

Functional changes of local DMOs in the modern tourism economy

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Abstract. The objectives of the article are to identify the operational forms and roles of local DMOs (Destination Management Organization), resulting in an increased organisational effectiveness within a given operational model. The study provides an addition to the extant body of knowledge concerning the relevance and effectiveness of local DMOs' operating models and their roles. The CAWI survey results of the entirety of 125 local Polish DMOs indicate that their organisational structures have become obsolete. Their reorganisation into network cooperation organisations, clusters or consortiums of tourism products or management organisations in tourist destinations has been shown to have great adaptive potential and will affect their effectiveness. The study has identified key roles for increasing local DMOs' effectiveness, as well as the functions that should be limited. The study offers implications for evaluating local DMOs using non-financial indicators, also having implications for managerial practice. The implications presented enable comparative studies of different organisations in tourist destinations and indicate the importance of the need for further research on organisational evolution of local DMOs in turbulent environments and growing stakeholder expectations.

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1. Introduction

Addressing a range of issues related to the sustainable development of the tourism economy in destinations, combined with environmental protection and pro-tourism community activation and the operation of local tourism organisations (local DMOs – Destination Management Organization) is becoming an increasing challenge of the present day (Laumark, 2016), also in the face of frequent crises (Fedyk et al., 2022a; 2022b). Sustainable tourism development in a destination requires planned, coordinated and collective action (Faur & Ban, 2022), where local DMOs are considered a key steering party, as raised by Wagenseil et al. (2022). Success in sustainable destination development is, according to Roxas et al. (2020), a function and outcome of effective governance, and the future of tourism destination management must be based on a coalition of networks of actors working towards comprehensive destination development (following Hartman et al., 2020) and sustainable value creation (see Idisondjaja et al., 2023). It is the local DMOs, according to Pawłowska-Legwand et al. (2024), that should create action strategies for more sustainable tourism in the destination using specific organisational action models and key roles assigned to them.

At the same time, the nature and complexity of the interactions between tourism stakeholders in the destination sphere (Idisondjaja et al., 2023) and how this group (including members of local DMOs) can leverage their assigned (sometimes imposed) roles in destination management remains consistently unclear (see Hristov & Zehrer, 2015). Local DMOs, as Uchiyama and Kohsaka (2023) raise, are gaining prominence among stakeholders (including their members) as organisations that can develop and enable sustainable tourism in a destination by coordinating local actors and tourism resources (Toma & Mihai, 2022). DMOs, especially at the local level, according to researchers (see Wagenseil et al., 2022) occupy a central position in the marketing and management of tourism in a destination.

Significantly, local DMOs operating in a destination perform a number of roles that are crucial for the market attractiveness and sustainability of the destination (Gutic, 2022). At the same time, the increasing phenomena of competition within the destination and between regions, as reported by Paunović et al. (2020), are a stimulus for the introduction of new types of 'smart' roles (after Gretzel, 2022) into the catalogue of functions of local DMOs, which are part of a knowledge-based and knowledge-managed tourism economy (Švagždienė

et al., 2013). At the same time, it should be added that local DMOs are quite often the place where diverse interdependencies and stakeholder interests, including conflicting ones, clash (Louillet et al., 2021), which requires harmonisation of the scope of activities and roles performed through a unified strategy or chosen organisational model of operation, with the use of specialised knowledge (Beritelli et al., 2015; Hristov & Zehrer, 2015).

Contemporary organisations, including local DMOs, are required to be flexible in their operations (Gretzel & Scarpino-Johns, 2018), which should manifest itself in attempts to change the form of operations in order to perform assigned roles more effectively, also in unusual situations (Fedyk et al., 2022a). Local DMOs, in response to increasing environmental pressures and the need to deal with multifaceted roles, also need to evaluate on an inter- as well as intra-organisational level in order to manage destinations effectively (Volgger et al., 2021). This involves the search for organisational models and new types of roles in the operation of local DMOs, allowing them to respond effectively to changes in a turbulent environment (Ness & Haugland, 2022). Destination management, through local DMOs, is also becoming a contemporary professional profession that is gaining increasing recognition, and this requires further professionalisation of organisational models of operation and specialisation in the roles performed (Morrison & Buhalis, 2023), in response to the problems and challenges faced by tourism destinations and their stakeholders, including their sustainability.

Due to the numerous economic crises, intensifying competition and emerging new trends in the tourism economy that dictate tourism management structures (after Honovic & Klapan, 2021), the need to find new methods of organising territorial units managing tourism in the destination is indicated, and the expected reorganisation (also of local DMOs) is to be the basis for achieving market advantages. The increasing competitiveness between local, regional, national and international tourism destinations forces the stakeholders of the tourism sphere to initiate actions that will contribute to economic benefits and to the sustainable development of the destination (Faur & Ban, 2022).

In light of the aforementioned considerations, the authors identify several research gaps, which serve as the foundation for the subsequent formulation of the study objectives: Firstly, extensive research has been conducted on the organisational forms of DMOs; however, there remains a significant research gap in understanding organisational effectiveness as evaluated from the perspective of stakeholders.

Secondly, although there is a substantial body of research on the role of DMOs, there is still a paucity of knowledge regarding the possible directions of evolution of these organisations, including the creation of roles that can ensure an increase in their operational effectiveness.

Taking into account the aforementioned research gaps and the latest demands of the academic and industry communities, this study examines local DMOs, along with their stakeholder community as organizations that are assigned many strategic roles relevant to the development of tourism destination.

2. Literature review and hypotheses

2.1. Organisational orientation of local DMOs

DMOs have undergone many transformations in recent years. The acronym 'DMO' stands for either 'Destination Marketing Organization'; or 'Destination Management Organization' depending on the focus of the organization's activities (Dredge, 2016). In addition, the reorientation of the organization's activities is increasingly prompting considerations of management-type aspects. As Korzh & Onyschuk (2022) point out it has been proven that destination management organizations (DMOs) need to perform both managerial and marketing functions. Destination Management Organizations play a leading role in managing the network of destinations, establishing and maintaining cooperation between stakeholders.

Local DMOs play a key role in ensuring the desired tourism development scenario in the destination (Fairley, 2020), but crisis phenomena in the near and far environment of local DMOs in the destination, lead researchers (Vargas, 2020) to propose the evolution of these organisations towards the performance of three different roles, namely, as the (1) orchestrator of the various players in the destination, (2) the facilitator of opportunities for its members and (3) the intelligence promoter and their strategic mind. It is further pointed out that crisis phenomena, such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic, are turning points in the process of organisational change in local DMOs, on the way to the desired sustainable development of tourism in the destination (see Rivera et al., 2021).

Against this backdrop, and due to the emergence of the need to create new experiences for destination visitors or to implement new types of tourism offerings in the destination, local DMOs

need to build innovative operating strategies and seek opportunities for organisational change (reorientation) in order to effectively cope with these challenges (after Gato et al., 2022), also on the basis of acquired, new knowledge. This is all the more necessary when there is an exponential increase in the amount of available data that local DMOs must take into account in order to function effectively when dealing with destination marketing and management (Huang et al., 2022).

