

EVALUATING HOSPITALITY ECOSYSTEM COMPONENTS IN A REGIONAL TOURISM DESTINATION: EFFECTS ON TOURIST SATISFACTION AND RECOMMENDATION INTENTIONS

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Abstract. Tourism destinations are becoming more and more like interconnected hospitality ecosystems, where visitor experiences are created through the interaction of information services, infrastructure, hospitality services and leisure opportunities. Understanding how these components influence tourist satisfaction and intention to recommend a destination is important for enhancing its competitiveness. This study therefore aims to evaluate the influence of these components on tourist satisfaction and recommendation intentions in a regional tourism destination in western Lithuania. A quantitative research design was employed, involving a structured questionnaire survey. The final sample consisted of 455 visitors. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, a reliability analysis, a Pearson correlation analysis, multiple linear regression and an ordinal logistic regression. The findings revealed generally positive evaluations of the dimensions of the hospitality ecosystem. Information quality received the highest evaluation ($M = 3.79$), while infrastructure quality received the lowest score ($M = 2.88$). Reliability analysis revealed excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.934 to 0.967. Regression analysis revealed that infrastructure quality ($\beta = 0.235$, $p = 0.036$) and leisure service quality ($\beta = 0.164$, $p = 0.020$) had a significant impact on tourist satisfaction. In contrast, information quality, food service quality and accommodation quality were not found to have a significant effect. The model explained 28.1% of the variance in tourist satisfaction. Satisfied tourists were significantly more likely to recommend the destination ($\beta = 1.817$, $p < 0.001$). These results emphasise the importance of infrastructure and leisure services in enhancing visitor experiences and boosting a destination's competitiveness.

Keywords: hospitality ecosystem, tourist satisfaction, recommendation intentions, destination competitiveness, tourism destination, Western Lithuania.

JEL Classification: L83, Z32, R58

1. Introduction

Tourism plays a significant role in regional economic development, creating employment opportunities, supporting local businesses and enhancing the attractiveness of destinations. In an increasingly competitive market, destinations must not only attract visitors, but also provide experiences that generate satisfaction and encourage positive recommendations. Consequently, the factors influencing tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty

have become important topics of research in tourism and hospitality studies.

Traditional destination competitiveness models emphasise the importance of tourism resources, infrastructure, destination management and supporting services for creating visitor value and maintaining long-term competitiveness (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Dwyer & Kim, 2003). However, recent studies suggest that the performance of destinations should be viewed from a broader perspective. In this

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view, visitor experiences emerge through interactions among multiple stakeholders, services, infrastructure systems and information networks (Philipp et al., 2022; Xu & Au, 2023). This shift has encouraged the development of approaches to hospitality ecosystems that conceptualise destinations as interconnected systems rather than as collections of individual tourism services.

Despite the growing interest in hospitality ecosystems, existing studies have primarily examined information quality, infrastructure, accommodation services, food services, leisure opportunities, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty as individual factors. Consequently, there is limited empirical evidence regarding the combined influence of hospitality ecosystem components on tourist satisfaction and intention to recommend within a single analytical framework. This gap is particularly pertinent in regional tourism destinations, where competitiveness frequently hinges on the efficient integration of tourism services and supporting systems.

This study addresses the scientific problem of the inadequate understanding of how different components of the hospitality ecosystem collectively influence tourist satisfaction and intention to recommend regional tourism destinations.

The aim of this study is therefore to evaluate the influence of components of the hospitality ecosystem on tourist satisfaction and intention to recommend a regional tourism destination in Western Lithuania.

To achieve this aim, the following research objectives were formulated:

1. To establish a theoretical framework linking hospitality ecosystem components, tourist satisfaction, and recommendation intentions.
2. To assess visitors' evaluations of key hospitality ecosystem components.
3. To examine the effects of hospitality ecosystem components on tourist satisfaction.
4. To analyse the relationship between tourist satisfaction and recommendation intentions.

This study uses a quantitative research approach based on a questionnaire survey of visitors. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics, a reliability analysis, a Pearson correlation analysis, multiple linear regression and an ordinal logistic regression analysis. As the research focuses on visitors to a single regional tourism destination in Western Lithuania, the findings should be interpreted within this geographical context.

The study is theoretically founded on destination competitiveness theory, the Ecosystem of Hospitality framework, service quality theory and research into tourist satisfaction. The analysis draws primarily on the work of Ritchie and Crouch (2003), Dwyer and Kim (2003), Philipp et al. (2022) and Oliver (1980),

as well as subsequent studies examining tourist satisfaction and recommendation behaviour.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews the relevant literature, developing the conceptual framework and hypotheses. Section 3 presents the research methodology. Section 4 reports the empirical results. Section 5 discusses the findings in relation to previous studies. The final section presents the conclusions, limitations and implications for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Destination Competitiveness and Hospitality Ecosystems

Destination competitiveness is one of the key concepts used to explain why some tourism destinations perform better than others. It is typically linked to a destination's capacity to attract visitors, provide them with value, and sustain development over time. Ritchie and Crouch (2003) link destination competitiveness to the interaction of tourism resources, infrastructure, management, policy and market conditions. Dwyer and Kim (2003) adopt a similar perspective, contending that competitiveness hinges on inherited and created resources, supportive factors, destination management, and demand conditions.

While these models remain highly relevant, tourism destinations are now increasingly recognised as complex systems, rather than collections of individual attractions or services. Recent studies show that destination competitiveness is shaped by a variety of factors, including resources, sustainability, stakeholder collaboration, innovation, visitor experience and resilience (Mior Shariffuddin et al., 2022; Xu & Au, 2023). This shift is important because visitors usually experience a destination as a whole. The way in which different services, spaces, people and information sources function together influences their evaluation.

This broader perspective is closely linked to the concept of ecosystem-based thinking in tourism and hospitality research. Philipp et al. (2022) propose the Ecosystem of Hospitality framework, which views destinations as networks comprising visitors, tourism businesses, local communities, public institutions, infrastructure and information systems. From this perspective, the visitor experience is not created by a single hotel, restaurant, attraction or information channel. Rather, it is formed through the combined performance of many destination elements and the relationships between them.

