LIETUVOS VERSLO KOLEGIJA
LITHUANIA BUSINESS COLLEGE

VADYBA

2023 Nr. 1 (39)

Journal of Management

Klaipėda
2023

Turinys / Contents

EDITORIAL

"Journal of Management" is periodically published applied sciences journal by Lithuanian Business College. The journal is constantly publishing articles since 2002 and has gained significant experience and international recognition. This year the journal is celebrating its 21 years anniversary. It has been well renowned by foreign scientists and number of international scholars publishing continues to increase. Currently, 39th number of the journal is released to readers. Only those articles that meet thorough requirements set by the Editorial Board are being published. Authors of these articles represent various Lithuanian and foreign countries science. From Lithuania the following institutes are represented Lithuania Business College, Kaunas University Technology, Mykolas Romeris University and other. The following institutes from foreign countries: Kastamonu University, Tarsus University (Turkey), University of Mauritius.

Editorial board of "Journal of management" seeks for published academic researches to cover different economic directions and to be relevant to different industries and countries around the world. At the same time, the focus remains on ongoing changes in various industries, human resources, and governance. Based on these criterions, articles are chosen for publication in the journal. Focusing on relevant areas of change is expected to encourage further scientific discourse and development of social science ideas.

The Journal continues to provide various scientific articles prepared by researchers from various backgrounds, experiences and nationalities, thus providing diverse view of current research trends in multiple topics, including not only business, but also technology, economics, politics and other areas. One of the topics in this number of the journal includes political research made by Lithuanian scientists, where Avižonienė G., Paulauskas M. and Kemtė P. is making an assessment of the competences of past governments of the Republic of Lithuania. The paper analyses the composition of the last ten governments in Lithuania and the appointment of individuals to ministerial positions, categorising them as either politicians or specialists in their respective fields. Authors conclude that out of last ten governments, eight consisted of politicians serving as ministers, while the other two had specialised ministers. Political ministers are the most typical ministers in Lithuania and after analysis can be considered more stable and successful. Meanwhile, specialist ministers, tend to excel in their specific fields, thus typically being better suited for lower levels of government to support political ministers. These ministers tend to be less stable, experiencing more frequent changes during their tenure. Professional specialists face challenges in political work, as effectively identifying societal and workplace issues becomes more difficult due to factors such as communication, public interaction, reform drafting, and decision-making.

However, Editorial cannot review all of the researches, therefore we encourage familiarizing with them in the Journal, which currently is under the indexing process with Scopus and WoS.

We invite scientists to actively publish in the Journal, share their research results and methodological insights. We expect for close cooperation.

Prof. Dr. (HP) Valentinas Navickas, Editor-in-Chief

CONTEMPORARY CONCEPT OF BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS

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Abstract

Business competitiveness topic is widely discussed among researchers in various science disciplines and areas. Industries and companies have been forced to adapt their activity to various changes that have a significant impact on their competitiveness. The authors revise contemporary concept of business competitiveness. Competitiveness provides direction for long-term economic growth, contributes to increasing asset value and competitive advantages, attracts more investment. Therefore, this study aims to assess how well the existing literature on competitiveness. The competitive situation of the market allows for a company to retain its customers for the long term, and to this end, providing quick and flexible service and ensuring the availability of products are of key importance. Existing research is largely based on a variety of innovative models and indicators, with a relatively small difference being the assumed operational relationship of competitive factors at different scales. Many researchers describe competitiveness at the national level. Scott and Lodge (1985) describe competitiveness as the intrinsic ability of a product to create, produce, distribute, service and/or produce a product in international trade. The tumultuous beginning of the this century has brought new challenge to companies and industries. The main criteria and sources of competitiveness at the country, industry and company level are updating the connotations of competitiveness. Individual competitiveness frameworks and models were reviewed and classified. After, the paper includes bibliometric literature study on the competitiveness in the period 2021-2023 and examines trends, as well as prospects for future research. The findings of the bibliometric analysis confirmed that research on competitiveness is mainly focused on the global market and company level.

KEY WORDS: Competitiveness, Competitiveness processes, Sources of Competitiveness.

Introduction

Researchers describe competitiveness as a multidimensional and comparative notion. The importance of different competitive sensors varies depending on the duration and circumstances.

Competitiveness is yet an elusive concept, the topicality of which is changing with time. Theories and frameworks, if they are truly viable, will be flexible rather than aligning change with core strategic management processes.

Competitiveness is the Latin word "competitor", which describes to intervene in the commercial competition of the market. Simply put, it's the ability to compete. Over the past 20 years, competitiveness has become a popular term. The importance, discipline, evaluation and timeliness of competitiveness are mainly described in different fields such as economics, management and political science. In assessing international trade theory, competitiveness is describe as "degree of conformity of goods and services standards are produced in the international market while maintaining the real income of citizens in a free and fair market. Competitiveness is seen by many as an important factor in a country's wealth creation because it improves living conditions and real incomes by providing goods and services with a certain comparative advantage (Crouch & Ritchie 1999). In contrast to its competitors in the global market economy, it has become the name of what is now called the economic power of a country, industry or enterprise, where goods, services, people, skills and ideas easily cross geographical boundaries (Man, 1998).

The paper has several sections. The study starts with the introduction and the review of terminology is presented here. Further, the authors present the scientific literature related to business competitiveness concept approaches. In the next section, the authors provided biobliometric analysis of the contemprorary literature. Finally, the authors provided conclusions.

