3)
	Establishing and maintaining relations with the organization's clients	"...to attract customers..." (EN1, SE1, SE2) "...satisfy your customer..." (LT2, LT3) "... the best channel is word of mouth because it brings a certain group of customers" (LT4) "Communicating with customers...", "...selling additional excursions" (LV1) "Communicating mainly with customers..."; "...customers can ask us questions, then we answer them..." (LV2) "...to showcase attractive places in the municipality and thus attract more tourists to our county" (LV3) "...to make our customers aware of and interested in our product" (LV4) "...to organise fruitful cooperation between the company and its customers" (LV5) "...to maintain contact with customers..." (SE3)
	Establishing and maintaining contacts with various organizations externally	"Communicating with partners and tour operators to ensure that the way they present our product to the travel agent is in line with the reality of what we actually offer" (LV1) "...cooperate with booking.com and other organizations, as well as with public authorities, e.g., State Tax Inspectorate" (LV2)
	Shaping the image of the organization	"...to learn about us, our strengths..." (LT1) "...to give a positive impression of the city so that people leave satisfied. To give more than one expected before coming" (LT3) "...reputation and good image come first..." (LT4) "...to provide a service that meets customer expectations" (LV1) "...get good feedback" (SE1)

	Manage crisis and conflict situations and resolve problems outside the organization	"Report every problem and help them as much as we can" (LV4) "...creating the conditions for successful problem solving" (LV5) "Helping them learn Swedish" (SE3)

Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of the research results.

Summarising the results of the study (Table 5), it was found that tourism organizations use a very wide range of communication channels and tools for external communication, i.e., they primarily use standard communication channels and tools for communication: communicate directly; communicate by telephone calls or SMS; use printed material in the communication process - printed catalogues, magazines, newsletters; cooperation with the media; radio advertising.

The surveyed tourism organizations also use digital communication tools in their communication process, such as a website, e-mail; social media, e.g., a Facebook page/account, Messenger, Instagram account for external communication. To a lesser extent, other websites and platforms outside the organization are used for external communication (booking.com and other booking systems like Airbnb; YouTube, uploading videos about the company and tourist destinations, Blog on a separate domain and etc.).

Cooperation with external organizations also contributes to successful external communication of tourism organizations, e.g., with Tourist Information Centres; communication with the local communities; participation in various events; involvement of trainees and volunteers in the organization's work. Some tourism organizations participating in the study indicated that they use special equipment for external communication, such as beepers and information signs.

Table 5. **The main external communication channels and tools used in tourism organizations**

Category	Subcategory	Supporting statements
Standard/traditional external communication channels and tools	Direct communication	"...our main channel is word of mouth..." (LT1, LT4) "Sometimes customers just drop by, and we have face-to-face communication" (LV2)
	Telephone calls or SMS	"...we communicate by phone..." (LT4, LV2, SE1, SE2) "We use SMS to remind about payments, restrictions in the country" (LV5)
	Printed materials: catalogues, magazines, newsletters and other printed advertising means	"Printed catalogues of summer and winter tourist destinations, which are appreciated by customers who like photos and books" (LV1) "Newsletters..." (LV3, LV4) "We have business cards, vouchers..." (LT1, SE1, SE2, SE3); "...printed maps with company contacts." (LT2) "...we give out a lot of printed materials, maps" (LT3) "...stickers on the table with information" (LT4) "Printed materials, flyers..." (LV2) "Printed publications for special occasions..." (LV3) "Brochures and posters..." (LV5)
	Cooperation with the media	"When we opened the hostel, the media wrote about us ... " (LT1) "We communicate with the media when they want to interview us" (LT2) "The local media often write, come..." (LT3) "…interviews for various articles" (LT1, LV4, SE1) "At the beginning of the pandemic, the company participated in a show..." (LV2) "We cooperate with the media... " (LV3, LV4, LV5)
	Radio advertising	"Radio too, especially Laluna" (LT3) "Latvian Radio 2" (LV3)
Digital external communication channels and tools	Own website	"A website that is used to publicise and create an image of a company" (LT1, LT2, LT3, LV1, LV3, LV4, LV5, SE1, SE2)
	E-mail	"The company's means of communication with the outside world is only e-