Pechlaner et al. (2022) also emphasise that the ecosystem approach helps us to gain a more holistic understanding of tourism destinations, as it brings together the social, economic, technological and cultural dimensions. This is particularly pertinent for

regional destinations, where competitiveness is less dependent on a single dominant attraction and more on the effective connection of various services and supporting systems.

Following this logic, the present study analyses the performance of the hospitality ecosystem through five interrelated dimensions: information quality, infrastructure quality, food service quality, accommodation quality and leisure service quality. Together, these dimensions represent the practical and experiential aspects of the destination, providing a basis for examining the influence of the hospitality ecosystem on tourist satisfaction and intention to recommend.

2.2. Hospitality Ecosystem Components and Tourist Satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction is generally defined as an evaluation that emerges from the comparison between visitors' expectations and their actual experience (Oliver, 1980). It is widely regarded as one of the most important indicators of a destination's performance, as it reflects visitors' assessment of the overall quality and value of their travel experience. From a hospitality ecosystem perspective, visitor satisfaction is shaped by the combined influence of multiple destination components experienced throughout their trip, rather than by a single service encounter (Philipp et al., 2022).

One of these components is the quality of information. The growing digitalisation of tourism means that access to reliable information is increasingly important before, during and after travel. Tourists use a variety of sources, such as destination websites, social media platforms, online reviews, mobile applications and tourism information centres, to inform their decisions and reduce uncertainty. Previous studies have suggested that high-quality information can contribute to a more positive image of a destination, boost visitor confidence and enhance overall satisfaction (Chen & Law, 2016; Styliadis et al., 2020). Accurate, accessible and easy-to-understand information helps visitors navigate destinations more effectively and can have a positive influence on their overall experience (Soliman, 2021).

Infrastructure quality is another essential element of the hospitality ecosystem. Transport accessibility, signage, public facilities, environmental quality and general mobility conditions all influence how easily visitors can move around and experience a destination. Traditional destination competitiveness models identify infrastructure as a key factor in tourism development (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). Recent studies confirm that well-developed infrastructure directly contributes to visitor satisfaction, particularly in regional destinations where accessibility and supporting facilities can significantly impact overall evaluations of the destination (Hanafiah

et al., 2022; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2023).

The quality of food and accommodation form the core dimensions of a destination's hospitality services. According to service quality theory, customer evaluations are influenced by factors such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangible service attributes (Parasuraman et al., 1988). In the context of tourism, the quality of accommodation and food services influences both the practical and experiential aspects of travel. Visitors often base their overall impression of a destination on the quality of the accommodation, the professionalism of the staff, cleanliness, comfort and dining experiences. Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that higher service quality leads to greater tourist satisfaction and stronger destination loyalty (Nunkoo et al., 2020).

The quality of leisure services reflects the experiential dimension of destination performance. Modern tourists increasingly seek memorable and engaging experiences rather than purely functional services (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Cultural events, recreational activities, festivals, nature-based attractions and entertainment opportunities often play a central role in how visitors respond emotionally to a destination. Research indicates that positive leisure experiences strengthen emotional attachment and significantly contribute to tourist satisfaction (Kim & Thapa, 2021). Furthermore, experiential attributes are becoming an increasingly important factor in explaining how visitors evaluate destinations and form behavioural intentions alongside traditional service quality factors (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2023).

Overall, previous research suggests that the quality of information, infrastructure, food services, accommodation and leisure services represent key dimensions of the performance of the hospitality ecosystem. While each component contributes to visitor experiences differently, they all operate within the same destination system, collectively shaping tourist satisfaction. This theoretical foundation is the basis for the present study's examination of their combined influence on tourist satisfaction.

2.3. Tourist Satisfaction and Recommendation Intentions

Tourist satisfaction is widely recognised as one of the key outcomes of destination experiences, as it influences visitors' evaluations of destinations and their subsequent behaviour. According to expectation-confirmation theory (Oliver, 1980), satisfaction develops when actual experiences meet or exceed prior expectations. Positive experiences generally lead to favourable evaluations of destinations and increase the likelihood of positive behavioural responses.

One of the most important indicators of destination loyalty is the willingness to recommend a place to

others. Although revisit intentions have traditionally been used as an indicator of loyalty, they do not always accurately reflect tourists' true attitudes. Many travellers actively seek out new destinations and experiences, meaning that even those who are highly satisfied with a place may not return. Nevertheless, they are often willing to recommend destinations that provided positive experiences. For this reason, recommendations are often considered a particularly meaningful indicator of attitudinal loyalty (Rather et al., 2022).

The importance of recommendation behaviour has grown considerably alongside the growth of digital communication. Online reviews, travel platforms, blogs and social media enable visitors to share their experiences with a wide audience. These forms of electronic word-of-mouth marketing (eWOM) have become a key source of information for potential travellers, influencing destination image and travel decisions (Litvin et al., 2008). As a result, the role of satisfied visitors in destination promotion is becoming increasingly important. Positive recommendations reflect favourable evaluations and can contribute to a destination's competitiveness by influencing future visitor numbers (Su et al., 2024).

A substantial body of empirical research supports the positive relationship between tourist satisfaction and the likelihood of recommendations being made. Studies conducted in various tourism contexts have shown that satisfied tourists are more likely to recommend destinations to friends, family members, and other potential travellers (Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Seetanah et al., 2019). More recent evidence suggests that this relationship can be further strengthened by emotional attachment to the destination, positive memories of it, and a sense of connection to it (Rather et al., 2022).

Overall, the literature suggests that tourist satisfaction is more than just the result of experiences at a destination. Rather, it is an important mechanism through which destination attributes and the performance of the hospitality ecosystem influence recommendation intentions. Hence, higher levels of tourist satisfaction are expected to boost visitors' willingness to recommend the destination to others.