Theoretical Background

Competitiveness is a multidimensional concept. It can be analyzed at various but interrelated levels: Country, Industry and Company level. Interrelated level analyze competitive positioning.
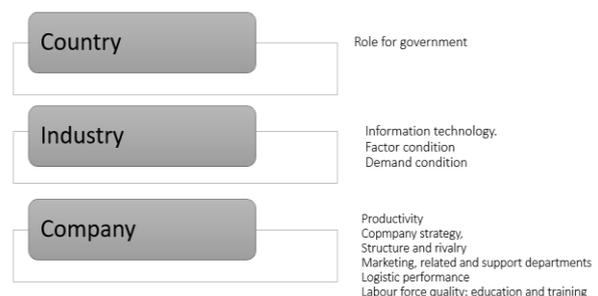
Fig. 1. Interrelated level.
Created by authors

Globalization has extended the concept of competitiveness: competition influences regions, describe as systems that build conditions for economic and social growth, promote the growth of local enterprises, and participate in new business. Given recent trends in globalization, the issue of competitive advantage was important for Governments. In particular, the opening of trade with the World Trade Organization meant that industry could no longer live under the protectionist

policies of the government. Multinational businesses are progressively moving into domestic markets. Overall, there is a given, but limited role for government; The best way to increase your competitive advantage is mainly to let it happen on its own. The government has enacted many laws and regulations to support the development policy of the sector. In this regard, the role of the government is very significant. While governments role is fundamental in some areas to secure the common good. The role of active government policies should be to create an economic environment policies conductive to competition, innovation and growth. The government creates an environment that promotes the industry by supporting laws, regulations, policies, and tax systems. First, all work to reduce budget deficit this one key reducing our current account deficit. For the government need to borrow increase the capital available for private-sector investment. The next and important role of government is to keep open markets, both here and abroad. In a rapidly changing high-tech environment, the free flow of goods, services, information and capital is essential if we are to maintain the elasticity of the world market. Barriers to imports are a tax on our exporter of approach to range of intermediate goods available to their foreign competitors to push resources into less efficient industries, decreasing our economic well-being and growing cost for exporters.

In all areas, competition is determined by competitiveness: the contractual capacity of buyers, the complexity and scale of competition between existing competitors, the threat of new market participants, the threat of alternative products and services, and fines for suppliers.

The composition and intensity of these forces combine to create profitable competition in an industry. When these five forces are replaced by new technologies, customer needs, or downstream factors, the structure of the industry changes. Smart, connected products are shaping the fabric of many industries, like the last branch of Internet information technologies (IT). The industrial sector will have the biggest impact.

Significantly increase the possibilities of product differentiation and shift the wide competition from the price.

Once you understand how customers actually use your products, you can create customer segments, customize your products, set prices to create added value, and update your value-added services.

By understanding how customers actually use your products, you can create customer segments, customize products and set prices to create added value and renew value-added services.
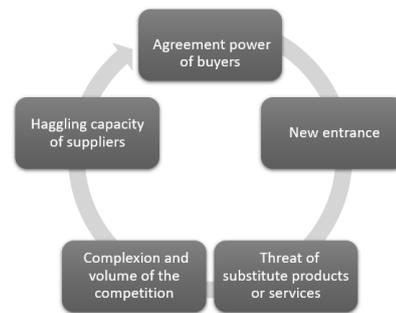
Fig.2. Industry competition shape.
Formed by authors following Porter et al. (2014)

This allows companies to decrease their dependence on sales and service partners, further mediate and consolidate large profits. All of this helps buffer or reduce the bargaining power of buyers. However, it can increase purchasing power, allowing buyers to better understand the performance of a product, and they can play the role of a separate manufacturer. Finally, product-as-a-service and product sharing services have the potential to increase purchasing power by reducing the costs of switching to a new manufacturer compared to the real estate model.

Newcomers to the intelligent connected world faces significant new obstacles, such as high fixed costs for product and technology design, and the complex layers of new IT infrastructure. It can also increase customer loyalty and the cost of changing suppliers, increasing barriers to market entry. However, barriers to entry decrease when products eliminate competitors' strengths.

Products can provide customers with better performance, customization, and value through traditional alternatives, reducing threats to innovation and increasing industry growth. Many industries are creating new types of alternative threats, such the ability to reach legacy products more broadly.

New business models based on advanced, connected products can replace product ownership and reduce overall product demand.

An opportunity to replace competition and open up new and enriching opportunities for diversity and value-added services. You can also tailor products to a particular market segment by tailoring products to customers, further improve price volatility and performance, extend your value proposition beyond your products, and create opportunities to integrate valuable data and enhanced service offerings.

Linking traditional relationships with vendors is a bargaining force. Traditional suppliers tend to be less important in total production costs and less bargaining power. These new suppliers have strong bargaining power and can meet part of the product, reducing the profitability of producers. Trade growth means that expanding trade between countries with similar global portfolios is more exciting than building business models. Companies need to ensure their overall attractiveness. the decisive factors were predicted by Porter's "diamond model" influencing the development of the industry. Based on these factors, the model emphasizes strategic actions by governments and companies to increase

industrial competitiveness. The model consists of four main components: employee status, demand status, company strategy, structure and competition with the related industry (Porter, 1990). These models describe a company's competitiveness in terms of three main components: the global competitive environment, competitive strategy, and organizational structure.

Porter's framework could easily be strengthened to provide insight into the emergence of Porter's competitive and enduring structure, rather than just the lack of theoretical originals (Dunning, 1993; Rugman & d'Cruz, 1993), but also modestly predicts the competitiveness of each industry.

International competition shifts resources to areas of comparative advantage. The factor of high competitive pressure is increased customer training, which requires higher information technology and higher operating standards (Porter, 1990). Information technology can promote economic growth and increase productivity. The wave of information technology has not only led to gradual functional improvements in product performance and productivity, but also to its ability to meet business and customer's needs. In many areas, products are more efficient, safer, more reliable, more adequate, and save scarce natural resources such as energy, water, and raw materials.

In the field of information technology development is very important because new ways of providing services and processes that increase competence and efficiency. It is widely recognized that the information technology process accounts for half of economic growth, is a major driver of the long-term outlook and the cause of rising living standards. Advances in information technology have helped create new capital, goods, services, and jobs, potentially expanding the economy in the future. The use of technology allows to increase productivity and product quality. You can expand the range of services we offer and expand the geographical coverage of services. in determining the patterns of international trade, the growth and use of technology plays an important role, which influences the development of the advantage of the industrial sector. Since the development of technology is not determined by its importance in economic conditions, it may also affect the progress of service provision, enterprise organization and management, and the activities of state institutions. New technologies can also help offset potential damage to a company's capital and labor costs.

The relationship between government and business often has a important effect on the environment in which innovation and technology develop. The relationship can become adversarial as the government strives to reduce operations rather than promote positive contributions to the country.