		mail..." (LT2) "Email" (LT4, SE1, SE3) "We communicate by email (LV1, LV2) "Email is for sending information to customers" (LV5)
	Social media (Facebook, Instagram)	"We have a Facebook account that we use for both information and communication with our customers." (LT3) "...today no business can exist without Facebook..." (LT1, LT4) "Facebook... " (LV1, LV2, LV3, LV4, SE2) "A Facebook account for customers to get in touch..." (LV5, SE1, SE3) "... Some customers find us on Facebook and write to us via messenger." (LT1, LV2) "We have an Instagram account..." (LT1, LT3, LV3, LV4, SE2) "In addition to Facebook, we use Instagram" (LT4, SE3)
	Other websites and platforms	"...we advertise on other websites" (LT1) "...we are also found through booking." (LT1, LV2) "booking.com and other booking systems like Airbnb" (SE1, SE2) "We are going to be more active on YouTube, uploading videos about the company and tourist destinations" (LV1) "Blog on a separate domain." (LV4)
External communication channels and tools to promote cooperation with other organizations, communities and individuals	Tourist Information Centre	"...we cooperate with the Tourist Information Centre" (LT1, LT4, SE1)
	Local communities	"...we communicate with the local communities, and we also involve them in the tours." (LT2) "We had a Neighbours' Day project with the community" (LT3) "During the Senior Citizens' Festival, we served our pizza for free as a snack" (LT4)
	Participation in various events	"We take part in trade fairs..." (LT2) "We take part in the local competition for tourism companies" (LV3)
	Trainees and volunteers	involvement of trainees and volunteers in the organization's work (LT1, LT2, LT3)
Special external communication channels and tools	Special equipment	"...we use beepers to inform our customers about the prepared food" (LT4)
	Information signs	"External information signs" (SE1)

Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of the research results.

The majority of the informants indicated that they do not specifically select and adapt the external communication channels and tools to the generation, taking into account the differences in intergenerational communication, and they emphasised more the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic period on intergenerational communication.

During the research, when discussing the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on external communication in tourism organizations, the informants indicated that communication had changed (LT3, LV1, LV3, LV5, SE2, SE3) or stopped altogether in some communication channels (LV4, LV5, SE1). In addition, during the pandemic period, face-to-face, live communication with customers has decreased, communication has moved to the virtual space (LT3, LV1, LV3, LV5, SE2, SE3), and other means of communication have emerged such as, visual information on pandemic restrictions (LT1, LT3, LT4, LV2, LV3), in some cases the duration of communication per customer has increased (LT3), the content of the communication has changed (LT3, LV2), and communication has even improved in some Swedish tourism organizations due to the increase in local tourism (SE2, SE3).

The research identified the main problems in external communication between employees of different generations. When communicating externally, employees of tourism organizations face foreign language barrier (LT1, LT4, LV2, LV3, SE1); different interests leading to ineffective communication with other generations (LT1, LV1, LV2, LV3, LV4, LV5, SE1, SE2, SE3); the need for older generations to follow a hierarchy (LT2, LV4); different ways of capturing the information received

during communication (LT3, LT4, LV1, LV2, LV4, SE2, SE3); different ability to use virtual space for communication (LT3, LV2, LV3, LV4, LV5, SE3); different use of IT (LT3, LV2, LV4, LV5 SE1, SE2, SE3); different use of communication channels and effectiveness of communication (LT4, LV1, LV2, LV4, LV5, SE1, SE2, SE3); different attitudes to work and to oneself, different generational characteristics (LT4, LV1, LV2, LV3, LV4, LV5, SE1, SE2, SE3); etc.

Table 6. **The main generational differences that have direct impact on intergenerational communication**

