# THE MANAGEMENT OF THE GLOBAL VILLAGE IN DUBAI AS A SHOPPING TOURISM ATTRACTION

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**Purpose:** The aim of this paper is to identify and characterize the Dubai Global Village as a shopping tourism attraction. The paper attempts to identify the main determinants affecting the tourist attractiveness of that destination.

**Design/methodology/approach**: The study used quantitative and qualitative research methods such as a literature search, website analysis, including reviews on the TripAdvisor tourism portal. Mixed quantitative (Text Mining, co-occurrence network analysis) and qualitative (narrative research) methods were used.

**Findings:** The majority of tourists' opinions about the Dubai Global Village left on the travel portal are positive. The analysis of tourists' opinions regarding the described place left on the TripAdvisor tourism portal shows that the key determinants of the attractiveness of the Dubai Global Village are the additional attractions, the experience and the cultural diversity that runs through the village's various attractions, not only shopping.

**Research limitations/implications**: Further research in the area of this issue should focus on the use of modern technology in both the demand and supply areas, methods of cooperation with all relevant stakeholders influencing the site's operations and its success or promotional tools.

**Practical implications:** The found determinants can provide guidance both for tourist destinations and for companies that want to create similar tourist attractions.

**Social implications:** One of the most attractive places within shopping tourism is the Dubai Global Village. It not only provides a place dedicated to purchasing but is also an important part of the integration of different cultures.

**Originality/value:** The topic of the Shopping Village has so far been addressed in the foreign literature by Alzoubi et al. (2022) in exploring marketing strategies for the introduction of Beacons (BLE) technology in businesses and how it can generate satisfaction and loyalty in potential customers, or A. Krieger (2023) - pseudo-cosmopolitanism and hyper-reality in the Dubai Global Village. However, the determinants of its attractiveness have not been investigated, which means that the presented research results are a complete novelty in that field.

## 1. Introduction

Shopping tourism is one form of the concept of tourism in cities. Urban tourism includes such types of tourism as leisure, business, cultural, religious, sport or just shopping tourism (Kowalczyk, 2005, pp. 157-158). In the context of the latter, it is important that it is polymotivational in nature. This means that a trip is often undertaken for the sake of more than one motive (Niemczyk, 2012, pp. 104-105). A tourist trip is usually accompanied by additional motives, such as the desire to shop, entertainment and the desire to have a good time (Kachniewska et al., 2012, p. 43). Tourist activity clearly stimulates tourists' spending on shopping (Oh, 2007, 122). Importantly, they are a key element of the tourist experience (Correia, Kozak, 2016, p. 85). Tourists shop in a variety of places including shopping malls, souvenir shops, markets or other often unique locations i.e. the Global Village in Dubai. All shopping venues form the core of the shopping tourism product (Paliś, 2022, pp. 133-134). This kind of tourism can develop precisely because of the various shopping facilities, which constitute often a very important tourist attraction for visitors (Paliś, 2022, p. 141). Dubai is one of the world's top shopping tourism destinations. The city has developed a number of attractive shopping facilities. These determine the potential of this city for the development of shopping tourism. One such venue is the Global Village. It is a remarkable facility because of its unique character, which is determined by a number of factors.

The purpose of this paper is to identify and characterise the Dubai Global Village as a shopping attraction. The paper attempts to identify the main determinants influencing the tourist attractiveness of the Global Village. The study employed qualitative research methods such as a literature search and website analysis, including reviews on a tourism portal. It was hypothesised that the key determinant of the attractiveness of the place is its cross-cultural character. The topic of the Shopping Village has so far been addressed in the foreign literature by Alzoubi et al. (2022) in exploring marketing strategies for the introduction of Beacons (BLE) technology in businesses and how it can generate satisfaction and loyalty in potential customers, or A. Krieger (2023) - pseudo-cosmopolitanism and hyper-reality in the Dubai Global Village. However, the determinants of its attractiveness have not been investigated, which means that the presented research results are a complete novelty in that field.