As Lynch et al. (2012) note, organisational orientation relating to local DMOs is a specific approach to how an organisation conducts its business, which is also credited with a number of benefits, including improved organisational effectiveness (Farrell et al. 2008) or the ability to achieve an organisation's competitive advantage in the markets (Zhou & Li, 2010). Organisational orientation (forms and models of operational performance) also influences decisions regarding the acquisition, allocation and use of resources (Zhou & Li, 2010). At the same time, as Morton and Hu (2008) note, organisations may use a combination of different orientations (models and forms of operation) aimed at achieving higher efficiency at different stages of development, and this phenomenon directly applies to the local DMOs studied. This is of colossal importance when there are opinions among the organisation's stakeholders (here members of local DMOs) about the need for change due to the 'obsolescence' of the adopted operational formula and the expected increase in efficiency. This links directly to Freeman's (1994) stakeholder theory as it relates to undertaking analyses of the nature of the relationship between DMOs and their stakeholders from the point of view of the benefits and effects of mutual cooperation.

Concurrently, there are proponents within the stakeholder community who argue that the existing structures of local DMOs, despite their established organizational maturity, should maintain the status quo with respect to their organizational form (e.g., Mandić & Kennell, 2021). In light of the aforementioned considerations, it is prudent to refrain from modifying or reorienting these organizations, as there is no guarantee that alternative organizational models (presented in this paper) will yield beneficial changes and prove more effective in managing tourism destinations (see Morrison, 2023). In light of the aforementioned uncertainty and duality of stakeholder opinion (Fyall & Garrod, 2020) regarding the necessity of organizational reorientation in mature, local DMOs, it can be hypothesized (H1) that the organizational

structures of local DMOs have become outdated and require a change in the operating model.

Destinations and their stakeholders clustered in local DMOs are evolving, often following only an intuitive path, responding to the interests of source markets that have been targeted in the past (Chasovschi, 2019). As argued by Sheehan et al. (2016), local DMOs being in a unique position in the destination, between the internal environment of the destination and the external competitive environment, need to be an intelligent change agent in the destination looking for appropriate operating models that they can use in destination management.

Although tourism destination management organisations (in our case local DMOs) are atypical organisations, often non-profit, their activities are evaluated in terms of organisational effectiveness, as Foris et al. (2020) explicitly point out. In addition, such evaluation is sometimes carried out by a variety of stakeholders, including, not related to tourism or destination management, politicians or experts, among others (Mandić & Kennell, 2021). Importantly, there are signs (Thomas & McNeice, 2022) that local DMOs, which were supposed to play a key role in the exchange of information between tourism stakeholders in the destination, are becoming less and less relevant in this exchange. Moreover, local DMOs, when trying to manage increasingly complex relationships in the destination, in their current organisational structures, are not fulfilling their ascribed role as local tourism operators. It is also pointed out, especially to local DMOs covering urban destinations, that they need to adapt their approach (operating model) to the implementation of destination management processes, by emphasising expertise and local input (the voice of the organisation's stakeholders is also important) in shaping effective strategic management plans (see Vukašin, 2024). Furthermore, local DMOs also operate in a network of relationships with their members, which calls for continuous analyses of the impact of the inter-organisational information system on performance (cf. Louillet et al., 2021). This is also a reflection of the operating model adopted and the roles played. It is also a challenge for local DMOs to look for solutions that will activate stakeholders more in the management processes of the destination (based on their feedback), using new technologies and a lot of data generated by the stakeholders themselves, but also by artificial intelligence (Huang et al., 2022).

A key aspect is also the identification of appropriate roles for local DMOs, which should result from the organisational orientation adopted.

In this context, local DMOs are seen as strategic management organisations, as well as mediators between actors (stakeholders in the tourism economy) inside and outside the destination (Reinhold et al., 2018). Importantly, the chosen strategic orientation, which influences the activities of the organisation, is at the same time aimed at ensuring increased long-term effectiveness (Hakala, 2011). Nowadays, local DMOs, facing various socio-economic or crisis phenomena in their environment, have to adapt to the new reality (including the sustainability of the destination) (Fedyk et al., 2022a; 2022b). It can even be hypothesised that contemporary local DMOs are evolving into third-generation structures focusing on tourism flows and service chains, clearly indicating the need to update DMOs' organisational structures (Maráková & Džuríková, 2023). Many circles also believe that local DMOs need to modernise their organisational structures to better meet the demands of the modern tourism market. It is regrettable that there is no consensus among researchers on the optimal operational model for local DMOs to ensure operational effectiveness, a necessity that Spyriadis (2014) emphasises. Furthermore, local DMOs are postulated to operate in completely different organisational forms. Some authors explicitly assert that a cluster initiative can fulfil the role of a DMOs (Fedyk & Kachniewska, 2016; Ryśnik et al., 2014). This assertion is corroborated by Stasiak (2007), who posits that the existing collaboration between entities within local or regional tourism organizations renders them suited to the role of a cluster nucleus. This is also the case when these organizations are considered as consortia. On the other hand, Fedyk et al. (2018) propose that LTOs should act as network organisations. In this context, the main objective of destination management is to identify the distinctive features of a destination and adapt them to the specific requirements of target tourist groups using the LTOs' partner network. In addition, the model of regional DMOs functioning through networking with stakeholders is a proposal tailored to this type of organisation, as it offers the potential to integrate various activities and functions (Fedyk et al., 2018; Fedyk & Sołtysik, 2019). It is also postulated (cf. Fedyk, 2019) that LTOs act as local destination management organisations (local DMOs). And here the effectiveness of local DMOs is inextricably linked to the success of the destination itself, as well as to the attainment of its competitive advantage. By enhancing the effectiveness of DMOs, not only is the destination as a system bolstered, but it also facilitates the optimal utilization of resources available to local

stakeholders, which in turn enhances their own operational performance. At the same time, the stakeholders of local DMOs, as reported by Foris et al. (2020) and Martins et al. (2021), do not have a clear-cut opinion on what new organizational forms can ensure effectiveness, and there are even contradictions in the positions of DMOs' stakeholders on the directions of organizational reorientation (see Sorikina et al., 2022). This mosaic of views on the proposed organisational models of LTOs does not facilitate the decision-making process of the organisation's authorities or the direction of the organisational evolution of local DMOs expected by stakeholders, and directly leads to the hypothesis (H2) that implementing the proposed models for local DMOs is feasible and will improve the organisation's effectiveness.

2.2. Roles and effectiveness of local DMOs

The contemporary discourse on the role of local DMOs and whether and how they will survive in the future is still an open question in both academia and industry (Belemu, 2023). The researchers highlight (after Kaurav et al., 2015) that there is a huge gap in defining concepts or models of destination performance at the interface between performance and operational efficiency and the organisation of the destination management system, including by local DMOs. Notably, to date, the measurement of local DMOs' effectiveness has been equated with financial or operational indicators, ignoring the presence and quality of the relationship between DMOs and tourism stakeholders (after Fairley, 2020), which can be diagnosed for example by listening to their feedback on this effectiveness.

At the same time, local DMOs, according to Tom and Mihai (2022), play the role of strategic leaders in the development of the destination and are responsible for coordinating and integrating elements of the local tourism offer, which, with their effective leadership, provides an opportunity for the competitiveness, sustainability and success of the tourism destination. Local DMOs also occupy an important position in destination marketing performing several roles, the type of which is crucial for the effective management, market attractiveness and sustainability of the destination (see Gowreesunkar et al., 2018). At the same time, there are voices (Miltiadis & Ioannis, 2022) questioning the contribution of local DMOs to tourism development, destination management and promotion, and regarding the proposed

organisational structures or the type of their responsibilities and roles.