Company ability to design, manufacture or sell products at a higher price than those offered by its competitors is defined at the company level as competitiveness (D'Cruz et al. 1992). To provide customers businesses are efficient, cost-effective, and quality-driven to provide greater value and satisfaction to customers than their competitors (Johnson, 1992; Hammer and Champy, 1993). A number of studies have been conducted to determine the meaning of this term,

focusing on specific aspects such as marketing (Corbett and Wassenhove, 1993), information technology (Ross et al., 1996), quality of the product (Swann and Tahhavi, 1994), and the the ability of companies to exchange ideas (Grupp et al., 1997). Companies are building new types of customer relationships and demanding new marketing skills and abilities. When companies collect and analyze product usage data, they can gain new insight into how their products create value for customers by improving product placement and communicating product value more effectively to customers.

This approach is ideal if the product can be adapted fast and efficiently and at low marginal cost. In addition, the product development process requires quick and effective specialization of design changes later and after purchase. The process of developing a new product is important maintaining the company in modern conditions competitiveness and identification of success factors is important to the company.

Many authors often describe productivity as a substitute for enterprise competitiveness and high sustainable competitiveness. Porter describes organization-level competitiveness as increases in productivity that reflect or decline in differentiated costs or in products that pay higher prices. Porter's overall strategy also emphasizes these parameters. It is said that the most productive companies, industries, or countries can be considered the most competitive (McKee and Sessions-Robinson, 1989).

Flexibility, mobility, speed and adaptability are increasingly important sources of competitiveness in today's changing business environment (Barney, 2001; Sushil, 2000).

Traditional distribution cost included all activities starting at the finished goods end of production line and finishing with supply to the customer. The development of materials management since 1970s brought pre and post output flows closer together. Useful request of the supply chain concept and strategic alliances of companies now demand a look into companies' complete procurement-production-logistic processes in addition to those of customers.

The quality of the local business environment has a significant impact on the competitiveness of companies. Secondly, competitiveness depends on labor force quality. Education and training consist of about quarters total stock of productive capital. Companies compete effectively for complex services without well-educated employees. During the post-war era, improvements in this human capital which we continue to pursue for 10%-20% of real output growth. Comparable investments in research and development have led to technological advancements which have improved output.

In relation to cyclical changes, inflation, exchange rates and other important macroeconomic variables such as consumption, investment and employment affect productivity, making it a key driver of long-term economic growth and improved living standards (El Salvador et al., 2006). Higher wages, better working conditions, and growing investment in human resources lead to higher productivity in the labor market, which is a key factor in creating quality jobs. Learning and skills development is essential to developing and maintaining

skills and taking advantage of opportunities in the workplace. Without a workforce that is continually learning new skills, it will be hard for a country to compete in a globalized world. Educating and upskilling the workforce is a key driver of economic growth and capability in business today. The wave of growth from the mid-1980s was directed towards higher returns on human and physical capital, which was the main reason for economic growth influencing the concentration of human capital, and the reason for differences in living standards between countries can be attributed to the value of education and competent skills.

Knowledge management is increasingly important to the business community today as a key area of sustainable competitive advantage. The only thing that gives an organization a competitive advantage is news, including knowledge about the organization, how it uses it, what it knows and how quickly it can learn something new (Prusak, 1996).

Knowledge is the thermonuclear competitive tool of our time; knowledge and its resources, big factories, or fat bankrolls (Stewart, 1997). Robert Hiebler of Arthur Anderson writes: "Those companies that develop best practices for managing knowledge capital will be the ones that ride this competitive wave" (Hiebler, 1996).

Results

The authors delivered a bibliometric analysis for the period 2021-2023, seeking to identify contemporary trends and gather the most popular topics among the authors in the field of competitiveness. After introducing the keywords: "competition" in the base "Vos viewer," the results of the authors' publications were found, which were used to create bibliographic maps, which are depicted in Figures 3 and 4.

Figure 3 demonstrates the prevalence of the most frequently repeated words used by the authors, which are from the results of publications obtained in the Vos viewer database. As a result of the bibliometric analysis, a bibliographic map was generated with the most frequently repeated, the authors of the articles, used by the most commonly repeated words of the authors of the articles. Typically, circles on bibliometric maps can be of different colors, which separate clusters with the purpose of showing which keywords are closer to each other, as well as circles are also demonstrated in various sizes that indicate the importance of the word; the brighter the meaning of the word is more important. The lines indicate the relationships between the elements. The brightness of the lines suggests the strength of the connection, and the different distances between the keywords define the intensity of the interface. The closer the circles are to each other, the greater the interface between them.

The analysis of keywords that are associated indicated that nine clusters exist in the analyzed number of science articles.

However, in this case, in Figure 3, we can see that all the significant words " enterprise," "industry", and "factor" are distinguished by size, which means that they are essential, the size of the circles, as much as the color, how much less critical are "company," "management," "market," "strategy," "region," since the size of the circles is somewhat smaller. It should also be noted that all keywords are interdependent, but the distances of the connections are different. A total of 20 keywords were identified: "enterprise," "industry," "factor," "company," "management," "market," "strategy," "region," "performance," "approach," "China," "country," "context," "export," "competitiveness," "condition," "case study," "influence," "perspective," "formation," "Indonesia."

The links attribute indicates the number of co-occurring links of given keywords with other keywords. The outstanding keywords of the first cluster are "company," which occurred 146 times, "approach," which occurred 122 times, and "influence," which appeared 77 times.

The second cluster's leading keyword is "context," which occurred 93 times.

The third cluster contains the leading keyword, "export competitiveness," which occurred 96 times, while the keyword "industry" appeared 290 times.

The fourth cluster with the keyword "performance" occurred 123 times, and "strategy" appeared 142 times.

The fifth cluster with the keywords "enterprise" occurred 323 times, "formation" times 74 times, and "management" happened 145 times.

The sixth cluster with the keyword "country" occurred 110 times, and the "region" appeared 140 times.

The seventh cluster with the keyword "factor" occurred 265 times, and the keyword "market" occurred 144 times.

The eighth with keywords "world market" and "efficiency," and the ninth clusters keywords "response" and "interspecies competitiveness."