## 2. The core of shopping tourism and its product

Shopping tourism is defined in various ways in the literature. The World Tourism Organisation defines it as a contemporary form of tourism undertaken by people for whom the purchase of goods outside their usual environment is a determining factor in their decision to travel (UNWTO, 2014, p. 13). According to the Institute of Tourism, this phenomenon includes all kinds of shopping trips outside the place of residence concerning purchases for personal needs excluding those related to the satisfaction of a tourist stay (Hołderna-Mielcarek, Majchrzak, 2007, p. 178). Shopping tourism is also often defined as a form of tourism service that enables tourists to purchase goods and services not commonly available in their environment (Timothy, 2005).

Acording to A. Niemczyk, shopping tourism is related to tourists' desire to make purchases for their own use (Niemczyk, 2015, pp. 174-184). In recent years, some definitions of shopping tourism consider it as a form of leisure. Leisure time has always been one of the main motivations for travelling, as tourists seek enjoyable activities outside the home. According to D. Timothy (2005), consumption is not only about products. It is also about consuming places, space and time. This fact has implications for the growing importance of shopping in the management space of a tourist destination, especially a city (UNWTO, 2014, p. 13). Tourists have the opportunity to obtain products outside their place of residence because of the availability, exclusivity and price of the goods (EY Centro de Estudio, 2015, p. 9, cf. Paliś, 2022, p. 120).

Shopping for personal enjoyment and use (e.g. souvenirs, clothing or cosmetics) is one of the most important activities that tourists undertake during their trip (Roy, Chandra Kuri, 2015, p. 27). These are done at a variety of shopping venues, which are often a tourist attraction for visitors. B. Paliś (2023) pointed out the following distinguishing features of shopping tourism, i.e.: visiting shopping venues or other shopping places, shopping while travelling for the pleasure of oneself and/or loved ones, shopping for souvenirs for oneself and/or loved ones, shopping for unique goods while travelling, local products, branded products at lower prices, motivation of tourists to shop, motivation to travel for shopping purposes. Local products can be an important distinguishing feature of shopping tourism, especially those products that represent the cultural identity of a place and region.

One factor in the development of shopping tourism in a market is the creation of a suitable product in its reception area. The businesses and revenues generated by such a tourism product have the potential to help develop the local economy through better employment opportunities (Wong et al., 2022, p. 1). According to A. Niemczyk (2012, p. 42), the product is a set of utilities that form a package of goods and services to make a shopping trip a reality. It encompasses everything a shopping tourist uses or encounters during a stay in a particular city. It can be referred to as an 'integrated experience' (Zdoń-Korzeniowska, 2009, p. 20). On the other hand,

according to author B. Paliś (2022, p. 132) and A. Niemczyk (2012, p. 44) it consists of a core, a real product and an extended product.

At the core of this product are the physical places of sale, i.e. the locations and their shopping offer, i.e. large-scale shopping facilities: shopping malls, retail parks, outlet centres; occasional shopping centres: Christmas markets and fairs; bazaars/tradeshows; airport shops; department stores and other facilities, i.e. local small shops or vintage shops, as well as shopping festivals, which can take place in a variety of locations (Paliś, 2022, pp. 133-153).

The actual product of shopping tourism includes price, meals, accommodation, travel, shopping excursions (Paliś, 2022, pp. 133-134), tourist information, leisure services in the shopping sphere, cultural events and activities, promotional actions offering goods at lower prices, etc. Within the augmented product, we can distinguish additional benefits consisting of: the atmosphere and image of the place, infrastructure and leisure services outside the shopping sphere and around tourism, additional excursions, product sales advice and after-sales service, tourist attractions of the city (monuments, museums) (Paliś, 2022, p. 133). Shopping facilities are what often encourage shopping trips (Palis, 2022, pp. 134-143).

The purchase assumption is primarily based on the utilitarian benefits of owning the goods (Wong et al., 2022, p. 4). Low price, durability and reliability of the product are some of the attributes tourists look out for (Sharma et al., 2018; Sheth et al., 1991). Favourable prices along with the greater range and authenticity of products available in other markets may explain why tourists flock to shopping destinations such as Hong Kong, Paris and Milan or similar (Jin et al., 2017). However, it is important to note that the tourist evaluation of shopping often goes beyond its functional qualities, as this tourism activity also includes hedonic values, such as emotional valence and pleasure during the shopping process (Sandström et al., 2008).