Category	Subcategory	Supporting statements
The main generational differences that have direct impact on intergenerational communication	Language (in)proficiency	"The language barrier..." (LT1, LV2) "Older generations don't know foreign languages, can't communicate properly" (LT4, LV3) "Older generations have language problems because they have not been taught English, they know Swedish" (SE1, SE2, SE3)
	Personal characteristics, values and attitudes	"Generation X is more likely to be stressed..." (LV1) "Generation Y has very high self-confidence..." (LT3) "Older generations are more responsible..." (LT1, LT4) "Older people value the workplace more (LT4) "Generation Z is more free, more relaxed..." (LT4) "Younger guests are more carefree..." (SE1) "Older generations have less patience..." (SE1, SE2) "The younger generation likes that immediate communication" (LT4) "Baby Boomers want that more formal communication" (LT2, LV4)
	(Non-)use of IT in communication	"Generation Z writes down everything on the phone, while Generation X writes it down on paper, in a notebook" (LT3) "For young people, the information has to be very focused, presented using IT..." (LT4) "Generation Y employees are more adventurous with technology..." (LT3) "The older generation is less advanced in technology than the younger generation..." (EN2) "Younger generations are quicker to adopt new IT systems and applications..." (SE1, SE2, SE3)
	The communication channels used	"Facebook is for the older generation and Instagram is more for Generation Z" (LT4) "Generation Z and part of Generation Y communicate more electronically. Baby Boomers and Generation X communicate more by phone or face-to-face" (LV4, LV5) "Older generations are less likely to use technology and prefer face-to-face communication..." (SE2)
	Different interests and cross-cultural differences	"It's hard to explain one generation's problems to another generation's employees, for example" (SE2) "When it comes to generations, different people expect different results and have different interests" (SE3)

Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of the research results.

The study found that the main generational differences that have direct impact on intergenerational communication are: language (in)proficiency; personal characteristics, values and attitudes; (non-)use of IT in communication; the communication channels used; different interests and cross-cultural differences (Table 6).

To summarise the results of the semi-structured interviews, Table 7 presents a matrix that identifies and systematises the recommended communication channels and tools that are most effective for employees of different generations in the organization, and that are most appropriate for each generation.

Table 7. **A matrix of most effectively applied communication channels and tools that are recommended for employees of different generations in a tourism organization**

Communication channels and tools	Baby Boomers (born in 1943-1960)	Generation X (born in 1961-1981)	Generation Y (born in 1982-2000)	Generation Z (born after 2000)
In person / Face-to-face	↑	↑	→	→
Formal Letter / Text / Newsletters	→	→	↘	---
Telephone	↑	↑	→	↘
SMS	↘	→	→	→
E-mail	↘	↑	↑	→
WEB *(Internet Site)*	↘	↑	↑	→
Social media *(Facebook, Instagram, Viber, WhatsApp and etc.)*	↘	→	↑	↑
Audio / video conference	→	→	↑	↑
Intranet	↘	→	→	↘
Bulletin boards	→	↘	---	---
Newsletters	→	→	---	---
Meetings	↑	↑	→	→
Events	↘	→	→	↘
Reports	↘	→	---	---
Remarks	↘	→	---	---

Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of the research results.

↑ - very effective and recommended

→ - partially effective

↘ - it is recommended to look for other, more effective ones

--- - not recommended

5. Discussion

Effective business communication is a prerequisite for the success of any business, but its importance is particularly evident for tourism service businesses (Tankovic et al., 2023). All employees in the tourism sector need to be able to communicate effectively with co-workers (internal communication), consumers of tourism services and all other stakeholders (external communication) at all levels (Lolli, 2013).

As can be seen from the informants' statements in the semi-structured interviews, one of the main objectives of internal communication in tourism organizations is to communicate information to employees. This confirms the views of many scholars studying the field of communication, e.g., Bucata and Rizescu (2017), Cornelissen (2020), Dewhurst and FitzPatrick (2022), among others. Effective internal communication is important for tourism organizations to create and market high quality tourism products. This is also reflected in the second, equally important, objective of internal communication in tourism organizations, which was identified during the research - to ensure the stability of the organization's functioning. To achieve this goal, communication of the management has crucial influence on employees, a view supported by the cognitions of Men and Yue (2019), Dewhurst and FitzPatrick (2022) and other researchers. The third goal of communication in a tourism organization identified in the study is to create a mutually beneficial relationship between the organization and employees. This goal is identified as one of the main objectives of internal

communication within the organization by researchers such as Men and Bowen (2017), Munteanu and Maciuga (2021), etc.