The expectation is that local DMOs should take the lead in marketing or destination management, also assigned to regional DMOs, and this requires a redefinition of their roles in the destination (Garrod & Fyall, 2016) taking into account the chosen organisational model of operation (Belemu & Mwanaumo, 2022), as well as flexibility and clarity, sometimes courage and certainly foresight (Sarasadat & Nematpourm, 2022), as to the choice of direction for organisational change from the perspective of local DMOs' managers and their stakeholders. At the same time, destination stakeholders, including local DMOs, need to be responsive to any changes in the environment and create a framework in which all stakeholders can work together (after Bramwell & Lane, 2000) to enhance destination effectiveness, and in which everyone can benefit without harming others (Katemliadis, 2020). Importantly, the indicated ability of local DMOs to develop and enhance collaboration among destination stakeholders (Fedyk & Morawski, 2014) is also a reflection of their views on organisational effectiveness, by focusing on the views of the organisation's stakeholders on this issue (after Fedyk & Kachniewska, 2016; Fedyk & Morawski, 2016; Fedyk, 2019; Fedyk & Sołtysik, 2019).

In the academic literature, few researchers articulate the need for research on the effectiveness of local DMOs. And at the same time, despite the fact that many studies on DMOs have been conducted, a systematic approach that would take into account the views and interests of all stakeholders and measure the effectiveness of these organisations has still not been fully explored (Katemliadis, 2020; Quevedo et al., 2024). It is the study of the effectiveness of local DMOs that is particularly relevant from the perspective of the organisation's stakeholders. They are the ones who expect the organisation to achieve certain measurable outcomes, such as increasing the competitiveness of the destination (Line & Runyan, 2014). Pearce (1992) explicitly argues that research is needed to determine how different stakeholder groups evaluate the effectiveness of DMOs. In turn, many authors emphasise that the measure of an organisation's effectiveness (including local DMOs) is primarily the ability to survive in the market (Hay, 2019), even during crisis phenomena (Jiang et al., 2019; Kirant Yozcu & Cetin, 2019), as well as to adapt to change and continue to grow (Ávila-Robinson & Wakabayashi, 2018). Thus, in order for the activities of local DMOs to be effective, these organisations must be given the authority (also

roles) assigned to them to act on behalf of and for the destination. Therefore, these DMOs must also be given formal prerogatives to act by the various stakeholders they represent. Epp (2013) suggests explicitly that, in particular, increased stakeholder involvement (in our case, survey respondents) may contribute to the effectiveness of local DMOs. Quevedo et al. (2024) additionally note that analyses of the characteristics of local DMOs are also needed to determine whether perceptions of the effectiveness of DMOs vary according to the stakeholder group studied, including board members of the DMOs studied (after Atorough & Martin, 2012).

Importantly, contemporary tourism destination management systems, including those involving local DMOs, often fail to keep up with the rapid changes in the tourism market and sometimes fail to fulfil their tasks effectively (see Thomas & McNeice, 2022). Having this in mind, it is necessary to analyse possible ways of organisational transformation of local DMOs using available models of operation, as Čorak and Živoder (2016) explicitly advocate. Further, solving the problem of measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of local DMOs, including in their roles in the destination (Katefliadis, 2020), which was one of the objectives of the research, is essential for the proper transformation of the tourism economy with the increasing need to rely on sources of non-financial measures of organisational effectiveness (Woodside & Sakai, 2009). This is particularly relevant in relation to non-profit organisations, and studied local DMOs are such organisations. It is therefore legitimate to identify the organisational forms of local DMOs' activities and catalogue of their roles that will ensure an increase in their effectiveness in a given phase of their development with given resources, as highlighted by Atorough and Martin (2012) or Elbe et al. (2008).

Solving the practical problem of measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of local DMOs in their roles, as postulated by Castelltort & Mäder (2010), from the perspective of their stakeholders, is a contemporary imperative for shaping the prosperity of the tourism sector in a destination. Unfortunately, this process is not made any easier by the multitude of objectives, functions and roles assigned to local DMOs (cf. Fedyk, 2013; Fedyk & Morawski 2016; Fedyk, 2018), often without reflection and for the immediate needs of stakeholders. Therefore, local DMOs must use appropriate tools and techniques to optimally select and improve the effectiveness of their roles (after Soteriades, 2012) with a given organisational model of operation, and this forces an attempt to carry out a role typing (RT)

process in the activities of local DMOs, within the proposed organisational models that will influence the effectiveness of their functioning. This aspect is particularly important because, in order for local DMOs to be truly effective, organisations must be formally authorised by the destination and its stakeholders to fulfil these roles (Elbe & Emmoth, 2014), which is also part of the research process (CAWI) in this study. In addition, the necessity of specific principles (see Fig. 3) in the roles performed by local DMOs was verified.

3. Sample description

This line of thinking also includes Polish local tourism organisations (local DMOs=LTOs), whose history of formation and development spans over the last 20 years LTOs operate in all 16 provinces in Poland and were created based on the Act on the Polish Tourism Organization of June 25, 1999 (Journal of Laws of 1999, No. 62, item 689, as amended), forming a part of a three-tier system of tourism promotion management in Poland, that includes also the Polish Tourism Organization (PTO) and regional tourism organizations (RTOs). It should be pointed out that the local DMOs studied are special associations, including those with non-profit status, established under a dedicated law, which allows for membership of local DMOs of strongly diverse types, i.e. local government units at different levels, business entities, other associations, foundations or other organizations, as well as individuals.

The diversity of solutions (legal, statutory, organisational and types of activities) applied in the 125 LTOs existing in Poland, with a strongly diverse number of members, different time of activity or scale of resources, calls for a review of the principles of their functioning. Additionally, they are subject to the various pressures of the closer and further environment (Paunović et al., 2020). These organisations, as intended by the creators of the three-tier system of tourism destination management in Poland, were to coordinate the development of the tourism function at the level of the local destinations in which they operate (after Borzyszkowski, 2013a; 2013b), and were to be effective in this regard (see Fedyk, 2019; Pechlaner et al., 2012).

In the evaluated, local DMOs, there is a lack of standardisation with a strong diversity of goals and roles in action and also, in many cases, a lack of formal regulation of business opportunities. Such

heterogeneous status of the studied local DMOs limits the applicability of the assessment of the effectiveness of the organisational forms of action from the perspective of the goal-oriented approach. In this approach the measure of effectiveness is the degree of realisation of the set goals: in the case of the studied local DMOs, comparative analyses of heterogeneous goals cannot be made. Similarly, it does not seem appropriate (following Fedyk & Kachniewska, 2016; Fedyk & Morawski, 2016; Negrosa et al., 2016; Fairley, 2020), to examine the economic efficiency of local DMOs as entities operating as non-profit organisations.