For the development of shopping tourism in the world, shopping destinations that offer a combination of the above-mentioned elements are especially crucial (cf. Paliś, Przenzak, 2022, pp. 28-29). One such specific shopping destination is Dubai.

## 3. Dubai as a destination for shopping tourism

Dubai in the United Arab Emirates has a population of 3.34 million and boasts as many as 65 shopping malls, with another 10 under construction. As a result of the oppressive climate, these places have become community hubs and public squares where Dubai residents and tourists alike can congregate, socialise and attend various events. Dubai is the world's first literal 'shopping hub'. A 2015 study conducted in various shopping destinations in Dubai found that it has particular advantages that make it a leading luxury destination of this kind (Zaidan, 2015, pp. 3 and 10). This research found that a trip to Dubai is not seen by tourists as just a shopping trip, but rather as a place to have an exciting experience in a combination of buying and

entertainment and other attractions in the area. The survey results also show that purchasing in Dubai is a desirable activity for most visitors. Festival shopping tourism has proven to be a success for the city, as it offers exciting opportunities for tourists who want a successful shopping experience in Dubai. The results of this research addressed perceptions of the importance of luxury purchasing destinations and products as relevant to tourists. It was pointed out that more luxury buying opportunities should be offered to tourists as the demand for luxury products is increasing. It was pointed out that it is important to locate shopping centres close to major tourist attractions and hotels. Retailers should take into account that such features of luxury products, i.e. price, quality and uniqueness, are perceived as important to consumers (Zaidan, 2015, pp. 3 and 10).

The 'Dubai' brand has taken shape over a dozen years. It is a symbol not only of progress, innovation, excellence and wealth, but also of the preservation of immense cultural diversity. It has been created through products such as: Emirates, Burj Khalifa, Burjal-Arab, Palm Jumeirah (Palm Jamira), or events: Dubai Shopping Festival, Dubai Property Show, Global Village, Dubai Food Festival and many others (Podobas, Matysk, 2019, p. 34). Today, the city is the fourth most visited in the world, with 16.7 million visitors per year (Ahmed, 2020). The Dubai authorities, through their efforts, aim to make the city the world's most popular tourist destination by 2025 (Lee, 2015; Langton, 2018). According to EMAAR statistics (Zaidan, 2016), Dubai Mall, which has averaged 20 million visitors per year for the past four years, is the most visited shopping mall in the world (Jung, Mahmoud, 2013). It is not only Dubai Mall that represents one of the biggest shopping attractions in Dubai. A unique attraction is another place such as the Global Village.

## 4. Characteristics of the Global Village in Dubai

Dubai Global Villige (Figure 1) is considered one of the world's largest tourism, leisure and entertainment destinations and a major shopping destination in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Not only are there shopping outlets within this location, but also many restaurants. Numerous cultural events also take place there. The company is committed to the representation of the world's cultures and symbolises the city's confident view of the world and Dubai's place within it (Krieger, 2023, pp. 31-32). The Global Village is a unique multicultural space, especially for families, created in 1997. This park is home to some of the best entertainment, shopping, restaurants and attractions in the region. The facility operates on the belief that the diversity and creativity of the world is an unlimited source of excitement and that human connections should have no boundaries. Global Village brings people together to create great experiences for tourists from around the world (https://www-globalvillage-ae.translate.goog; https://www.visitdubai.com, 17.09.2023).

**Figure 1.** Print screen of the Dubai Global Village.

Source: https://mediaoffice.ae/en/news/2023/May/01-05/Global-Village-sets-new-audience-record-with-9-million-guest-visits-during-Season-27, 29.09.2023.