2.4. Research Gap, Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

Previous studies have considerably advanced the understanding of destination competitiveness, service quality, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. However, there are still several research gaps.

Firstly, destination attributes such as information quality, infrastructure, accommodation, food services and leisure opportunities are frequently examined in isolation rather than as interconnected elements of

a wider destination system (Mior Shariffuddin et al., 2022; Xu & Au, 2023). Consequently, their combined influence on tourist satisfaction has received limited attention.

Secondly, while the Hospitality Ecosystem approach offers a thorough framework for analysing tourism destinations as integrated systems (Philipp et al., 2022), its application in practice is still limited, especially in regional tourism contexts.

Thirdly, although the positive relationship between tourist satisfaction and intention to recommend is well established, relatively few studies have examined this relationship within the context of an integrated hospitality ecosystem.

In order to address these gaps, the present study develops a conceptual framework grounded in Information Quality Theory, Destination Competitiveness Theory, Service Quality Theory, and Experience Economy Theory. The model posits that information quality, infrastructure quality, food service quality, accommodation quality, and leisure service quality, as pivotal components of the hospitality ecosystem, exert a positive influence on tourist satisfaction, which in turn fosters heightened recommendation intentions. The broader destination context and the actors within the ecosystem provide the conceptual setting of the model, but are not hypothesised directly. The proposed framework is presented in Figure 1.

H1. Hospitality ecosystem components positively influence tourist satisfaction.

H2. Tourist satisfaction positively influences recommendation intentions.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research design to investigate the relationships between components of the hospitality ecosystem, tourist satisfaction and intention to recommend a regional tourism destination. The research was based on the Ecosystem of Hospitality (EoH) perspective, which views visitor experiences as the result of interactions between various destination elements, such as information systems, infrastructure, hospitality services, and leisure activities (Philipp et al., 2022).

The empirical study was conducted in one of the districts of western Lithuania. Regional destinations are an ideal setting for researching the hospitality ecosystem because their competitiveness hinges on the collective performance of multiple tourism-related services and supporting systems, rather than a single attraction.

The conceptual model developed in this study assumes that components of the hospitality ecosystem influence tourist satisfaction, which in turn affects intention to recommend.

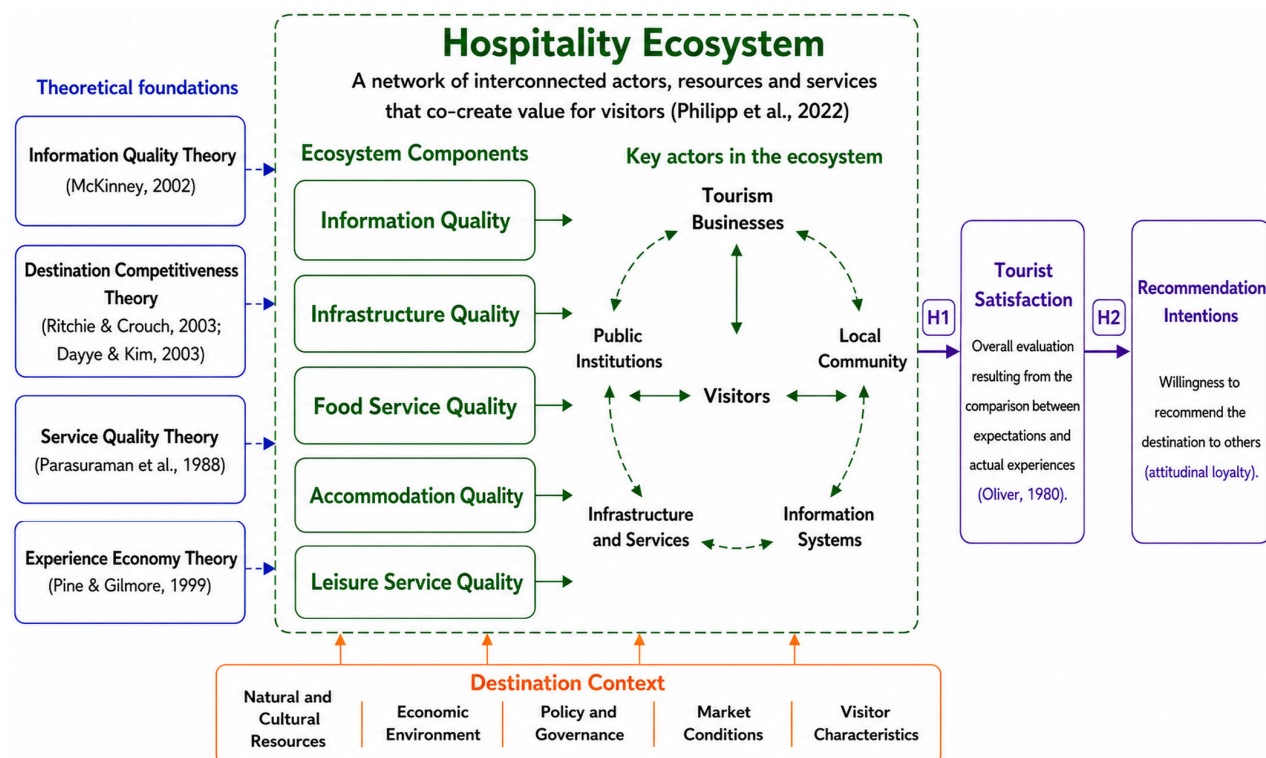


Figure 1. Conceptual model: hospitality ecosystem components, tourists' satisfaction and recommendation intention

Source: compiled by the authors based on the survey data, 2026

3.2. Data Collection and Sample

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire survey of visitors to the destination in 2024.

The target population consisted of tourists and visitors who experienced tourism services in the destination during the study period. As there was no comprehensive sampling frame of destination visitors, a non-probability convenience sampling approach was used instead.

A total of 455 valid questionnaires were obtained and included in the final analysis. According to Hair et al. (2019), sample sizes exceeding 300 observations are generally considered adequate for multivariate statistical analysis. Samples above 400 observations, however, provide robust statistical power and stable parameter estimates. Therefore, the sample size achieved was considered sufficient for the purposes of the study.