Polish local DMOs have reached a certain maturity as organisations (Gołembski & Niezgoda, 2014; Fedyk et. al., 2017; Stokłosa et al., 2019), which triggers a natural need for organisational evolution, as well as the need to assess the nature of these transformations and their effects. At the same time, local DMOs are constantly exposed to phenomena such as duplication of scopes of action in relation to other tourism stakeholders in the tourism destination (e.g. regional DMOs or local government units). Local DMOs often have to operate under a lot of competition for the same resources with other tourism organisations operating in the same destination. Local DMOs are often expected to take over the destination marketing role previously assigned to destination marketing organisations at regional level (regional DMOs) (after Garrod & Fyall, 2017). A phenomenon that hinders the functioning of

local DMOs is the overlapping competences and the imprecise distribution of competences in the management structures of the tourism sphere in the destination, which cause negative feedbacks in the tourism management system (Hartman et al., 2020).

4. Methodology

The research process was divided into three stages with the use of multidirectional analyses and the operation scheme presented in Figure 1 below. The study included an analysis of primary and secondary data and a review of academic publications on the mechanisms of tourism management systems at the local level, the nature of tourism stakeholders and their relationships in the tourism economy, the types, structures and roles of organisations influencing their performance. A key component of the study was a survey based on a CAWI questionnaire (7 closed questions with limited cafeteria responses and 3 metric questions: location and respondent type) conducted through the Google Forms tool. The design of the cafeteria for questions 1-3 of the questionnaire was based on a scale (1-5: strongly disagree - strongly agree) regarding the issue of outdated LTOs operating model and the possibility of transforming LTOs using the proposed operating models. For questions 4-6 concerning the ranking (assessment of importance and effectiveness) of

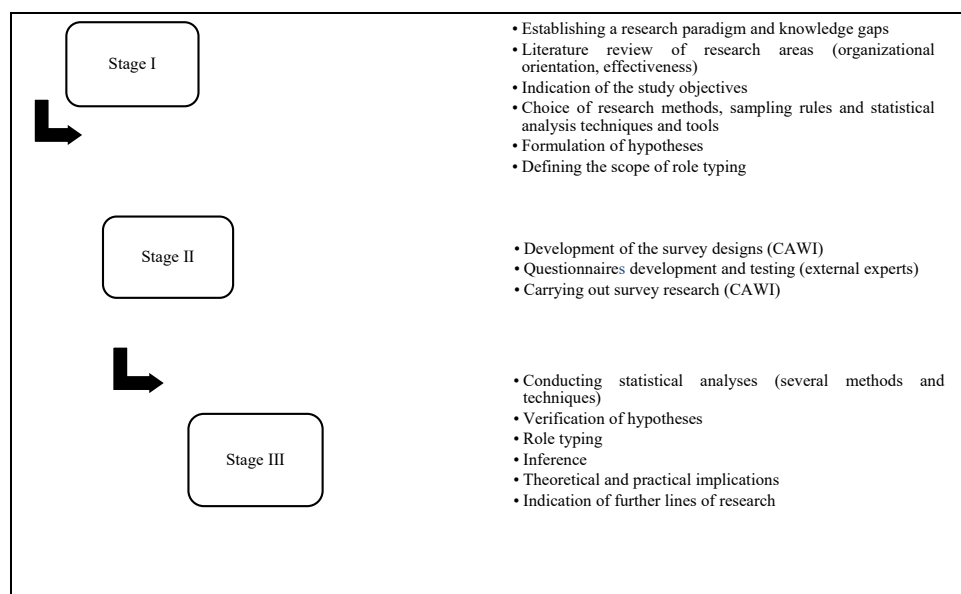


Fig 1. Graphical scheme of study design.

Source: own elaboration

the roles assigned to a given LTO model, a 5-point Likert scale was employed (1-role not important, 5-role very important). A similar scale was utilised in question 7 concerning the impact of a given role on the degree of LTOs effectiveness. The survey was modelled on previous DMOs research (Fedyk, 2019; Fedyk & Morawski, 2016; Fedyk et al., 2018). The research process (pilot study) also included consulting (via e-mail) the content of the CAWI questionnaire with selected 10 experts from PTO, LTOs and 10 leaders of local DMOs (chairmen of the board or directors of the board offices). No major comments were made on the survey apart from individual semantic corrections.

The CAWI questionnaire was distributed between December 2023 and February 2024 to all 125 LTOs operating in Poland using email to all 125 boards of these DMOs. CAWI questionnaires were sent to the indicated group of LTOs (their entire population). Responses were received from 88 LTOs, which represented 70% of the population.

The respondents' answers (definitely no, no, no opinion, yes, definitely yes) to the questions from the CAWI survey concerning: the need to change the model of operation of local DMOs as a result of its obsolescence and the need to apply the indicated principles in the roles performed by the organisation, were classified as negative (No), neutral (Don't know) and positive (Yes). The percentages of the frequency structure of the responses were calculated and the differences between them were verified using the two proportions test with Bonferroni's significance level correction. For the other variables concerning the adaptability and effectiveness of the three proposed models for the operation of local DMOs, and the validity and effectiveness of the roles adopted by local DMOs assessed on a scoring scale of 1-5, the median and quarterly deviation were calculated. Differences between the ratings of individual models and roles were checked with the Kruskal-Wallis test. For confirmed differences, multiple comparisons were performed using the Dunn-Bonferroni post hoc test.

Associations between adaptability and predicted effectiveness of models and validity and efficacy of adopted roles by local DMOs were assessed with Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (ρ). Following the recommendations of Ferguson (2009), the correlation effect size was taken as 'recommended minimum effect size representing a practically significant effect for social science data' for $0.20 \leq \rho < 0.50$, 'moderate effect' for $0.50 \leq \rho < 0.80$ and 'strong effect' for $\rho \geq 0.80$. Statistical significance of the results was accepted at $p <$

0.05. All analyses were performed using TIBCO Statistica® 13.3.0 (StatSoft Poland).

5. Results

The literature review emphasised that for local DMOs to be effective, they must be given organisational models and the authority to act on behalf of and for the benefit of the destination by their stakeholders. Thus, this study was based on a survey of local DMOs' stakeholders in Poland. The CAWI survey received responses from the management boards of 88 local DMOs (out of 125 organisations surveyed), including: 40 local government units (45%), 24 tourism businesses (27%), 7 tourism organisations (8%) and 17 other institutions and entities, including 2 from outside the tourism sphere (19%).

The obsolescence of the current operating model of local DMOs and the need to change it (question 1 in CAWI) was reported by 41% of local DMOs, which was significantly higher compared to the frequency of opposing opinions (25%, $p=0.025$) but not compared to the frequency of neutral opinions (34%, $p=0.350$).

Modern local DMOs are evolving into third-generation structures focused on tourist flows and service chains, which clearly indicates the need to update the organisational structures of local DMOs (cf. Maráková & Džuríková 2023) and to search for effective operating models. In this paper, three organisational models for local DMOs are proposed, which reflect the literature review, including works emphasising the search for organisational models that ensure increased operational efficiency in the evolution of this type of organisation (Fedyk 2019; Fedyk et al. 2018; Fedyk & Kachniewska, 2016; Fedyk & Sołtysik 2019; Mandić & Kennell 2021; Morton & Hu 2008).

The evaluation of the three, proposed organisational models for local DMOs, both their adaptability and predicted effectiveness (question 2 and 3 in CAWI) were similar ($p>0.05$). Moderately strong associations ($\rho > 0.50$, $p<0.001$) were found between implementation and effectiveness ratings for each of the postulated models (Table 1).