Since its opening, on 25 October 2022, the Global Village has represented more than 90 cultures in 27 pavilions and hosted 40,000 performances, featuring 400 artists from more than 40 different nationalities. Visitors were also able to enjoy more than 175 rides and attractions, shop and dine at more than 3250 outlets and enjoy 77 unique fireworks displays. As many as 9 million visitors visited the Global Village during the 2023 season (https://mediaoffice.ae, 17.09.2023).

Fernando Eiroa, CEO of Dubai Holding Entertainment, said: 'This new record achieved in 188 days firmly positions Global Village as not only the largest entertainment attraction in the region, but also one of the most popular entertainment destinations in the world. As we continue to play our part in building Dubai's position as the world's entertainment and tourism hub, we look forward to the future and thank our invaluable partners and the Global Village team whose contributions made Season 27 our most successful ever' (https://mediaoffice.ae, 17.09.2023).

The attractiveness of the Global Village is determined primarily by its determinants, which the next section of the article seeks to describe.

## 5. Material and methods

The main objective of the paper is to identify and characterize the Dubai Global Village as a shopping tourism development attraction. The paper attempts to identify the main determinants influencing the tourist attractiveness of that destination. In this paper, mixed

quantitative (Text Mining, co-occurrence network analysis) and qualitative (narrative research) methods were used. The following research questions were formulated: What characteristics determine the attractiveness of the Dubai Global Village?; Does cultural identity matter for the attractiveness of the Dubai Global Village?; What are the behaviours of tourists visiting the Dubai Global Village?; Are the additional attractions and events organised in the Global Village relevant to its attractiveness in the eyes of tourists?; What products are sold and purchased in the Global Village?

The research aimed to confirm the thesis that the Dubai Global Village can be a shopping tourism attraction and means to contribute to its development. In undertaking the analysis, it was assumed that the main determinant of the tourist attractiveness of the shopping village is the cultural diversity that runs through the area of the various attractions of the village, not only shopping. It stems from the cultural identity of the countries representing the supply side of the site. Websites presenting information about the Global Village in Dubai were selected to investigate the determinants of its attractiveness for tourists. The research was conducted by analysing information contained on websites, while the study of the determinants influencing the attractiveness of the village to tourists was conducted by analysing reviews contained on TripAdvisor (Tripadvisor.co.uk, 2023), the English-language service of the world's largest aggregator of reviews of tourism products (UK Press Center, 2023). The sampling was network-based, which is a non-random sampling technique involving the selection of respondents from among the customers of a specific service network, in this case the Global Village (Sagan, 2018). The study had a pilot. A total of 187 reviews of Dubai's Global Village left by tourists were collected, between August-September 2023.The average rating of the opinions was approximately 4.24 on a 5-point scale, with a median of 5. Figure 2 shows the distribution of tourist ratings.
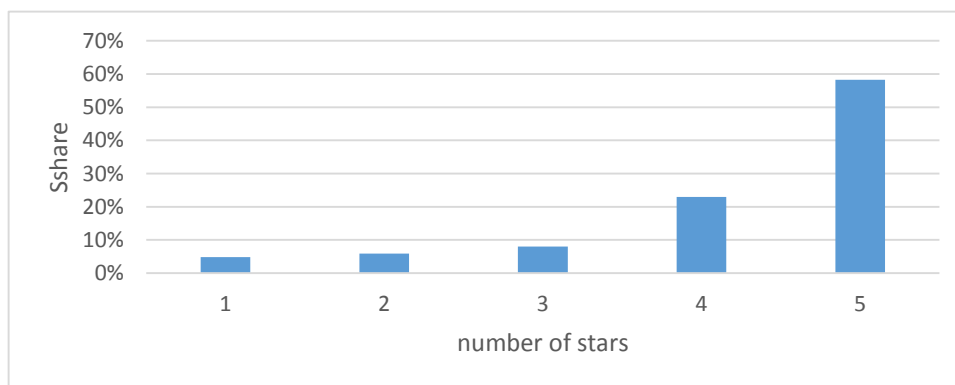


**Figure 2**. Distribution of tourists' ratings in reviews on TripAdvisor of the Dubai Global Village.
Source: own compilation based on content analysis.