The respondent profile included people of different ages, with different educational backgrounds and travel motivations, and with different visitation patterns. This ensured a diversity of perspectives regarding destination experiences.

3.3. Measurement Instrument

The questionnaire was developed based on literature concerning destination competitiveness, hospitality ecosystems, service quality and tourist satisfaction

(Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Philipp et al., 2022).

The instrument consisted of 26 questions organised into thematic sections. These covered travel characteristics, tourism information, infrastructure, food and accommodation services, leisure services, the overall evaluation of the destination, intentions to recommend it, and socio-demographic characteristics.

Following the proposed conceptual framework, hospitality ecosystem components were operationalised through five dimensions:

- Information Quality;
- Infrastructure Quality;
- Food Service Quality;
- Accommodation Quality;
- Leisure Service Quality.

The quality of the information was measured using eight indicators that assessed the adequacy, clarity, accessibility and usefulness of the tourism-related information.

The quality of infrastructure was measured using sixteen indicators related to accessibility, transport systems, signage, public facilities, environmental conditions and visitor amenities.

The quality of the food service was assessed using sixteen indicators, which evaluated service availability, diversity, cleanliness, comfort, staff professionalism and value for money.

The quality of the accommodation was measured using fifteen indicators assessing service accessibility, comfort, cleanliness, service quality and perceived value.

The quality of leisure services was measured using nine indicators reflecting the availability, diversity and quality of recreational, cultural and entertainment opportunities.

Tourist satisfaction was defined as visitors' overall evaluation of their experience at the destination.

The intention to recommend the destination to others was measured as respondents' willingness to do so.

Most of the measurements were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, where higher scores indicated a more positive evaluation.

3.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics software. The analytical procedure consisted of four stages.

Firstly, a descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to describe the characteristics of the respondents and evaluate visitors' perceptions of the components of the hospitality ecosystem. Means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages were calculated to provide an overview of the sample and the attributes of the evaluated destination.

Secondly, a reliability analysis was performed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients to evaluate the internal consistency of the measurement scales. In line with the recommendations of Hair et al. (2019), a Cronbach's alpha value above 0.70 was considered an acceptable indicator of scale reliability. Based on the reliability assessment, composite indices were calculated for each dimension of the hospitality ecosystem by averaging the corresponding questionnaire items. The dimensions included Information Quality, Infrastructure Quality, Food Service Quality, Accommodation Quality and Leisure Service Quality.

Thirdly, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the dimensions of the hospitality ecosystem and tourist satisfaction. This analysis provided an initial assessment of the strength and direction of the associations between the study variables, enabling potential relationships to be identified prior to regression modelling.

Finally, hypothesis testing was conducted using regression-based techniques. To test hypothesis H1, a multiple linear regression analysis was performed, with tourist satisfaction as the dependent variable and the five dimensions of the hospitality ecosystem as the independent variables. This analysis revealed the relative contribution of each component of the hospitality ecosystem to overall tourist satisfaction.

The regression model was specified as follows:

$$TS = \beta_0 + \beta_1 IQ + \beta_2 INF + \beta_3 FSQ + \beta_4 ACQ + \beta_5 LSQ + \varepsilon$$

where:

- **TS** = Tourist Satisfaction;
- **IQ** = Information Quality;
- **INF** = Infrastructure Quality;
- **FSQ** = Food Service Quality;
- **ACQ** = Accommodation Quality;
- **LSQ** = Leisure Service Quality;
- **ε** = error term.

Ordinal logistic regression analysis was employed to test Hypothesis H2 because recommendation intention was measured using an ordinal response scale. Tourist satisfaction was included as the predictor variable, while recommendation intention served as the dependent variable.

The statistical significance was evaluated at a 95% confidence level. P-values below 0.05 were considered to be statistically significant.

3.5. Ethical Considerations and Methodological Limitations

The study adhered to the ethical principles of voluntary participation, anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent. Before taking part in the survey, respondents were informed of the study's purpose and how the collected data would be used. No personally identifiable information was collected, and all responses were analysed only in an aggregated form.

4. Results

4.1. Respondent Profile

Following the data cleaning procedure, a total of 455 valid questionnaires were included in the analysis. Of the 483 questionnaires initially collected, 28 were excluded due to incomplete or invalid data. The final sample size was large enough to conduct the planned statistical analyses and examine the relationships between the components of the hospitality ecosystem, tourist satisfaction and recommendation intentions.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1. The majority of the sample were female respondents (65.9%), while male respondents accounted for 31.9%. A small proportion of participants (2.2%) chose not to disclose their gender. The age distribution shows that the largest group of respondents were visitors aged 18–29 (37.8%), followed by those aged 30–46 (28.8%) and 47–64 (24.6%). The smallest proportion belonged to the oldest age category (65–77 years), at 6.8%. Overall, the sample was dominated by respondents aged 18–46, with older age groups being represented to a lesser extent.

In terms of educational attainment, the respondents had diverse backgrounds. The largest group had completed secondary education (36.7%), followed by those with higher education qualifications (33.8%).

Those with vocational qualifications accounted for 15.6% of the sample, while 12.3% had non-university higher education qualifications. This diverse educational structure contributes to the heterogeneity of the sample, enabling the inclusion of different visitor perspectives.

Table 1

Respondent Profile (N = 455)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	300	65.9
	Male	145	31.9
	Prefer not to disclose	10	2.2
Age	18–29 years	172	37.8
	30–46 years	131	28.8
	47–64 years	112	24.6
	65–77 years	31	6.8
Education	Secondary education	167	36.7
	Vocational education	71	15.6
	Non-university higher education	56	12.3
	Higher education	154	33.8

Source: compiled by the authors based on the survey data, 2026

In addition to demographic diversity, the sample reflected a wide variety of travel characteristics. While the majority of respondents (65.5%) visited the destination during the summer season, substantial proportions also reported visiting during spring (39.1%) and autumn (38.0%). Visits in winter were less common (21.3%). Most respondents travelled without staying overnight (74.1%), whereas 25.9% stayed in the destination for at least one night. Among those who stayed overnight, short stays of one to three nights were most common.