An assessment of the importance and effectiveness of the roles (questions 4-7 in CAWI) that a local DMO should perform when operating under the formula of one of the three proposed models is presented in Table 2. The catalogue of roles assigned to local DMOs in a given model is original and was based on a detailed analysis of the

Table 1. Evaluation of the adaptation and effectiveness of the proposed models for the operation of local DMOs (median $\pm$ quarterly deviation)

Model assessment	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	p
Model adaptation	4.0 $\pm$ 1.0	4.0 $\pm$ 0.5	3.5 $\pm$ 1.0	0.343
Model effectiveness	4.0 $\pm$ 1.0	4.0 $\pm$ 1.0	4.0 $\pm$ 1.0	0.067
ρ	0.60*	0.64*	0.78*	

Model 1 - Networking organisation at local level; Model 2 - Local tourism cluster or consortium of local tourism products, Model 3 - Local Destination Management Organisation. ρ - (rho) Spearman's rank correlation coefficient; p-value for Kruskal-Wallis test;

* significant correlations between adaptation and effectiveness ratings ($p < 0.001$ for all ρ),

Source: own elaboration

Table 2. Assessment of the validity and effectiveness of the roles undertaken within the proposed models of local DMOs (median $\pm$ quarterly deviation)

		Role 1.1	Role 1.2	Role 1.3	Role 1.4	Role 1.5	Role 1.6	p	differences
Model 1	Validity	5.0 $\pm$ 0.5	5.0 $\pm$ 0.5	4.0 $\pm$ 1.0	4.0 $\pm$ 1.0	5.0 $\pm$ 0.5	3.0 $\pm$ 1.0	<0.001	(6) vs (1)-(5)
	Effectiveness	5.0 $\pm$ 0.5	4.0 $\pm$ 0.5	4.0 $\pm$ 0.8	4.5 $\pm$ 0.5	5.0 $\pm$ 0.5	3.0 $\pm$ 0.5	<0.001	(6) vs (1)-(5)
	ρ	0.63*	0.56*	0.74*	0.81*	0.62*	0.77*		
		Role 2.1	Role 2.2.	Role 2.3	Role 2.4.	Role 2.5	Role 2.6	p	differences
Model 2	Validity	4.5 $\pm$ 1.0	4.0 $\pm$ 1.0	4.0 $\pm$ 1.0	4.0 $\pm$ 1.0	5.0 $\pm$ 0.5	4.0 $\pm$ 1.0	<0.001	(5) vs (2)-(4)
	Effectiveness	4.0 $\pm$ 1.0	4.0 $\pm$ 1.0	4.0 $\pm$ 1.0	4.0 $\pm$ 1.0	5.0 $\pm$ 0.5	4.0 $\pm$ 0.5	<0.001	(5) vs (2)-(4)
	ρ	0.56*	0.68*	0.75*	0.69*	0.51*	0.80*		
		Role 3.1	Role 3.2	Role 3.3	Role 3.4	Role 3.5	Role 3.6	p	differences
Model 3	Validity	4.0 $\pm$ 0.8	4.0 $\pm$ 1.0	4.0 $\pm$ 0.8	4.0 $\pm$ 1.0	3.5 $\pm$ 1.5	4.0 $\pm$ 1.5	0.133	none
	Effectiveness	4.0 $\pm$ 0.5	4.0 $\pm$ 1.0	4.0 $\pm$ 0.5	4.0 $\pm$ 0.5	4.0 $\pm$ 1.0	4.0 $\pm$ 1.0	0.115	none
	ρ	0.54*	0.55*	0.63*	0.68*	0.74*	0.71*		

Model 1 - Networking organisation at local level: Role 1.1 - Integrator of the local community, Role 1.2 - Consultant for local tourism promotion and development, Role 1.3 - Educator in the sphere of local tourism, Role 1.4 - Analyst of the tourist attractiveness of the area of action, Role 1.5 - Stimulator of local initiatives for tourism development, Role 1.6 - Sales representative of local tourism companies

Model 2 - Local tourism cluster or consortium of local tourism products: Role 2.1 - Administrator of the local tourist information point, Role 2.2 - Animator of the commercialisation of local tourism, Role 2.3 - Seller of the local tourist offer, Role 2.4 - Operator of the local tourist product, Role 2.5 - Promoter of local tourist attractions, Role 2.6 - Certifier of the quality of local tourism

Model 3 - Local Destination Management Organization: Role 3.1 - Creator of the local tourism product, Role 3.2 - Administrator of the local tourism product, Role 3.3 - Generator of the local tourism brand, Role 3.4 - Advisor to the local tourism industry, Role 3.5 - Investor in the development of the local tourism sphere, Role 3.6 - Broker of local tourism information

(6) vs (1)-(5) - significant difference between role 6 and role 1,2,3,4 and 5 ratings

ρ - (rho) Spearman's rank correlation coefficient;

* significant correlations between role importance and effectiveness ratings ($p < 0.001$ for all ρ)

Source: own elaboration

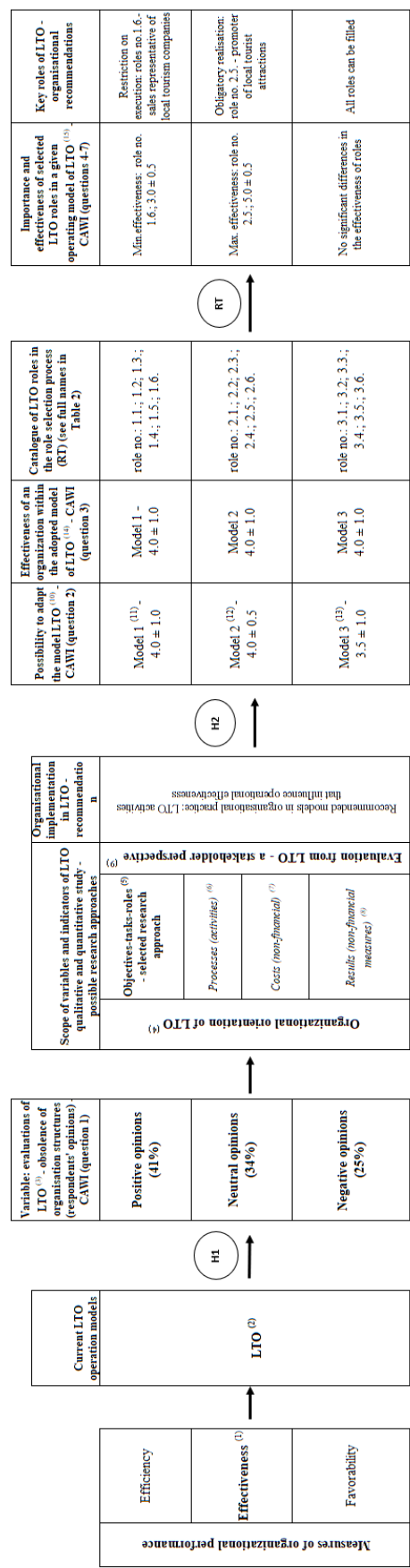


Fig. 2. Diagram of effective organisational evolution of LTOs – model of research and implementation of recommendations Source: own elaboration.