R software (in the Text Mining procedure) and KH Coder (for co-occurrence analysis) were used to analyse the data. The following section presents the results of the research (Lander, 2014; Gatnar, Walesiak, 2009).
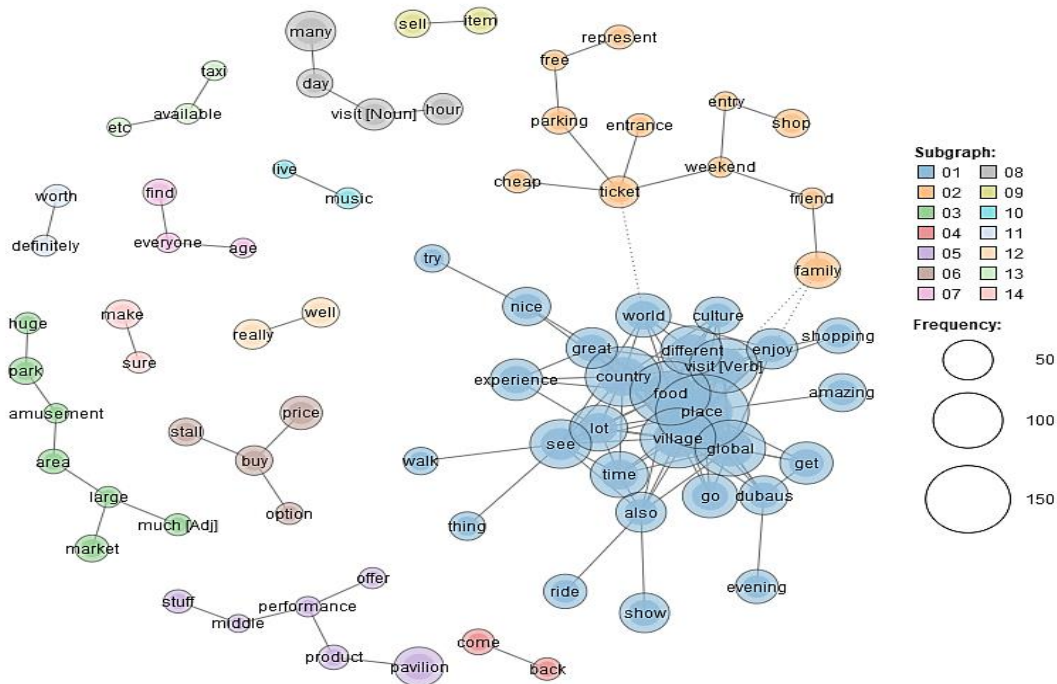
## 6. Results

*Identification of keywords in tourists' reviews of the Dubai Global Village on the TripAdvisor tourism portal*

In the first stage of the analysis, a Text Mining procedure was carried out to identify the most frequent words in the opinions. 175 English punctuation words were excluded from the analysis. A total of 130 words that appeared in at least 10 tourist opinions were obtained. Figure 3 illustrates these in the form of a tag cloud.



**Figure 3.** Words in the opinion of tourists of the Dubai Global Village on TripAdvisor tourism portal. Source: own elaboration based on content analysis.

The selected words that are most frequently repeated in the reviews, and which may be determinants of the attractiveness of the Dubai Global Village are: place, village, global, food, visit, countries. These words are the largest, which means they are repeated the most often. Opinions refer to the size, experience, shopping, diversity, world, entertainment, fun, children, parking facilities, products, prices, opportunity to spend time with friends, uniqueness, diversity and culture (It is possible to see the positive adjectives as e.g. unique, recommend, interesting, amaizing, great, good i.e.). There are some negative opinion, i.e. congestion, expensive can also be discerned among the repeated words. In the next step of the content analysis, the most frequent recurring themes were identified.

*Identifying the most common issues in tourist reviews of the Dubai Global Village on TripAdvisor - a qualitative analysis*

A co-occurrence network created using the KH Coder package was used to identify the most frequently occurring issues in tourists' opinions in relation to the Dubai Global Village (Figure 4). In this analysis, 130 words appearing in at least 10 opinions were considered. The co-occurrence network combines words with a high degree of co-occurrence and is created according to a method developed by Thomas Fruchterman and Edward Reingold (Fruchterman, Reingold, 1991).