Regardless of the number of dominant generations and the proportions of employees from different generations in the tourism organizations surveyed, meetings and face-to-face communication are the most prevalent forms of internal communication; telephone and e-mail are also used for internal communication. The results of the study confirm the findings of Hudcová (2014): "face-to-face communication is the most efficient tool of internal communication in terms of knowledge transfer. In cases when it is not possible to use the face-to-face communication, other valuable tools of internal communication are: telephone calls, instant messaging, web conferences and emails" (p. 61), i.e. tourism organizations use several different communication channels and tools for internal communication, one of the most important being face-to-face. The fact that the impact of the latest technologies on communication in tourism organizations is increasing (Ivanov, 2019; Carlisle et al., 2021) is also supported by the results of our study, i.e., the study also highlighted digital communication tools, such as social networks, various digital applications, etc.

The study identified the main problems of internal communication between different generations of employees, i.e., it identified that there are generational differences in communication in a tourism organization in terms of communication channels. The results obtained from the study are in line with the insights of other scholars such as Bencsik (2016) and Mahmoud et al. (2021), who argue that intergenerational communication and information sharing techniques are very different from those of previous generations, and this can lead to a lot of conflicts and misunderstandings in the communication process in tourism organizations (Yang, Guy, 2006; Barron et al., 2014; Sakdiyakorn, Wattanacharoensil, 2018; Singh et al., 2021).

The results of the study, which show that internal communication within organizations changed during the Covid-19 pandemic, are supported by the results of prior studies in the field (Lee et. al, 2020; Bojadjiev, Vaneva, 2021; Kuščer, Eichelberger, Peters, 2022). The challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic have been met by tourism organizations through effective communication among employees (Capolupo et al., 2022; Florek, Lewicki, 2022), who, according to Vojinović and Kapor (2021), are the most important link between the company and its customers, and are crucial for the design and implementation of effective communication systems in organizations. It should be emphasised that internal communication directly influences external communication, which has a direct impact on the performance and results of tourism organizations.

The study identified several objectives of external communication in tourism organizations: to provide information externally of the organization; to establish and maintain relations with the organization's customers; to establish and maintain relations with various organizations externally; to shape the image of the organization; to manage crisis and conflict situations, and to resolve problems externally. The results obtained confirm the cognitions of external communication scholars such as Reilly and Larya (2018), Piehler, Schade and Burmann (2019), Munteanu and Maciuga (2021).

External communication of a tourism organization is not only the promotional activities aimed at attracting tourists, but also the totality of the relationships that tourists establish upon arrival, during their stay and after their departure, and the quality of these relationships determines the ratio of expected customer satisfaction with the service provided (Vojinović, Kapor, 2021). Based on this approach, it was relevant to identify the main external communication channels and tools used in tourism organizations not only to provide information, but also to create a positive image, satisfy customer needs, ensure customer satisfaction with the tourism product, etc.

The results of the research confirm statements of Vojinović and Kapor (2021) that external communication in tourism organizations needs to be multifaceted, multichannel, flexible and adaptable to a changing and complex environment.

During the research, when discussing the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on external communication in tourism organizations, the informants indicated that communication had changed or

stopped altogether in some communication channels. In addition, during the pandemic period, face-to-face, live communication with customers has decreased, communication has moved to the virtual space. The study's findings that the Covid-19 pandemic increased the need for communication using the latest technologies and that younger generations (Generation Y and Generation Z) were better able to cope with this challenge are supported by other researchers' insights into the growing digital divide between different generations of workers (Capolupo et al., 2022; Florek, Lewicki, 2022). The Covid-19 pandemic further exacerbated intergenerational communication problems in tourism organizations, as the Covid-19 pandemic primarily reinforced the importance of digital technologies in organizational communication (Flynn, 2022). Younger generations have a high level of competence in digital skills compared to the Baby Boomer generation and have a shared perception of the need for continuous learning in order to maintain high levels of digital literacy (Olsson, Samuelsson, Viscovi, 2019). During the quarantine period of the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries imposed restrictions limiting physical contact, which particularly affected employees of older generations (Ward, O'Mahoney, & Kenny, 2021) and their communication.

The study found that the main generational differences that have direct impact on intergenerational communication are: language (in)proficiency; personal characteristics, values and attitudes; (non-)use of IT in communication; the communication channels used; different interests and cross-cultural differences. The generational differences identified in the study are in line with the insights provided in scientific sources (Venter, 2017; Jones, Murray, Tapp, 2018). A critical analysis of the literature by Karasek and Hysa (2020) shows that Generations Y and Z find it important to use modern technology and social media for workplace communication, and that some tourism businesses are not yet fully prepared for this.