Continuing about the distances between keywords, we can notice a circle of diversity in the choice of enterprise, which has the closest connection with the words factor, industry.

The first and fifth clusters for the company level include management, marketing, and productivity. The focus of the fourth group is on the business and strategy levels. The third, sixth and eighth clusters relate to the global market, exports, and globalization. A more detailed seventh cluster is related to digitization.

Fig. 3. The prevalence of the most frequently used keywords used in author's publications, according to the search of "competitiveness" in the database "Vos viewer."
Source: compiled by the author based on the results of the Vos viewer database.

According to the results in Figure 4, it can be seen that the bibliographic map consists of 5 clusters of authors: nineteen red, ten blue, eight yellow, thirteen green, and three purple. In the red cluster, the circles form a network of the same structure as on the bibliographic map shown in Figure 3, which contains neatly located circles that are dependent on each other by a closer or more distant connection.

Fig. 4. Prevalence of the most frequently repeated, used in author's publications, keywords according to the results of the search of "competitiveness" in the "Vos viewer" database.
Source: Compiled by the author based on the results of the Vos viewer database

Among the authors is cited European Commission (2021) work, which supports reforms dedicated to strengthening small and medium enterprises, reducing barriers to entering the market, facilitating foreign direct investments, international, regional, and national trade, development of the digital economy, stimulation of research, development, and application of innovations, the creation, and management of public and private partnerships and improvement of governance at state-based companies.

Other authors identified that among competitiveness studies, the most popular are digitalization and globalization directions. Also, the authors highlight

industry, strategy, and region aspects in those studies as the most popular ones.

Conclusions

This study offers a finding by using literature sources dedicated to competitiveness. In all areas, competition is determined by various competitiveness levels. The literature analysis showed that it is necessary to adapt to the rapidly changing economic environment and changing trends related to globalization flexibility, mobility, speed, and adaptability factors, which are increasingly important sources of competitiveness. New business models based on advanced, connected products can replace product ownership. The growth and the use of technology play an essential role, influencing the development of the advantage of the industrial sector in many areas. For example, products are more efficient, safer, reliable, and adequate and save scarce natural resources. Innovations are one of the most important aspects of current international economics and business development issues. It is the key to maintaining companies' competitiveness concept on the global market and states'/economies' competitiveness enhancement within the international economics system. The development of businesses should become one of the priority areas of the country's economy development, since it plays an important role in ensuring the stability of economic development, increasing the flexibility and adaptability of the national economy to changing external and internal conditions. The criteria of a company's or a country's success and competitiveness is the changing behavior of the different economic actors and its influence.

The literature analysis indicates that the majority of business competitiveness approaches were designed in early 1980. Also, the recent approach suggests looking at competitiveness at the country, industry, and company levels to represent interrelation. The bibliometric analysis highlights enterprise, industry, and factors, also the management and strategy approach.

Later, more systematic approaches will be developed by connecting all essential elements and testing the relationships.

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THE RESPONSIBILITY OF E-MARKETPLACES IN SHAPING FAIR E-COMMERCE PRACTICES: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstract

Authors of this paper generally seeks to provide a review of literature related to the research phenomenon. This paper *aims* to discuss the structure of the responsibility of e-marketplaces in shaping fair e-commerce practices on a theoretical basis. Based on key insights in the scientific literature our study affirms that e-marketplaces play an important role in engendering consumer trust. *Findings* - in order to expand this approach on systematic paradigm, the authors of the article specifically embody a conceptual review, a theoretical review, an empirical review and establish a conceptual basis for the study of the analysed social phenomenon. A conceptual overview provides definitions of the key terms that underpin the study as conceptualized by various others. The theoretical review reflects discussions of various theories that explain the link between structures, regulations, rules and policies of e-commerce and consumer trust. The empirical review presents the findings of previous studies related to the study. The paper concludes with a Conceptual Framework outlining the expected relationships between the study variables. This Conceptual Framework (basis) will be empirically tested in our future research. The results of the research will be presented in the next article.

KEY WORDS: e-marketplace; e-commerce practice; consumer trust-responsibility; fair commerce; conceptual framework.

Introduction

Electronic commerce (e-commerce) continues to see a tremendous uproar globally which is an indication of the increased in information and communication technology (ICT) usage is shaping production and trade significantly as well as transforming humans process of doing things (Koh et al, 2017; Scalco, 2017; Thamik and Wu, 2022; Šaković Jovanović et al., 2020). This is demonstrated in how e-commerce is playing an integral role in retail and the emerging trends of industries few years ago. Estimates suggest a global value of e-commerce sales in business to business and business to consumer (B2B and B2C) reached almost $26.7 trillion in 2019 which is 30% of gross domestic product (GDP) representing 4% upward adjustment from 2018 ($25.6 trillion). An estimated 1.48 billion people representing a little over a quarter of the world population aged 15 and older made online purchase in 2019 that is 7% higher than 2018 (UNCTAD 2020). E-commerce is growing and continues to impact many businesses and marketing operations. E-commerce can play a peculiar role in fostering economic growth and rising living standards, particularly in developing countries according to World Trade Organization (INAS 2016). There is a collaborative instinct in public service platforms, manufacturing companies, payment initiative companies, logistics companies and others to forge for development and growth drive (Ai, Yang and Wang, 2016; Hsiao, Chen and Liao, 2017; Miao and Jayakar, 2016; Wang, Xie and Fan, 2021; and Wu et al., 2022) E-commerce is a way of trading, shopping, and selling goods or services using networks on the internet (Turban et al., 2018).