Model. 1. Model 1 - Networking organisation at local level; Model 2 - Local tourism cluster or consortium of local tourism products, Model 3 - Local Destination Management Organisation
4.0 ± 1.0 - median ± quartile deviation
RT - role typing
role no. 1.6. - number of a role in a given operational model of LTO
Source: Based on: 1) Beritelli et al. (2015), Foris et al. (2020), Hakala (2011), Katemliadis (2024), Kim & Scott-Halsell (2020), Moilanen (2023), Spyriadis (2014), Toma & Mihai (2022), Weaver & Lowton (2009); 2) Borzyszkowski (2015), Maráková and Džuriková (2023), Fedyk (2019), Fedyk & Kachniewska (2016), Fedyk & Sołtysik (2019), Fedyk et al. (2018), Ryśnik et al. (2014), Stasiak (2007), Dredge (2016); 3) Farrell et al. (2008), Fyall & Garrod (2020), Gato et al. (2022), Mandić & Kennell (2021); 4) Korzh & Onyschuk (2022), Lynch et al. (2012), Ruhanen et al. (2010), Zerva et al. (2019); 5) Atorough & Martin (2012), Foris et al. (2020), Foris & Bivolaru (2022), Hartman et al. (2020); 6) Fedyk et al. (2022 a i b), Hristov & Zehrer (2015), Reinhold et al. (2018); 7) Presenza et al. (2015), Pike & Page (2014), Zhou et al. (2010); 8) Farrell et al. (2008), Hay (2019), Negrusa et al. (2016), Woodside & Sakai (2009); 9) Atorough & Martin (2012), Beritelli et al. (2015), Budimir-Bekan & Pivčević (2022), Elbe & Emnotha (2014), Line & Runyan (2014), Quevedo et al. (2024), Zerva et al. (2019); 10) Beritelli et al. (2014), Fedyk et al. (2018), Fedyk & Sołtysik (2019), Gretzel & Scarpino-Johns (2018), Maráková & Džuriková (2023); 11) Fedyk et al. (2018), Fedyk & Sołtysik (2019), Katemliadis (2020); 12) Fedyk & Kachniewska (2016), Ryśnik et al. (2014), Stasiak (2007), Varghese & Paul (2014); 13) Borzyszkowski (2015), Dredge (2016), Holšínská (2013); 14) Aki et al. (2021), Čorák & Živoder (2016), Fedyk & Kachniewska (2016), Foris et al. (2020), Soteriades (2012), Weaver & Lowton (2009); 15) Atorough & Martin (2012), Belemu & Mwanaumo (2022), Castellfort & Mäder (2010), Fairley (2020), Epp (2013), Fedyk & Morawski (2019), Fedyk & Kachniewska (2016), Katemliadis (2020), Kaurav et al. (2015), Line & Runyan (2014), Miltiadis & Ioannis (2022), Pearce (1992), Soteriades (2012), Thomas i McNeice (2022), Toma i Mihai (2022), Quevedo et al. (2024), Woodside & Sakai (2009)

objectives of the activities (included in the statutes and reports on activities) of the DMOs studied, and also reflects literature studies, including works highlighting the subject of the functions undertaken by local DMOs (e.g. Fedyk, 2013; Ryśnik et al., 2014; Fedyk & Kachniewska, 2016; Fedyk & Morawski, 2016; Garrod & Fyall, 2016; Frdyk, 2018; Gowreesunkar et al., 2018; Rivera et al., 2021; Sorikina et al., 202; Toma & Mihai, 2022).

As part of the role-typing (RT) process carried out to determine the influence of roles on the effectiveness of LTOs, it was found that the effectiveness ratings of all roles in each model correlated significantly with their validity ratings ($p < 0.001$). At the same time, in model 1, both the importance and effectiveness of role 1.6 (sales representative of local tourism companies) were rated lowest compared to all other roles. In model 2, the validity and effectiveness of role 2.5 (promoter of local tourist attractions) were rated higher than for roles 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4, but not compared to the ratings of roles 2.1 and 2.6. There were no differences between role ratings in model 3. Very strong relationships between role importance and role effectiveness ($q \geq 0.80$) were observed for role 1.4 in model 1 and role 2.6 in model 2. In the remaining cases, the relationships had a moderate strength of effect.

The obtained results, compared to the observations of other researchers, allow for the identification of a general scheme (see Fig. 2) of

the postulated directions of effective organisational evolution of LTOs, which is also a model showing the components of the process of evaluating the effectiveness of local DMOs (here: the selection of models, the designation of roles) based on non-financial indicators.

The frequency of positive, negative and neutral responses regarding the need to apply certain principles in the roles performed by local DMOs is shown in Figure 3.

The vast majority of local DMOs (75% or more) indicated the need to apply each principle. The most frequent indication of the need for the principle of subsidiarity (94%) was significantly higher than that for the principle of sovereignty ($p = 0.001$), standardisation ($p < 0.001$) and openness ($p = 0.004$). The frequency of indications of the principle of standardisation was the lowest (75%) and, apart from the principle of subsidiarity, also differed significantly ($p = 0.034$) from the frequency of indications of the principle of fair competition (88%). The frequency of the other principles was not significantly different.

6. Discussion and conclusions

The study confirmed that the current organisational models of local DMOs are outdated and in need of change (H1), with only 25% of respondents

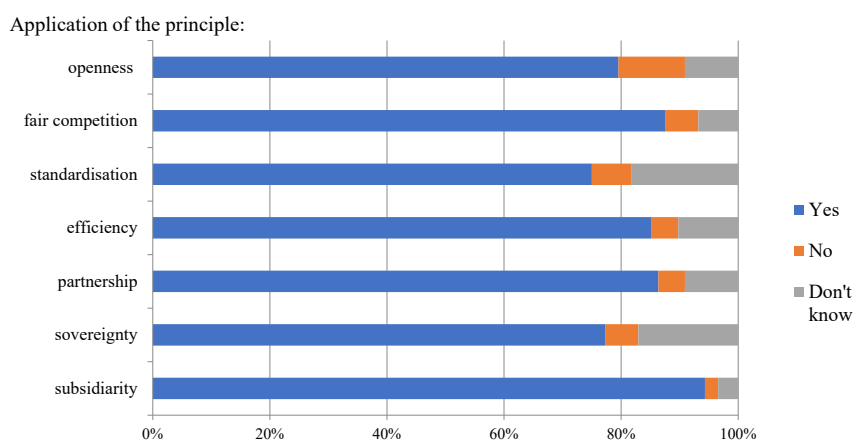


Fig 3. The imperative to apply certain principles to the roles performed by local DMOs.