Respondents were geographically distributed across a wide area of Lithuania, with the largest proportion coming from neighbouring municipalities, including the city and district of Klaipėda, as well as the districts of Kretinga, Tauragė and Šilutė. The sample also included visitors from major Lithuanian cities such as Vilnius, Kaunas, Šiauliai, Panevėžys, Telšiai and Plungė, as well as a small number of international visitors. Furthermore, the majority of respondents travelled with adult family members (46.2%) or friends (36.5%), suggesting that leisure travel was the main reason for visiting.

Overall, the demographic and travel-related characteristics of the sample indicate its diversity and provide a solid basis for analysing perceptions of the quality of the hospitality ecosystem, tourist satisfaction and intention to recommend. The heterogeneity of the respondents reduces the likelihood of substantial demographic bias, thereby supporting the robustness of the empirical findings within the context of the investigated destination.

4.2. Evaluation of Hospitality Ecosystem Components

4.2.1. Information Quality

The quality of the information was assessed using eight indicators related to the availability, clarity, accessibility and usefulness of tourism-related information. The results show that respondents generally gave positive evaluations of the destination's information system, with all mean scores on the five-point scale exceeding 3.7 (see Table 2).

Table 2

Evaluation of Information Quality

Indicator	Mean (M)
Sufficiency of information available online	3.81
Clarity and comprehensibility of information	3.90
Sufficiency of information provided by the Tourism Information Centre (TIC)	3.82
Information about tourist attractions	3.86
Availability of information in different languages	3.73
TIC opening hours	3.85
Information about guide services	3.74
Promotion of events and activities	3.80
Indicator	Mean (M)

Source: compiled by the authors based on the research data, 2026

Overall, the evaluation of information quality was favourable ($M = 3.79$), indicating that visitors generally found tourism-related information accessible and useful. The clarity and comprehensibility of information ($M = 3.90$) and the availability of information about tourist attractions ($M = 3.86$) were the highest-rated indicators. Relatively high evaluations were also given for the operating hours of the Tourism Information Centre ($M = 3.85$), the sufficiency of the information it provided ($M = 3.82$) and the availability of online information ($M = 3.81$).

The lowest scores were recorded for the availability of multilingual information ($M = 3.73$) and information about guide services ($M = 3.74$). While these scores are still above the midpoint of the scale, there is room for improvement. Providing multilingual information, in particular, may become increasingly important as destinations seek to attract a broader range of international visitors. Similarly, increasing the visibility of guide services could raise awareness of the range of tourism experiences available and encourage visitors to engage with the destination.

Overall, the findings suggest that information quality is one of the most important components of the hospitality ecosystem. The consistently positive evaluations across all indicators suggest that visitors experience few difficulties accessing and using tourism-related information during their visit.

4.2.2. Infrastructure Quality

The quality of the infrastructure was assessed using a range of indicators related to accessibility, transport services, public amenities, signage, environmental quality and visitor facilities.

The overall evaluation of infrastructure quality was the lowest of all the dimensions of the hospitality ecosystem ($M = 2.88$). This indicates that visitors perceived several infrastructure-related aspects less favourably than other aspects of the destination experience, highlighting infrastructure as the most problematic area within the ecosystem.

Respondents generally gave higher ratings to the accessibility of major attractions, destination signage and environmental cleanliness. This suggests that visitors were able to access key tourism resources relatively easily and that they perceived the overall physical environment as being adequately maintained. Such attributes contribute positively to the practical quality of the visitor experience and support the functionality of the destination.

By contrast, lower evaluations were associated with the availability and accessibility of public transport, and of public facilities for visitors with special needs. This suggests that supporting infrastructure has not developed to the same extent as other tourism-related services. Limited accessibility and inadequate public amenities may inconvenience visitors and negatively impact their overall experience, particularly those who are elderly, have children, or have limited mobility.

Overall, the results indicate that infrastructure quality is the weakest element of the hospitality ecosystem. This comparatively low evaluation suggests that future destination development efforts should prioritise improvements to transport accessibility, public facilities and inclusive infrastructure, in order to boost visitor satisfaction and enhance the destination's competitiveness.

4.2.3. Food Service Quality

The quality of food services was assessed using indicators reflecting aspects such as the availability, diversity, accessibility, cleanliness, quality of service, professionalism of staff, and value for money of food-related services.

The overall evaluation of food service quality was positive ($M = 3.77$), making it one of the highest-rated dimensions of the hospitality ecosystem. The findings suggest that respondents had favourable perceptions of the restaurants, cafés and other food-related services available at the destination.

Compared with other dimensions of the hospitality ecosystem, the quality of food services received a similar evaluation to the quality of information ($M = 3.79$), and a higher evaluation than the quality of accommodation ($M = 3.73$), leisure services ($M = 3.54$)

and infrastructure ($M = 2.88$). These results suggest that food services are a well-developed part of the tourist offer in this destination and have a positive impact on visitors' experiences.

The positive evaluation may reflect visitors' satisfaction with the variety of food-related services and the quality of service available at the destination, as well as the overall dining experience. Such services often constitute an important part of the tourism experience, influencing both practical requirements and the experiential aspects of travel.

Overall, the findings show that visitors were generally satisfied with food-related services. This suggests that food service providers are meeting the expectations of visitors to the destination.

4.2.4. Accommodation Quality

The quality of the accommodation was assessed using indicators related to accessibility, comfort, cleanliness, service quality, staff performance and perceived value.

The overall evaluation of the quality of accommodation was positive ($M = 3.73$). Respondents generally had a favourable perception of accommodation services, suggesting that lodging facilities adequately supported their travel experience and contributed positively to their overall stay.

The quality of accommodation received slightly lower evaluations than the quality of information ($M = 3.79$) and food services ($M = 3.77$), but remained substantially higher than the quality of leisure services ($M = 3.54$) and infrastructure ($M = 2.88$). These results suggest that accommodation services are a key part of the hospitality ecosystem.