Indeed, the role of e-commerce on outbreak prevention cannot be overlooked. E-commerce sector played an extraordinary role in the society by safely providing access to goods and service during the global pandemic where severe restrictions movement to protect health and life of people according to Luca Cassatti, Secretary General of e-commerce Europe. The trend of people shopping online in Europe for example saw an increase in Europe between the period 2017 to 2021 (60% to 73%), 2020 had the major rise of 71% from 66% in 2019. Between this same periods, e-commerce contribution to gross domestic product (E-GDP) was 3.11% in 2017, to 4.60% in 2021 (Europe E-Commerce Report 2021). This massive embracement of e-commerce places a demand for a high ethical rules, policies and regulations to ensure consumers safety and trust in the sector regarding e-markets to ascertain fairness to the future development according to Thamik and Wu (2022). It is therefore worth mentioning that the increasing scale of fraud, lack of trust, high risk, privacy invasion and other negative aspects place a dent on the successes of e-commerce in recent times hence the call for strict regulation in the sector is eminent (Hornby, Goulding and Poon, 2002; Julian and Ahmed, 2005; Al-Hyari, et al., 2012; Tesfomand Lutz, 2006; Liebermann and Stashevsky, 2002; Kshetri, 2007; and Lawrence and Tar, 2010). E-commerce reliance on data as crucial factor of production in driving economic growth and development also have a replicative threat on security and privacy Yang, Chen and Chen, (2023).

One significant impact risen out of the global acceleration in e-commerce during 2020 has been the change in consumer behaviour. The demand for convenience, personalization and options during online

shopping is at peak. The e-commerce retailers have to change their approach to reflect the current customer demands. The adoption of marketplace by traditional e-commerce retailers to move towards omnichannels where sales are made in multiple in-person and online sales channels Mathradas, (2021). The drifting to marketplaces is strategic expansion to established and existing e-commerce retailers. In furtherance to the strategic expansion, Forbes explain that these e-retailers establish a partnership with marketplaces to boost up sales whiles ensuring a one stop shopping for consumer satisfaction. Out of this new establishment an estimated increase of $3.5 trillion is expected to be reached by 2024. E-marketplaces are known for the provision of greater information richness, low cost of information search to users, has been the changing nature of business transactions and the easy accessibility it offers both sellers and buyers (Turban et al. 2008). It is not surprising to see Walmart to have more than 50,000 new sellers in 2019 as reported by Forbes.

All these improvement in e-commerce is mainly organized around e-marketplaces in which decisions to buy or sell can be made online. This is the implications of statements such as "the next vendor is only a mouse-click away" (UNCTAD 2000: 18). For this to happen, e-marketplaces must offer a range of functions (assurances about product, sellers, payment, etc.), and consequently it is suggested that "The e-marketplace that offers the most functionality that traders require will have an advantage" (UNCTAD 2001). A digital marketplace is a type of e-commerce website where sellers offer products or services to buyers. Thus, the marketplace operators control and process the transactions (Hong & Cho, 2011; Wu et al., 2015; Yoo et al, 2016). Online platforms are useful mechanisms for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to reach their customers without investing web shop or branding. This further may help SME's chances of survival and development in the cross-border trading Yang, Chen and Chen, (2023). Against this backdrop, the aim of this paper is to discuss the structure of the responsibility of e-marketplaces in shaping fair e-commerce practices on a theoretical basis. E-markets play vital role in development of cross-border trade facilitation, the overall growth and advancement of company's ability to expand globally (Cortés and Rosa, 2013; Steel, 2021). Standardization of structures, policies, rules and regulations in an internationally and regionally recognized manner may positively lead to consumer trust in the e-commerce system which will inure to the benefits of economic growth and development globally.

Statement of the problem and main research question: previous researches and articles posit that, despite arguments for the significance of market structure, and particularly the governmental role, in marketplaces there would appear to be no clear indication as to its real importance. This is particularly true of the electronic environment where there is a lack of theory on how electronic marketplace structures are developing. There is therefore the need for better framework and regulatory environment to provide equal opportunities to online marketplaces.

Restrictions by suppliers on trading third party marketplaces deprive retailers especially small to medium scale enterprises (SMEs) in using this important channel. This research provides a framework to assess the significance and implications of e-marketplace structures in electronic commerce. The framework can be used to inform and support companies considering participation in a marketplace or re-assessing their e-marketplace strategy.

The statement of scientific problem can be constructed on a question, *how does responsible e-marketplaces help in shaping fair e-commerce?*

Object of the study is the impact of e-marketplaces responsibilities on fair e-commerce practices.

Significance of the study: In order to expand the emergent approach on systematic paradigm, the authors of the article specifically embody a conceptual review, a theoretical review, an empirical review and establish a conceptual basis for the study of the analysed social phenomenon.

The aim of the paper: This paper seeks to construct A Conceptual Framework/ general theoretical overview of the impact of e-marketplaces on e-commerce and seeks to justify the Research Instrumentation of this social phenomenon.

The structure of the paper: the paper has several sections. The study starts with the introduction and presents the relevance of the study, the scientific problem statement and main research question, aims and objectives, significance of the study and aims of the paper. Section two presents the theoretical background and reviews of scientific literature to have a general overview of the impact of e-marketplaces on e-commerce. Section three concentrates on the Conceptual Framework (methodology, methods and research instrumentation) deployed in carrying out the research, that is: research design, scope of research, target population, sampling technique and size, location of research, research instrument, validity and reliability of research instrument, data collection, data analysis and research ethical considerations. And finally, the authors provided main discussion and conclusions.

Theoretical Background of the Study

The article seeks to present a review of literature related to the research phenomenon. It specifically embodies conceptual review, theoretical review, empirical review, and conceptual framework of the study. The conceptual review presents definitions of key terms underpinning the study as conceptualised by various others. The theoretical review reflects discussions of various theories that explain the link between structures, regulations, and policies of e-commerce and consumer trust. The empirical review presents the findings of previous studies related to the study.

The Concepts of E-commerce and E-market place

The term "electronic commerce" (EC) generally describes the exchange of products and services across

networks like the Internet and intranets (Plunkett, 2017). Hutt and Speh (2004) on their define e-commerce as comprising the business communications and transmissions over networks and through computers specifically for buying and selling of goods and services and the transfer of funds through digital communication. The main location to undertake electronic commerce transactions is the electronic market. An electronic location where buyers and sellers interact together and carry out various kinds of transactions is known as an e-marketplace. It is also referred to as a virtual market or market space. In exchange for payment, clients obtain goods and services (Plunkett, 2017). Although the tasks of an electronic market are identical to that of a physical one, computerised technologies have a tendency to make them far more effective by supplying more current information and a variety of support services, like quick execution of transactions. Clients, sellers, products, and services, infrastructures, front-end and back-end mechanisms, intermediaries, and other business associates are the main participants in an electronic market space (Turban et al., 2006).