The principle of subsidiarity - local problems should be solved at the very root; The principle of sovereignty - independence in mutual relations; The principle of partnership - participation, co-determination and co-responsibility of sovereign partners towards key goals; The principle of efficiency - raising capacities to perform tasks efficiently; The principle of standardisation - joint and structured definition of all important dimensions

Source: own elaboration

disagreeing. Furthermore, it was shown that the implementation of new models into the organisational practice of local DMOs can be highly feasible and effective (H2), and both aspects were rated 4 ± 1 on a five-point scale and were strongly correlated. Role typing (RT) in terms of the importance and effectiveness of individual roles performed by local DMOs varied depending on the type of model, including a rather low rating of the importance and effectiveness of the role of sales representative of local tourism companies (role 1.6, model 1) compared to all other roles. This seems to be due to the often-expressed view that local DMOs should be sought out by the authorities in order to avoid imposing new roles on them (cf. Hristov & Zehrer, 2015) in cooperation with local DMOs' stakeholders, which are often local tourist organisations that independently sell their own tourist offers as part of their business activities. On the other hand, the role of 2.5 - promoter of local tourist attractions (in model 2) was highly rated, which directly corresponds to the common view of researchers and business practitioners that local DMOs should focus on operational activities aimed at intensive promotion, and, more broadly, the integrated marketing of the destination's potential (attractions or tourism products) (after Wagenseil et al., 2022), because these are the activities that their stakeholders demand most (see Korzh & Onyschuk, 2022). This is also reflected in the acronym DMO, which is used to refer to Destination Marketing Organisations (cf. Dredge, 2016). Therefore, it should be clearly recognised that the opinions and perspectives of stakeholders have been translated into practice and have influenced the proposed models. They reflect the ongoing changes in the organisational formulas of DMOs and can serve as a reference point for further research and consideration of the directions in which these organisations are evolving.

A holistic view of destination management organisations (here local DMOs), requires that these organisations unite the efforts of multiple stakeholders to be most successful (after Sotiriadis, 2021). In this view, tourism destinations, through the appropriate organisational structure of the local DMOs, can achieve the expected win-win outcomes for all stakeholders, as Sotiriadis (2021) explicitly points out. The evolution of key management concepts in tourism destinations over the past decade synthesises the reflection that the management of a system as complex as destination tourism requires the different stakeholders to face the challenges of future development (after Vigliani & Calabrò, 2022), and this also applies to local DMOs. It is the

LTOs' stakeholders who have to make key decisions about the directions of organisational evolution or leadership in the destination (see Tuohino & Konu, 2014; Nomm et al., 2020), including by expressing their expectations and opinions (here in the CAWI survey).

Local DMOs are often part of the public sector involved in the marketing and management of tourism in a specific area (destination), and thus are consistently the subject of considerable research interest in many academic and industry circles (Topalović, 2021). At the same time, it is pointed out that many of the key responsibilities (roles) of local DMOs, e.g. in terms of: analysing the attractiveness of a destination, training human resources for crisis management or the development and certification of tourism products, innovation or promotion of tourism investments, and the effectiveness of DMOs' functioning, have been studied only sporadically (after Topalović, 2021). As Volgger and Pechlaner (2014) report, we know equally little about the determinants of the success of local DMOs, highlighting the need to study their organisational structures in terms of their ability to network co-operation in the destination and further shape their corporate governance, which is crucial to the success of the destination in which local DMOs operate (Katemliadis, 2020). This study and its findings, especially in the area of selecting effective organisational models and roles in LTO activities, fill these knowledge gaps.

It is pointed out that local DMOs (after Beritelli & Laesser, 2016) are constantly observed by their stakeholders and surroundings near or far, as these groups seek the optimal forms and organisational roles of functioning for these organisations (see RT), which was the impetus for the innovative research and the benchmark for confirming the validity of the hypotheses H1-H2 formulated. And management organisations in tourism destinations, including local DMOs, are at the same time under constant pressure from their environment and surroundings to demonstrate their effectiveness in operation (after Morgan et al., 2012). This was verified in this study CAWI from the perspective of the members of the organisation from the community of local DMOs. Thus, the results obtained fill the identified knowledge gap (after Presenza, 2015) about the condition and effectiveness of local DMOs in relation to the organisational model of operation and assigned (selected) roles. And the technique adopted to assess effectiveness (including the proposed evaluation variables in the survey) can

be considered at least adequate to the phenomena studied, if not innovative and novel.

The activities of contemporary local DMOs often include facing crisis management; they are also expected to be sustainable and resilient to a turbulent environment in the tourism economy (after Križman-Pavlović & Crnobori, 2022). This enforces the need to search for organisational models of operation (including those presented in this study CAWI) that allow local DMOs to be effective in their roles (Petković et al., 2023). Equally important is the continuous assessment of functioning of the local DMOs organisational structures, which may be becoming obsolete and in need of adjustment. It was confirmed by this study and verified hypothesis H1 positively, which should be an important signal for the LTOs' authorities to immediately undertake organisational evolution, in a situation where as many as 41% of the LTOs surveyed indicate symptoms of obsolescence. Local DMOs are nowadays facing major challenges, and they need to evaluate (organisationally) and adapt their operating strategies, governance model and functioning structures to cope with rapid changes and uncertainties in the environment (Au-Yeung et al., 2022). This is demonstrated explicitly by positively verifying hypothesis H2 (see also Table 1) about the feasibility of implementing the three proposed operating models of local DMOs to improve organisational effectiveness.

The existing knowledge gap on the effectiveness of leadership practices and roles performed by local DMOs in the destination (cf. Nomm et al., 2020) makes us reflect on the results of the studies conducted. They showed the need for specialisation of local DMOs, and the necessity to adopt specific roles in operations, within the proposed organisational models, to influence effectiveness. Further, the research in question confirmed (using a CAWI survey technique) the need for ongoing stakeholder consultation on the desired roles and functions for local DMOs, as explicitly advocated by Giumelli et al. (2022). The results of the research also fit in with the need to gain acceptance (for final satisfaction) from stakeholders (see Budimir-Beka & Pivčević, 2022), for the activities of local DMOs, as it is these stakeholders who *de facto* assess the effectiveness of the organisation's functioning in specific roles.

Local DMOs must also adhere to certain principles when carrying out their roles, including subsidiarity, sovereignty, partnership, standardisation, fair competition or openness, and research (see Fig. 3) has shown that the principle of subsidiarity was most often indicated as essential

for effective DMOs. This fits in with the trend of destination management by ensuring good cooperation and unrestricted support between the network of stakeholders in a tourism destination, as argued and postulated by Foris et al. (2020).

The researchers point out that local DMOs have different functions (tasks and roles) and organisational structures and vary from one destination to another (after Varghese & Paul, 2014), which is also confirmed in the present study, in which three organisational models and 18 role types were examined for their effectiveness. The results of the present study provide, for the first time, an in-depth picture of the obsolescence of the operational forms of local DMOs in Poland from the perspective of the organisation's members. At the same time, this research, based on selected methods and techniques (including statistically validated survey results) has identified measurable indicators of the degree of obsolescence of the DMOs system at the local level, which represents an important contribution to science and is the opening of a new field of scientific research on methods or techniques for auditing local DMOs (see Presenza, 2015). Thus, the article fills a research gap and makes an important contribution to the theme of scientific inquiry and diagnosis of phenomena and the search for qualitative indicators of the DMO effectiveness, not only for the entities studied, but also applicable to other DMOs in Europe (see Morgan et al., 2012).

The obtained results, based on a scientific approach, are relevant for the construction of principles or directions of the necessary evolution of local DMOs in Poland, which should also lead, according to d'Agella & Go (2009), to the creation of systems of multidirectional cooperation between the organisation and its environment. Thanks to this, tourism stakeholders in the destination (also members of DMOs), will be able to find their place (roles) in the tourism management system, as postulated by Pearce (2015).