The favourable evaluation suggests that visitors were generally satisfied with aspects such as comfort, cleanliness, the quality of service, and value for money. Adequate accommodation services are important for supporting visitor well-being and contribute to the overall quality of the destination experience.

Overall, the results suggest that accommodation providers generally meet visitor expectations, making them an important contributor to positive evaluations of the destination.

4.2.5. Leisure Service Quality

The quality of leisure services was assessed using indicators related to the availability, diversity and accessibility of recreational, cultural and entertainment opportunities.

The overall evaluation of leisure service quality was moderately positive ($M = 3.54$). Although leisure services received lower evaluations than information, food and accommodation services, the results remained above the midpoint of the

scale, indicating favourable visitor perceptions overall.

Compared with other dimensions of the hospitality ecosystem, the quality of leisure services occupied an intermediate position. This suggests that visitors appreciated the destination's recreational, cultural and entertainment offerings, while also indicating potential for further development and diversification.

The findings suggest that leisure services have a positive impact on the attractiveness of a destination and the experiences of visitors. However, the comparatively lower evaluation suggests that visitors expect a wider range of activities, events or entertainment. Therefore, expanding and diversifying leisure offerings could enhance the destination's appeal and encourage longer stays.

It is evident that leisure services represent a significant component of the hospitality ecosystem, contributing positively to the overall visitor experience. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that these services appear to offer greater potential for enhancement in comparison to food and accommodation services.

4.3. Reliability Assessment

Prior to hypothesis testing, the reliability and internal consistency of the measurement scales were evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

**Reliability Assessment
of Hospitality Ecosystem Dimensions**

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's α
Information Quality	8	0.934
Infrastructure Quality	16	0.940
Food Service Quality	17	0.965
Accommodation Quality	15	0.967
Leisure Service Quality	9	0.961

Source: compiled by the authors based on the research data, 2026

The results demonstrate excellent internal consistency across all constructs. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.934 to 0.967, which is well above

the generally accepted minimum threshold of 0.70. Accommodation Quality ($\alpha = 0.967$) exhibited the highest reliability, followed by Food Service Quality ($\alpha = 0.965$) and Leisure Service Quality ($\alpha = 0.961$). Information Quality ($\alpha = 0.934$) and Infrastructure Quality ($\alpha = 0.940$) also exhibited very high levels of reliability.

Although alpha values above 0.95 may occasionally suggest some degree of item overlap, the scales were kept because they were designed to measure several aspects of each hospitality ecosystem dimension. Consequently, the high reliability coefficients are interpreted as evidence of strong internal consistency rather than problematic duplication of items.

Due to the robust theoretical basis of the constructs and the high levels of internal consistency observed across all dimensions, composite indices were calculated by averaging the relevant indicators within each dimension. These indices were then used in subsequent correlation and regression analyses.

Overall, the findings confirm that the measurement scales are reliable and suitable for subsequent statistical analysis. The results inspire confidence in using the constructs to examine the relationships between the dimensions of the hospitality ecosystem, tourist satisfaction and recommendation intentions.

4.4. Correlation Analysis

Before carrying out the regression analysis, the authors calculated the Pearson correlation coefficients to examine the relationships between the study variables and to assess the potential presence of multicollinearity.

The results revealed positive and statistically significant relationships among all the variables in the study. The strongest relationships with tourist satisfaction were observed for infrastructure quality ($r = 0.419$, $p < 0.01$) and leisure service quality ($r = 0.406$, $p < 0.01$), while information quality demonstrated the weakest relationship ($r = 0.149$, $p < 0.01$).

Of the dimensions of the hospitality ecosystem, the strongest correlation was observed between food service quality and accommodation quality ($r =$

Table 5

Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.Information Quality	1.000					
2.Infrastructure Quality	0.412**	1.000				
3.Food Service Quality	0.487**	0.421**	1.000			
4.Accommodation Quality	0.451**	0.394**	0.563**	1.000		
5.Leisure Service Quality	0.438**	0.512**	0.471**	0.445**	1.000	
6.Tourist Satisfaction	0.149**	0.419**	0.288**	0.211**	0.406**	1.000

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: compiled by the authors based on the research data, 2026

0.563, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that visitors who gave positive evaluations of food-related services also tended to give favourable evaluations of accommodation services.

Furthermore, all the correlation coefficients were below the commonly accepted threshold of 0.80. This indicates that multicollinearity was unlikely to be severe and supports the inclusion of the variables in the subsequent regression analysis.

4.5. Effects of Hospitality Ecosystem Components on Tourist Satisfaction

A multiple linear regression analysis was performed to examine the influence of hospitality ecosystem components on tourist satisfaction. Tourist satisfaction was specified as the dependent variable, and Information Quality, Infrastructure Quality, Food Service Quality, Accommodation Quality and Leisure Service Quality were specified as the independent variables.

The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 17.55$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the selected components of the hospitality ecosystem collectively explained a significant proportion of the variation in tourist satisfaction. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.281$) showed that the model explained approximately 28.1% of the variance in tourist satisfaction.

Multicollinearity diagnostics were considered prior to interpreting the regression results. As all the correlation coefficients between the predictor variables were below 0.80, there was no evidence of severe multicollinearity. Therefore, the regression coefficients can be interpreted with confidence.

Table 6

Effects of Hospitality Ecosystem Components on Tourist Satisfaction

Variable	Standardised β	p
Information Quality	0.048	0.502
Infrastructure Quality	0.235	0.036*
Food Service Quality	0.108	0.329
Accommodation Quality	-0.042	0.656
Leisure Service Quality	0.164	0.020*

*Note: $p < 0.05$.

Source: compiled by the authors based on the research data, 2026

The results revealed that Infrastructure Quality ($\beta = 0.235$, $p = 0.036$) and Leisure Service Quality ($\beta = 0.164$, $p = 0.020$) had a positive, statistically significant effect on tourist satisfaction. This suggests that visitors who rated the infrastructure and leisure services more highly were also more satisfied with the destination overall.