The numerous billions of individuals who access the Internet each year as potential consumers of the products and services supplied online are the clients (Turban et al., 2006). These customers seek out discounts, personalised products, collector's items, entertainment, social interaction, and a variety of other things. Customers who are sociable have more influence than those who are consistent. They can conduct in-depth information searches, contrast pricing, place bids, and occasionally engage in negotiations. Since purchasing organisations account for more than eighty-five per cent of EC volume and value transactions, they are also clients (Turban et al., 2006). The merchants describe the millions of online shops that advertise and provide a wide range of goods. These shops are owned by businesses, governmental entities, or private citizens. There are new offerings of goods and services available every day.

Databases, hardware, software, electronic networks, and other items are all part of the infrastructure dimension of the e-commerce. It is important to note that customers engage with a market space through a front end (Turban et al., 2006). The main elements of the front end are the trader's portal, electronic catalogues, a grocery cart, a search engine, an auction engine, a payment gateway, and any other actions involved in making purchases. Back-end operations, such as order aggregation and fulfilment, inventory management, supplier purchases, accounting and finance, insurance, payment processing, packaging, and delivery, are equally vital. These tasks take place in what is referred to as the back end of the firm.

The third parties who act as an intermediary between vendors and purchasers are often referred to as intermediaries. In general, the function of electronic intermediaries differs regularly from that of conventional intermediaries (such as wholesalers or merchants). As an illustration, internet intermediaries develop and oversee online markets. They facilitate the matching of buyers and sellers, offer escrow services, and aid clients in

completing transactions. Physical middlemen could be removed, and their roles could be entirely or partly electronic. It is worth mentioning with caution that these channels (websites and marketplaces) in their intermediary role positively boost performances of firms' Šaković Jovanović, et al., (2020).

Further, it is important to highlight that e-marketplaces can be divided into public and private e-marketplaces (Turban et al. 2018). Private e-marketplaces are those that are run solely by one business. Websites for Starbucks.com, Dell.com, Target.com, and United.com all feature online shopping. Anyone on the sell-side or the buy-side makes up private marketplaces. A company (like net-a-porter.com or cisco.com) will sell either high-quality or customised products to consumers (B2C) or to businesses (B2B) in a sell-side e-marketplace; this kind of selling is regarded as one-to-many. A corporation purchases from numerous possible suppliers in a buy-side e-marketplace; this kind of purchasing is regarded as many-to-one and is a B2B transaction. For instance, some hospitality firms purchase their products from authorised sellers who visit their online market. Walmart (walmart.com) purchases products from a massive number of vendors. Private marketplaces are unregulated and may only be accessible to a limited number of users. Oftentimes, a third party (not a vendor or a buyer) or a select minority of buying or selling enterprises owns public e-marketplaces, which are used by many sellers and many buyers. They are accessible to the public and occasionally subject to the State's regulation (Turban et al., 2018). Again, contributing to the typology of e-commerce, Offenliga (1999) identifies two types of e-commerce namely direct and indirect e-commerce. Direct e-commerce, in this context describes where the consumer orders, pays and also gets digitized products such as game, music, and services delivered online. Indirect e-commerce on the other hand describes cases where the consumer orders a product online, makes payment through invoice or by cash and receives the product that is delivered to the consumer in the conventional way. Other typologies of e-commerce include but not limited to Business-to-Business (B2B), Business-to-Consumer (B2C), Consumer-to-Consumer (C2C), and Business-Government (B2G).

The Concept of Trust in E-Commerce

According to Beatty, Reay, and Miller (2001), trust as a term is nebulous and vague idea although it is a necessity that must be integrated into e-commerce platforms. Beatty et al. (2001) further contend that trust can signify many different things, and its interpretation is highly contextual. Although there are many studies on the topic of building trust into e-commerce systems, there is still no specific conceptual definition in e-commerce (Beatty et al., 2001). In literary works on trust in e-commerce, however, one definition that is frequently used is "the eagerness of a party to be vulnerable to the deeds of some other party in the expectation that the other party will carry out a specific task essential to the trustor, regardless of the capability to track or regulate the other party (Kittl, & Petrovic,

2003). The person who puts himself in a vulnerable situation is typically the buyer. The internet vendor serves as the trustee, the person or entity to whom trust is granted, and can exploit any weaknesses in the trustor according to Kittl and Petrovic. Furthermore, scholars disagree on the best way to gauge the trust concept. Many however are of the view that the trust concept ought to be evaluated on just one factor, such as motivation or reliability (Gustavsson, & Johansson, 2006). The trust construct, according to another set of academics, has multiple dimensions. Obviously, this is the correct perspective to take (Rule & Friedberg, 2005). Competence and reciprocal benevolence in partnerships are two qualities that may be used to assess an online vendor's reliability. You are more likely to work with the other party if you have faith in them. The first time you put someone you do not know in danger. Individuals must be certain that their trust will be returned in order to take that risk. Building trust requires a lot of time. In general, most people desire to be able to trust others, so when that trust is broken, people feel exposed and uneasy. If it is ever possible to restore a breached of trust, it takes a bit of time. Since trust is difficult to quantify, it is beneficial to develop a simpler way to communicate it and provide a sense of it. As an illustration, several websites display a seal that denotes their reliability (Rule & Friedberg, 2005).

Despite having a connection, there are some differences between the terms trust and safety. Seat belts are about making one safe, but they do not increase once confidence that other drivers will drive defensively (Gustavsson & Johansson, 2006). Safety is mostly about defense from damage. Trust only exists when you have faith in the goodness, respect, honesty, and transparency of other people. Therefore, being safe does not guarantee that other people would behave decently and honourably. These are referred to as the three aspects of consumer trust in the research, and by concentrating on each of them one can develop overall consumer trust for an online seller. Competence is the capacity of a business to interact with its customers and deliver its commitments (Gustavsson & Johansson, 2006).