**Figure 4.** Issues in tourists' opinions of the Dubai Global Village on the TripAdvisor tourism portal
Source: own compilation based on content analysis

The analysis identified 14 groups of words. The most recurring themes in the first group of words were those relating to the place, e.g. food, experience, culture, variety of shopping, global, diversity, multiplicity and world dimension, as well as fun and the possibility of visiting the venue in the evening. Another group of words related to the issue of a family-friendly place, the possibility to visit it at the weekend, cheap entrance tickets, and large free parking. Other groups of words related to the opinions about the venue, informing that it is worth visiting or returning to, as well as that it is a place for people of all ages. Opinions were grouped into 10 categories based on the content (Tab. 1).

**Table 1.**
*Categories of tourist reviews of the Dubai Global Village on the TripAdvisor tourism portal*

| |
|---|
| 1. Additional attractions (entertainment, food, amusement park, fireworks, dance shows, stunt shows, funfair) |
| 2. Great experience (walking around, time with friends, family) |
| 3. Cultural diversity (Intercultural integration, the opportunity to learn about other cultures |
| 4. Different cultural merchandise |
| 5. Diversity of products |
| 6. Family-friendly place |
| 7. Friendly prices/entrance tickets |
| 8. Good communication infrastructure (parking, transport) |
| 9. Fake/commercial (Hectic touristic market) |
| 10. Negative experience |

Source: own elaboration.

The categories refer to the attractiveness determinants that were identified. Codes for negative opinions were also extracted. Figure 5 shows the share of each category in the total sample.
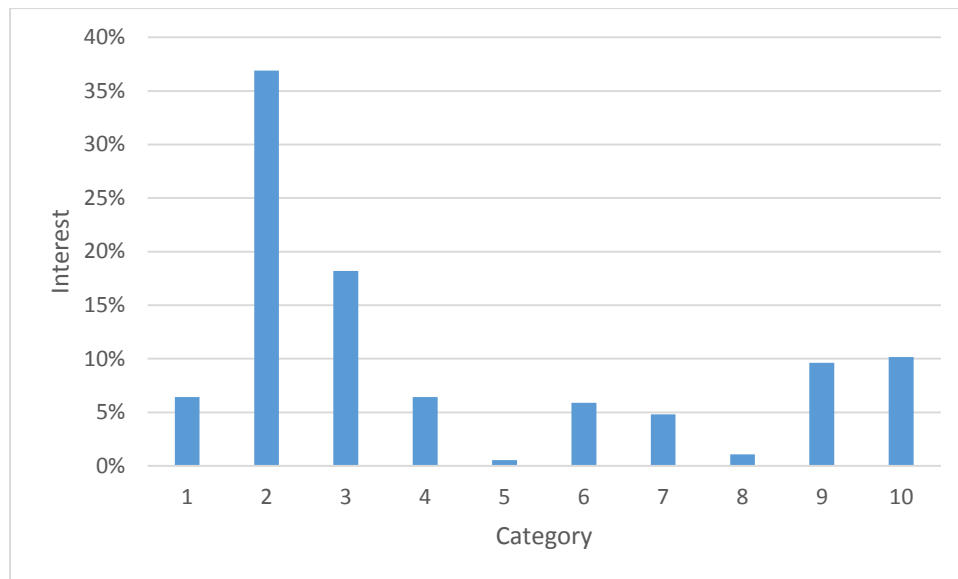
**Figure 5.** Distribution of tourists' opinions of the Dubai Global Village on the TripAdvisor Tourism Portal in the identified categories.

Source: own compilation based on content analysis.

As it shows, the largest percentage are additional attractions and experiences which confirms the Global Village's stature as a significant tourist attraction and a destination worth visiting. Table 2 presents the distribution of the number of opinions by category and grade.