The adopted concept of the study is based on the strategic need to obtain scientifically reliable sources of data (in this case, the opinions of key members-stakeholders of DMOs from the entire population of the researched destination) about possible, and environmentally acceptable, directions for the organisational reorientation of local DMOs based at the same time on variables that will allow for increased operational effectiveness (as voiced by Pechlaner et al., 2012) and are not at the same time merely the result of negative influences or political pressures from the environment of local DMOs, as pointed out by Saito and Ruhanen (2017). The survey model adopted and the results obtained are also an

instrument to mitigate perceived contradictions in the assessment of the degree of effectiveness of local DMOs (see Fedyk & Morawski, 2016), which is a current problem that needs intervention. This contradiction is often the result of a lack of recognition of the different, often divergent, positions of the members of the organisation or the stakeholders in the environment, as pointed out by Louillet et al. (2021), and was also confirmed by the scientifically validated CAWI results.

This study focuses on scientifically validated findings (verified hypotheses, conducted role typology and achieved goals) that have important implications for management theory and practice, as they allow local DMOs' stakeholders (including their leaders) to directly express (Elbe & Emmoth, 2014) important feedback to organisations in order to shape their current operational model and to develop effectively in the future. This approach to testing the effectiveness of local DMOs (forms and roles), conducted by assessing stakeholder attitudes (CAWI), provides a basis and a scientific thesis for accepting changes in the organisational structure and roles of local DMOs without causing conflict, as pointed out by Atorough & Martin (2012).

The theoretical framework of local DMOs must be flexible (here 3 models of functioning, 18 types of roles) and resilient and adapt to changing market conditions and stakeholder needs to ensure the long-term success of a tourism destination, as pointed out by Gretzel and Scarpino-Johns (2018). Against this background, the results obtained constitute an important element of scientific diagnosis (new knowledge), towards contemporary non-profit organisations (here local DMOs) that have to cope with a turbulent environment in the post-COVID-19 era (Fedyk et al., 2022a; 2022b). The implementation of appropriate (postulated in this research) operating models for local DMOs, adapted to local conditions and needs, can significantly improve the organisation's effectiveness, contributing to the sustainable development of tourism destinations, which should also be the goal of local DMOs as indicated by Idisondejaja et al. (2023) or Toma & Mihai (2022). Against this background, the present study of postulated models for the functioning of local DMOs (including selected roles resulting in increased effectiveness, provides a strong impetus for researchers and practitioners to more consciously create changes in the functioning system of local DMOs, as pointed out by Hartman et al. (2020) or Zerva et al. (2019).

This study and its findings support the process of necessity (following Foris et al., 2020) of improving tourism destination management involving local

DMOs and their managers or executives, pointing to operating models and roles for these organisations that can improve their effectiveness (see Table 2). As Varghese & Thomas (2023) demonstrate, effective destination management requires all stakeholders to work together to overcome obstacles and achieve common goals.

The obtained views (via CAWI) of the local DMOs members are of significant practical importance because they allow for the direct transfer of unique knowledge to the organisation and its managers, as postulated by Gretzel (2022). Crucially, these identified views also facilitate the flexibility and streamlining of DMOs' operations using the new organisational models available (Beritelli et al., 2014). The results obtained are at the same time a kind of prerogative for the boards of local DMOs to act (after Elbe & Emmoth, 2014). In our case on behalf of the organisation's stakeholders, who explicitly agreed to a certain direction of organisational change by performing a self-assessment (through a CAWI survey) (Beritelli et al., 2015) of the state of the organisation and perceptions of alternative directions of organisational evolution for a possible increase in the effectiveness of DMOs (see Blackman & Ritchie, 2007).

Importantly, the proposed technique and tools (see Fig. 2) for examining the characteristics of local DMOs are almost free and easy to implement into organisational practice. This is important because of the need to conduct a permanent assessment of the organisational effectiveness of the DMOs in question from the perspective of stakeholder expectations and organisational governance principles, as suggested by Pechlaner et al. (2012). The adopted concept of assessing the effectiveness of local DMOs can also be practically, and without major limitations, applied to other types of organisations with tourism functions in different destinations, regardless of the available resources, as highlighted by Slocum and Everett (2014). The proposed research model (as in Fig. 2) can also be applied to other organisations (in a country, region or destination) that show signs of organisational inefficiency (Foris et al., 2020) or are accused of being inefficient and too slow to adapt to new market conditions (Katemliadis, 2020). At the same time, the research approach adopted is in line with the view of researchers and business practitioners about the need to use non-financial measures to assess organisational effectiveness (after Woodside & Sakai, 2009).

The above discussion threads and conclusions also give rise to the thesis that the results of the study significantly enrich the academic discourse on the effectiveness of local destination manage-

ment organisations (DMOs) and organisational innovation, offering both theoretical and practical implications. The study fills a gap in the development of a theoretical framework for assessing the effectiveness of DMOs by introducing new methods of measuring organisational effectiveness that go beyond traditional financial indicators. The results support Freeman's (1994) theory of the key role of stakeholders in organisational effectiveness assessment, while offering a framework for further comparative research in different geographical and cultural contexts. The study of the three proposed operational models for LTOs (network organisation, tourism cluster, local destination management organisation) confirmed that the application of these models can lead to an increase in the effectiveness of DMOs. This is becoming the basis for developing new approaches in destination management and introducing an open discourse in the academic community about the evolution of DMOs towards more specialised and professional structures and supports previous conclusions by authors such as Morrison and Buhalis (2023). The results obtained also support the thesis that specialisation of LTOs' roles and their adaptation to stakeholders' needs can increase the effectiveness of organisations, which is consistent with previous works (e.g. Reinhold et al., 2018) and opens up space for further academic research on the impact of these roles on destination development. The paper also provides implications for management and academic practice in the development of tools for the evaluation and organisational auditing of DMOs. The study sets new directions in research on the effectiveness of DMOs and their organisational structures, while encouraging further reflection by the academic community on the potential for the development of these organisations in the context of global challenges.

The present study has several limitations. The analyses conducted included only a few selected variables, and the selection of respondents from among the members of local DMOs was not a fully programmed process, while being a representative sample at the same time (as indicated by the statistical analysis methods and techniques adopted). Importantly, an analogous survey design (a technique to assess the state of the organisation and identify directions for change) could be applied to other DMOs operating in the tourism economy, at different levels of operation (Bornhorst et al., 2010). The results obtained would allow for further in-depth analyses and the targeting of processes aimed at achieving the effectiveness of the entire tourism management system in destinations, which is directly in line with the recommendations of

Foris et al. (2020) or the guidelines of Negrus et al. (2016).

It is important to point out that the study and its results were based on the subjective opinions of selected local DMO stakeholders (members of the organisation), so their views do not necessarily reflect a complete picture of the degree of obsolescence of the LTOs' operating model or the types of expectations of LTOs' stakeholders. However, the opinions obtained made it possible to identify the attitude of local DMOs regarding the attitude of the organisation (and its members) towards the need to shape a specific organisational orientation in order to increase the effectiveness that is expected by destination tourism stakeholders (Foris et al., 2020; Mandić & Kennell, 2021; Thomas & McNeice, 2022).

The technique of the study and its findings may provide a basis for further research into the capacity to develop and enhance stakeholder collaboration in local DMOs, as suggested by Bramwell and Lane (2000), as well as for exploring organisational models and new roles in the operation of local DMOs that allow them to respond effectively to changes in the environment (Ness & Haugland, 2022).

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