McKnight and Chervany (2001) on their part cite that the conceptual constructs of trust in the literature include institutional trust (mainly from sociology), propensity to trust (mostly from psychology), as well as trusting intents and opinions (essentially from social psychology) (McKnight & Chervany, 2001). These authors argue that the trustor and the trustee are the two persons involved in the trust and distrust relations. In e-commerce, the two parties engage in a human-to-computer interface relationship instead of a human-to-human one. A website that offers an e-commerce system serves as the trustee in this scenario, and the trustor is the person who visits the website. In situations where there is limited knowledge, trust and distrust are crucial factors in decision-making. In e-commerce, a trustor is unable to physically inspect or interact with a trustee's goods or services or ask direct questions. In order to submit personal information, wire money, and provide credit card details, the trustor needs to engage with an unknown middleman and get past feelings of risk and uncertainty. Historically, trust and

mistrust were seen as being mutually exclusive and basically opposing in ideas, making mistrust a minimal level of trust.

Generally, trust is the cornerstone of e-commerce and any seller who fails to build a solid rapport with their clients will fail. There is a definite necessity for detailed instruction on the characteristics of e-commerce systems and business practices that can successfully foster consumer trust. Pittayachawan and Singh (2004) argue that because of very high-risk variables including impersonation, fraud, security concerns, privacy concerns, dishonest people, page-jacking, and parallel webs, trust has grown to be a crucial issue in e-commerce. Hoffman, Novak, and Peralta (1999) believe that roughly ninety-five per cent of online users refuse to give their personal information to websites because they lack trust in those sites. They further claim that sixty-nine per cent of internet consumers did not include any details since these websites did not disclose how the information would be utilised. Where risk, ambiguity, or reliance exist, trust is crucial. E-commerce will not be successful in the absence of trust. Among the most coveted characteristics in every close connection is trust. It is essential in social interactions and can be quite advantageous, particularly in business interactions. Trust makes human society less complex. Comparable to that, it serves as a means for both buyers and sellers to get across doubt in the world of online commerce. Family ties, business dealings, and client-professional contacts are all impacted by issues with trust. A customer desires to purchase a high-quality item at a fair price while a seller wants to sell a product and be well-known in the marketplace. In the e-commerce context, a buyer could actually be fraudulent or a vendor could offer unqualified goods or even absolutely nothing (Pittayachawan & Singh, 2004).

Theoretical Insights on Research Methodology Construction

This social phenomenon was anchored on the theory of Institutional-based Trust Theory, Systems Theory. These theories were chosen because of its permeability, comprehensiveness, and wider horizon in embracing all the elements and variables discussed in the study.

Institutional-based Trust Theory

The study partly adopts the Institutional-based trust theory. This theory, which McKnight et al. evaluated as a framework of initial trust in e-commerce, was put forth in 2002. Initial trust, according to McKnight et al. (2002), is trust between unidentified persons. Unfamiliar entities will not be able to predict potential results based on previous experience since the parties have not previously interacted. According to a 2002 study by McKnight et al., trust is essential for assisting customers in overcoming their perceptions of danger and insecurity in the world of online shopping. Institutional-based trust theory provides support for the ideas put forth by McKnight et al. (2002). Institution-based trust is a reflection of the sense of security that comes from having assurances, support systems, and other forms of trust in place. Shapiro (1987), McKnight and colleagues

(1998) claim that it is possible to utilise an institution-based trust to address the paradox of "rapid trust" between unidentified persons. (2000) McKnight et al. situation normality and structural certainty are the two trusting beliefs that make up institution-based trust. Beliefs in situational normality develop when people start to believe that affairs are in harmony or that the circumstance is ordinary (Lewis and Weigert, 1985). Shapiro talks about structural protections in terms of rules, warranties, and legal options. (1987; Shapiro) Structure-related assurance beliefs inform potential trustors that there are safeguards in place to reduce the possibility of unfavourable outcomes. So, for instance, third-party licenses and retailer declarations are both considered assurance structures in this research since they both give structural assurance in the e-commerce setting. Structured assurance beliefs, according to McKnight et al. (2002) hypothesis, would boost individuals' levels of trustworthiness. This claim was not supported by the findings of the initial sample study. Extensive studies with the holdout group did reveal that structural certainty beliefs greatly increased trusting intents. McKnight et al. provided a reasonable justification for the absence of impact in the initial sample. McKnight et al. specifically inferred that dispositional-based trust factors had a greater impact on individuals' trusting behaviour and intents than institution-based trust factors did. This appears to be fairly questionable considering the fact that assurance structures have been shown to impact trust and/or purchase intents in various research (Kovar et al., 2000; Mauldin and Arunachalam, 2002; Odom *et al.*, 2002; Pennington et al., 2003–2004).

Indeed, the Institutional-based trust theory in the setting of e-commerce highlights that businesses should have a framework to be able to sustain the trust connections that consumers and internet enterprises need and to offer the control tools they need to build and strengthen trust (Pittayachawan & Singh, 2004). Indeed, this theory is particularly appropriate in testing the effect of rules, policies, and regulations on consumer trust in e-commerce especially for customers with no previous experience and knowledge. For instance, according to the institutional-based trust theory, structural assurance offered a way for new players to engage in cooperative exchanges in the absence of the advantage of previous knowledge. Due to clients' lack of familiarity with the vendor and their inability to predict the outcome of the transaction, the examination of assurance structures is particularly crucial in the context of new consumers. Besides, previous studies also highlight the centrality of institutional policies, rules, and regulations in engendering consumer trust in e-commerce. In their study for example adopting a meta-analytic approach, Suk-Joo et al. found that structural assurance influenced consumer trust besides perceived quality, experience, intrapersonal-level antecedents (which is the trustor's tendency to trust), and interpersonal-level antecedents (that involves others' public image). (Kim et al. 2016; Wang and Yang, 2021; Warganegara and Babolian Hendijani, 2022) similarly reports transaction safety which is an institutional factor influence consumer trust

in e-commerce aside size, reputation, information quality, communication, economic viability, and verbal recommendations

Systems Theory

Ludwig Von Bertalanffy's 1945 system theory was widely accepted for many years as an analytical method for comprehending the operation of complex physical, biological, economic, and social systems. A system is often characterised as a collection of various interrelated and frequently communicating units or components that cooperate to achieve a set of defined goals. As a consequence, system theory provides a structure for locating the subject entity, developing a formalised model of the entity, and afterwards facilitating the capability to study the entity by which groupings of elements and their resources may be investigated collectively so as to explain findings. The "systems approach" has frequently been used to study business organisations and their behaviour. The main benefit of the methodology is that it includes several elements from system theory that are important for comprehending business issues, including inputs, outputs, boundaries, feedback, and control. A common illustration of a system that complies with the system theory is an information system. The information system (IS) functions as a subsystem of the corporate structure that procures resources to run business operations and generates results that reflect business performance (Lomerson and Mai, 2007). As a facet of IS, e-commerce employs proper information practices to accomplish customer acquisition, customer loyalty, cost reduction, channel optimization, and value capture (Epstein, 2004). Because computer technology is used to mediate e-commerce transactions, system-dependent unpredictability poses dangers to these deals. System-dependent uncertainty could result either through open technology infrastructures or trading party features that are exclusive to a given transaction (Grabner-Krauter, 2003).