By contrast, Information Quality ($\beta = 0.048$, $p = 0.502$), Food Service Quality ($\beta = 0.108$, $p = 0.329$)

and Accommodation Quality ($\beta = -0.042$, $p = 0.656$) were not found to have a statistically significant effect on tourist satisfaction within the regression model. While these dimensions were generally evaluated positively by respondents, they did not contribute significantly to explaining variation in tourist satisfaction when the effects of the other components of the hospitality ecosystem were considered simultaneously.

Of all the analysed variables, Infrastructure Quality had the strongest effect on tourist satisfaction, followed by Leisure Service Quality. These results imply that the practical aspects of the destination and the range of leisure activities available play a significant role in visitors' overall evaluation of their experience.

Although Accommodation Quality had a negative regression coefficient ($\beta = -0.042$), this was not statistically significant ($p = 0.656$). This result most likely reflects the fact that there is overlap in the variance among the dimensions of the hospitality ecosystem, rather than indicating a genuine negative influence on tourist satisfaction.

Overall, the results partially support the proposed relationship between the components of the hospitality ecosystem and tourist satisfaction. Therefore, Hypothesis H1, which states that hospitality ecosystem components have a positive influence on tourist satisfaction, was partially supported.

4.6. Effect of Tourist Satisfaction on Recommendation Intentions

The relationship between tourist satisfaction and recommendation intentions was investigated through the implementation of an ordinal logistic regression analysis. The dependent variable in this study was recommendation intention, with tourist satisfaction serving as the predictor variable.

The results indicated a statistically significant positive correlation between tourist satisfaction and intention to recommend the destination. As can be seen in Table 7, tourist satisfaction had a strong positive impact on visitors' willingness to recommend the destination to others.

Table 7

Effects of Tourist Satisfaction on Recommendation Intentions

Variable	β	z	p
Tourist Satisfaction	1.817	8.181	<0.001

Source: compiled by the authors based on the research data, 2026

The positive and statistically significant regression coefficient ($\beta = 1.817$, $z = 8.181$, $p < 0.001$) indicates that higher levels of tourist satisfaction are associated with a greater likelihood of recommending the destination. The size of the coefficient suggests a strong

positive correlation between tourist satisfaction and intention to recommend.

The corresponding odds ratio ($e^{1.817} \approx 6.15$) suggests that an increase in tourist satisfaction substantially increased the likelihood of reporting stronger recommendation intentions. In practical terms, visitors who were more satisfied with their experience of the destination as a whole were considerably more likely to recommend it to friends, relatives and other potential visitors.

Overall, the findings support the proposed relationship between tourist satisfaction and intention to recommend. Therefore, Hypothesis H2, which states that tourist satisfaction has a positive influence on recommendation intentions, was supported.

4.7. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

An overview of the empirical findings is provided by summarising the results of the hypothesis testing in Table 8.

Table 8

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H1	Hospitality ecosystem components positively influence tourist satisfaction.	Partially supported
H2	Tourist satisfaction positively influences recommendation intentions.	Supported

Source: compiled by the authors based on the research data, 2026

The results provide substantial support for the proposed conceptual model. The analysis revealed that not all components of the hospitality ecosystem contribute equally to tourist satisfaction. Of the analysed dimensions, only infrastructure quality and leisure service quality were found to have a statistically significant positive effect on tourist satisfaction. Consequently, Hypothesis H1 was partially supported.

The findings also confirmed a statistically significant positive correlation between tourist satisfaction and intention to recommend the destination. Those who reported higher levels of satisfaction were more likely to recommend the destination to others, thus supporting Hypothesis H2.

Overall, the results suggest that tourist satisfaction is an important factor in the relationship between the performance of the hospitality ecosystem and recommendation behaviour. The findings also show that infrastructure and leisure services are particularly important in influencing visitors' overall evaluations of the destination and their willingness to recommend it.

5. Discussion

This study examined the influence of components of the hospitality ecosystem on tourist satisfaction and

intention to recommend a regional tourism destination. Using the Ecosystem of Hospitality framework (Philipp et al., 2022) as a basis, the study defined destination performance in terms of five dimensions: information quality, infrastructure quality, food service quality, accommodation quality and leisure service quality. The findings show that these dimensions do not affect visitor satisfaction and recommendation behaviour equally.

In the course of the analysis, Infrastructure Quality and Leisure Service Quality were identified as the only statistically significant predictors of tourist satisfaction. The strongest effect was demonstrated by Infrastructure Quality, underlining the significance of accessibility, mobility, environmental conditions, signage, and public amenities in shaping visitors' overall evaluations. These results are consistent with the theory of destination competitiveness, which identifies infrastructure as a fundamental supporting factor enabling tourists to access and consume tourism services (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Concomitant conclusions were reported by Hanafiah et al. (2022) and Rasoolimanesh et al. (2023), who found that infrastructure remains a significant determinant of visitor satisfaction, particularly in regional destinations.

Leisure service quality was also found to have a significant positive influence on tourist satisfaction. This finding lends weight to the assumptions of the Experience Economy framework (Pine & Gilmore, 1999), which highlights the increasing significance of memorable and emotionally engaging experiences. It seems that recreational opportunities, cultural activities and leisure experiences play an important role in visitors' overall evaluation of a destination. For regional destinations, such experiences may be a key source of differentiation and competitiveness.

By contrast, Information Quality, Food Service Quality and Accommodation Quality were not found to have a statistically significant effect on tourist satisfaction when analysed alongside other dimensions of the hospitality ecosystem. While these components received relatively high descriptive evaluations, their contribution to explaining satisfaction independently was limited. One possible explanation is that visitors increasingly expect information, accommodation and food services, viewing them as basic rather than differentiating factors in destination experiences. Consequently, rather than directly determining overall destination evaluations, these dimensions may contribute to visitor satisfaction indirectly by supporting travel experiences.