The ability to communicate well is one of the most important skills for tourism employees, as it has become a vital part of the daily operations of a tourism business (Brownell, 2016; Lolli, 2013; Tankovic et al., 2023), and generational differences in communication can be the cause of misunderstandings, miscommunication, and other problems in the communication process (Yang, Jolly, 2008). According to Woodward and Vongswasdi (2017), younger generations' preference for new messaging platforms (e.g., smartphone apps or other digital applications) can be problematic if their older counterparts are unaware of new mobile platforms or other digital communication tools, or if they are reluctant to communicate using the latest technologies. Various studies show (Hillman, 2014; Bejtkovský, 2016; Jones, Chauhan, Torabian, 2019; Ho, Yeung, 2021; Appelbaum et. al, 2022) that once generational conflict in the communication process has been identified and understood, organizations can mitigate and resolve the conflict by developing mentoring among the parties involved to include generational diversity. Taking into account the characteristics of younger generations, such as the need of Generation Y for constant feedback and younger generations' (Generation Z and Y) disregard for the hierarchy of employees (Anderson, Buchko, Buchko, 2016; Walden, Jung, Westerman, 2017), it may be possible to modify the organization's communication process to include these generations; the younger generations could help Baby Boomer employees to adopt the latest IT technologies and encourage their application to the communication process (Venter, 2017), and the older generations can share their long-term professional experience in tourism organizations. Various components of HR activities should also be modified to identify and accommodate generational communication differences to attract and retain talent in the organization. When building intergenerational teams, using the most appropriate communication channels and tools for each generation is essential.

6. Conclusion

Summarising the study results, it can be stated that the problems of internal and external communication of different generations of employees in tourism organizations in Lithuania, Latvia, and Sweden have been identified. Furthermore, the findings confirm that communication problems are

particularly evident between the younger (Generation Z and Generation Y) and older generations (Baby Boomer Generation and Generation X).

All informants indicated that they face generational differences and see emerging problems in internal and external communication between different generations. Summarizing the results of the research, it can be stated that communication within the tourism organization revealed different attitudes of different generations towards communication channels, lack of feedback, insufficient sharing of information, non-compliance with the agreements and rules in communication, hierarchy problems in communication, lack of information, language barriers, etc. Furthermore, when communicating externally, employees of different generations at tourism organizations face foreign language barriers, different interests leading to ineffective communication with other generations, the need for older generations to follow a hierarchy, different ways of capturing the information received during communication, different ability to use virtual space for communication, they have different abilities to use the latest technologies in communication, have different communication efficiency and different use of communication channels and effectiveness of communication, different attitudes to work and to oneself, different generational characteristics, etc.

Based on the research results, a Matrix of the most effectively applied communication channels and tools recommended for employees of different generations in a tourism organization was developed.

Research Limitations

The limitations of qualitative research are related to the inevitable subjectivity in qualitative research. Although the design and conduct of this study followed the requirements necessary for this type of research, the generalisability and applicability of the results is limited in part by the small number of participants. Another limitation concerns the sample composition. Although it was originally planned to interview the management level representative of all generations, the researchers could not find any Z-generation representative corresponding to the criteria set.

Theoretical implications

The article is related to a deeper understanding of the generational phenomenon and its expression in tourism organizations. The scientific novelty and theoretical significance are related to the need to investigate the communication problems of employees belonging to different generations in tourism organizations, i.e., related to Generation Y, which is becoming more and more established in the labour market, and to the uniqueness of the new Generation Z, which is entering the labour market. This study contributes to the generational research within the framework of Strauss-Howe's generational theory.

Practical implications

The results of the study enable managers and/or HR specialists of tourism organizations to understand better the peculiarities of internal and external communication between different generations of employees, to identify areas of potential intergenerational conflicts in the workplace, and to be better prepared to manage the intergenerational communication diversity in tourism organizations. Furthermore, the matrix of most effectively applied communication channels and tools based on the study results enables selecting the most effective means of communication with representatives of different generations in tourism organizations.

Implications for Further Research

Future research could include internal and external communication problems between employees of different generations in other sectors and other countries.

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