**Table 2.**
*Distribution of the number of tourist reviews of the Dubai Global Village on the TripAdvisor tourism portal*

|  |  | Evaluation |  |  |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **Category** | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 9 |
|  | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 53 |
|  | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 24 |
|  | 4 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 9 |
|  | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
|  | 6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 6 |
|  | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 6 |
|  | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
|  | 9 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 0 |
|  | 10 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 0 |

Source: own compilation based on content analysis.

The analysis of the data in Table 2 shows that positive opinions prevail - 'great experience' and 'cultural diversity'. Additional attractions and cultural diversity of the products are also highly rated. Of all the opinions, a very small percentage were negative ones.

## 7. Discussion

The article seeks to demonstrate that large shopping malls, which are also entertainment centres and cultural parks like the Global Village in Dubai, can be an attraction for shopping tourism, while offering opportunities for a variety of purchasing, providing a memorable experience, entertainment, as well as an opportunity to interact with a diverse culture. A content analysis of the Global Village visitors' reviews on TripAdvisor identified the most recurring words in the visitors' reviews. They prove that, for visitors to the Global Village, it is not only the determinants of shopping tourism such as good price, high quality, variety of goods that are important, but to a greater extent the place itself, its atmosphere, the facilities and attractions it offers. It is these factors that can determine the choice of the Dubai Global Village as a tourist destination. The issue of place identity and its attractiveness in the context of large shopping malls was also addressed by Shim &Santos (2014), arguing that such places can have an identity that is an attraction in its own right. Jung & Mahmoud's (2023) research also confirms that large shopping centres become arenas for socialising and multicultural exchange, and that shared spaces play a major role in this process.

A study by B. Paliś (2022, p. 372) in the area of determinants of urban shopping tourism development shows that for typical shopping tourists the most important factors motivating them to make shopping trips were sales promotion, good quality goods at a promotional price and the unavailability of a given good in their place of residence. The surveyed opinions of the Global Village visitors indicate that they pay attention to the above factors, but above all, the decision to choose this place is influenced by its uniqueness and the possibility of encountering different cultures and thus purchasing goods specific to particular countries. Culture in its broadest sense, related to the tradition, history and heritage of a place, is increasingly becoming a factor that attracts tourists to a destination, increasing its value. Tour operators, local entrepreneurs and residents, as well as visitors themselves, are aware of this fact. Not only tangible culture, but also intangible, spiritual culture can provide a great boost to the development of a tourism product, which translates into economic benefits (Zhang et al., 2020).

The choice of products that customers buy is influenced the features directly related to the product, such as price, quality, price-quality relation, or the degree of satisfaction of customer needs. Customers are not only interested in the product itself and its functionality and usability. The customers first of all should be seen as one of the key stakeholders (Kiliańska, Pajęcki, 2022, p. 294).

## 8. Conclusions

The analysis shows that the Dubai Global Village is a significant attraction and one of the key products in terms of developing a shopping tourism offer in Dubai. It can be a major contributor to the development of this type of tourism. Particularly important, however, are determinants such as the additional attractions (i.e. entertainment, food, amusement park, fireworks, dance shows, stunt shows, funfair), the cultural diversity that results from the premise of an attraction such as the Global Village, as well as the great experience that is formed in the area of the various attractions offered. Analysing tourists' opinions, cultural identity was found to be important to the attractiveness of the Dubai Global Village. However, tourists do not perceive the place only as a shopping attraction, but enjoy the many ancillary attractions that the place offers i.e. cultural events, dining facilities, attractions for children. The village is a huge amusement park. A wide variety of products are bought there, especially those that represent the cultural identity of the country. Tourists appreciate the large assortment of goods on sale, as well as their diversity. The size of the attraction, the favourable admission prices and the fact that the place is both family-friendly and can also be an attraction for people of all ages are also important. The parking infrastructure is also crucial and the fact that the facility has a large car park is appreciated. Furthermore, the fact that the object can be visited late into the evening is also of significance.

The found determinants can provide guidance both for tourist destinations and for companies that want to create similar tourist attractions.

Further research in the area of this issue should focus on the use of modern technology in both the demand and supply areas, methods of cooperation with all relevant stakeholders influencing the site's operations and its success or promotional tools.

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