The study also revealed a strong positive correlation between tourist satisfaction and intention to recommend. This finding lends support to expectation-confirmation theory (Oliver, 1980) and to previous studies which have demonstrated that satisfied visitors

are more likely to engage in positive word-of-mouth communication and to advocate for the destination (Prayag & Ryan, 2012; Rather et al., 2022). In light of the growing importance of online reviews, social media and electronic word-of-mouth, the way people make recommendations has become an increasingly important way for destinations to strengthen their competitiveness and attract future visitors.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that destination managers and local policymakers should prioritise improving infrastructure and leisure opportunities. Particular attention should be given to transport accessibility, public amenities and accessibility for visitors with special needs, as well as the diversification of recreational and cultural activities. While information provision, accommodation and catering services remain important elements of the hospitality ecosystem, investments in infrastructure and experiences appear to offer the greatest potential for improving visitor satisfaction.

Overall, the findings support the central assumption of the hospitality ecosystem perspective, namely that visitor experiences are formed through the interaction of various destination elements. However, the results also show that these components do not all contribute equally to tourist satisfaction. The most influential predictors were infrastructure quality and leisure service quality, highlighting the importance of both functional and experiential destination attributes. The findings support the idea that the concept of a hospitality ecosystem can be operationalised through multiple, interconnected destination dimensions, rather than through individual tourism services alone.

Although the model explained 28.1% of the variance in tourist satisfaction, a substantial proportion remained unexplained. This suggests that other factors, such as destination image, perceived value, authenticity, emotional experiences and place attachment, may also influence visitor evaluations. Future studies should incorporate these factors to extend the explanatory power of the hospitality ecosystem framework further and improve the understanding of tourist behaviour in regional tourism destinations.

6. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study.

Firstly, the research was conducted in a single regional tourism destination in western Lithuania. While this setting was ideal for examining the performance of the hospitality ecosystem, the results may not be directly applicable to destinations with different geographical, cultural or tourism development characteristics. Future studies could apply the proposed framework to

multiple destinations to enable comparative analyses and improve the generalisability of the results.

Secondly, the study used a non-probability convenience sampling approach. Although the sample size ($N = 455$) was sufficient for the statistical analyses conducted, the sampling method may have introduced selection bias. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as reflecting the perceptions of the surveyed visitors, rather than those of the entire visitor population.

Thirdly, the study adopted a cross-sectional design and relied on self-reported survey data. Consequently, it is not possible to establish causal relationships with certainty, and respondents' evaluations may have been influenced by subjective perceptions or temporary emotional states. Future research could use longitudinal designs and combine survey data with behavioural indicators, online reviews or other digital tourism analytics.

Fourthly, recommendation intentions rather than actual recommendation behaviour were examined. Although recommendation intentions are commonly used as an indicator of destination loyalty, they do not always result in actual behaviour. Future studies could therefore focus on actual recommendation activities, such as electronic word-of-mouth communication on social media platforms and online review systems.

Finally, while the proposed model demonstrated explanatory value, it only explained 28.1% of the variance in tourist satisfaction. This suggests that other factors may also influence visitor evaluations. Future research could expand upon the hospitality ecosystem framework by incorporating constructs such as destination image, perceived value, authenticity, sustainability perceptions, emotional experiences, place attachment and visitor motivations.

Despite its limitations, this study makes a valuable contribution to the growing body of research on hospitality ecosystems by providing empirical evidence of the relationships between the components of such ecosystems, tourist satisfaction and intention to recommend a regional tourism destination. The findings offer theoretical insights and practical implications for destination managers seeking to improve visitor experiences and boost their destination's competitiveness.

7. Conclusions

This study aimed to evaluate the influence of components of the hospitality ecosystem on tourist satisfaction and intention to recommend a regional tourism destination in Western Lithuania.

1. The literature review revealed that contemporary tourism research is increasingly adopting systemic and ecosystem-based approaches to explain destination competitiveness and visitor experiences. Based on the

Ecosystem of Hospitality framework, a conceptual model was developed in which the main components of the hospitality ecosystem were found to be information quality, infrastructure quality, food service quality, accommodation quality and leisure service quality. The model proposes that these components influence tourist satisfaction, which in turn affects intention to recommend.

2. The empirical findings revealed generally positive evaluations across all analysed dimensions of the hospitality ecosystem. Information quality received the highest evaluation overall ($M = 3.79$), followed by food service quality ($M = 3.77$) and accommodation quality ($M = 3.73$). Leisure service quality was moderately positively evaluated ($M = 3.54$), whereas infrastructure quality received the lowest evaluation ($M = 2.88$). While visitors generally expressed favourable opinions about tourism services and information provision, infrastructure was identified as the weakest component of the hospitality ecosystem.

3. Multiple regression analysis revealed that the various components of the hospitality ecosystem do not contribute equally to tourist satisfaction. Infrastructure quality ($\beta = 0.235$, $p = 0.036$) and leisure service quality ($\beta = 0.164$, $p = 0.020$) were identified as statistically significant predictors of satisfaction. In contrast, information quality, food service quality

and accommodation quality were not found to have a statistically significant effect within the regression model. Consequently, Hypothesis H1 was partially supported.

4. Ordinal logistic regression analysis confirmed a strong positive correlation between tourist satisfaction and intention to recommend the destination. Satisfied tourists were more willing to recommend the destination to others ($\beta = 1.817$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, Hypothesis H2 was supported.

This study contributes to research on the hospitality ecosystem by empirically demonstrating that the various dimensions of the ecosystem differ in their contribution to tourist satisfaction. The findings suggest that the quality of infrastructure and leisure services are the most influential dimensions of the hospitality ecosystem, while tourist satisfaction is a key determinant of intention to recommend.

From a practical perspective, the results suggest that destination managers and local policymakers should prioritise investment in infrastructure development and improvements to accessibility, as well as expanding leisure and recreational opportunities. As tourist satisfaction has a strong influence on intention to recommend, improving these aspects of the destination experience could lead to positive word-of-mouth communication and strengthen the destination's competitiveness.

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