The system-dependent uncertainty hazards increase the importance of trust in transactions conducted on the internet (virtual) settings (Grabner-Krauter, et al., 2003). System theory can therefore be used to comprehend the problem of e-commerce trust. In current history, two distinct viewpoints on organisations have risen, namely the chaos theory and the complexity theory (Millet B. et al, 1998). Chaos theory is "...the idea that systems are neither open nor closed, but rather so complex that even the smallest alterations to the system might result in large-scale, unforeseen change" (Smither, Houston & McIntire, 1996). A tiny alteration in the environment can have a snowball effect and have major ramifications, which makes it impossible to predict future occurrences in an organisation, in accordance with the chaos theory (Smolowitz, 1996). Though chaotic processes of "self-organization that cause unpredictable emergent change" are not stressed enough in the complexity theory (Shaw, 1997). It encourages ongoing adaptation and realignment as opposed to allowing an organisation to become rigid (Dawson, 1994; Crossan, White, Lane & Klus, 1996). The complexity theory highlights the necessity of purposeful and planned

efforts in the direction of reshaping information practices in the setting of trust in e-commerce. In general, the systems approach to e-commerce trust-building would concentrate on efficiently implementing a set of acceptable practices in order to produce a trustworthy atmosphere.

The systems theory is also relevant to the current study since it underscores how e-commerce in general functions as systems where deficiency in one facet can affect all others. This in practice requires the formulation and implementation of rules, policies, and regulations that protect the system to enhance consumer trust in the setting of e-commerce.

Empirical Review Previous Applied Theories

Koh, Fichman, and Kraut (2012) observe that given the distance between customers and suppliers, trust is a factor in all commercial partnerships, but it is particularly important in international business-to-business transactions. These authors investigate how information indices and signals impact purchasers' trust in providers in cross-border trade using information signalling theory. The authors further actively look at how buyers' impressions of the legal system and national character of suppliers' countries, as well as how third-party supplier confirmations on business-to-business exchanges, influence buyers' trust. They again examine how the impacts of indices and signals alter as the amount of business conducted between the parties rises since they assume that buyer-supplier relationships typically change as time passes. According to the research of purchasers from international organisations, opinions of a country's integrity, its legal system, and supplier verifications are all favourably correlated with the confidence of buyers. The number of prior business dealings between buyers and suppliers, however, moderates the effect of the acknowledged legal system on buyers' trust.

Yashimi et al. (2020) in another study analysed how much trust in e-commerce depends on the user interface (UI). This real-world example of payment gateways (PGs) used a cross-sectional analysis and empirical study methodology. Firstly, the marketing campaign's evaluation of a payment gateway situation was considered. Then, one hundred and sixty volunteers rated the legitimacy of each page after redesigning the user interfaces of eight well-known payment gateways. After then, the campaign was repeated using the page with the highest ranking. Results revealed that a revised UI design caused the number of users who trusted to rise from 23.4 per cent to 54.5 per cent.

Jonres and Leonard (2008) created a model of consumer-to-consumer e-commerce trust was and subsequently put to test. They predicted that a person's trust in consumer-to-consumer e-commerce would be influenced by two factors: internal (natural propensity to trust and perception of website quality, and external (others' trust of buyers/sellers and third-party recognition. Support was only found for the perception of website quality and third-party recognition, though, in contrast to the research of other forms of e-commerce. (Wang and Yang, 2021; Warganegara and Babolian Hendijani, 2022) in the quest to find out what drives

rural consumers attitude to adopt to e-commerce revealed that perceived quality of training and logistics by e-commerce platforms positively affects the attitudes of consumers. They further postulate that such e-commerce users go a long way to make recommendations to others through word of mouth.

McKnight and Chervany (2001) examined the impact of various structural assurance techniques on the intent to trust in business-to-consumer electronic commerce. The present study was prompted to delve more into the nature of structural assurance because the findings from other studies on the topic were discordant. According to this study, which is premised on the Institution-based Trust Theory, various structural assurance mechanisms, such as vendor-specific guarantees, transaction protections, credit card company protections, and approval seals, could each have a distinct impact on individuals' motives to trust. The findings show that consumer views of certifications and vendor-specific assurances can considerably influence intentions to trust, whereas impressions of credit card companies, legal, and technological infrastructure protections do not influence it.

Chau et al. (2007) in a further study look into the connection between consumers' trust in an internet transaction and their abandonment of the sale at various points. They examine key online trust antecedents for each buying process, develop targeted hypotheses, and statistically test them employing a well-known consumer decision-making process. Their findings imply that consumers' decisions to leave an online vendor's website are significantly influenced by their confidence in the seller and that relevant trust antecedents change at various points of the consumer decision process. Their research findings again show that consumers generally rely on general, affective factors such as personal characteristics or opinions about a website's usability to gauge an online vendor's credibility in the beginning phases but concentrate on precise, objective, transaction-oriented factors in the final phases that are primarily connected to their purchase decision-making.

Kim, Ferrin, and Rao (2008) developed a theoretical framework outlining the trust-based decision-making process a consumer utilises while purchasing something from a certain website. Structural Equation Modelling was used in the study to analyse online customer purchase behaviour data gathered through a web survey. The research's findings demonstrate that online shoppers' perceptions of risk and their level of trust have a massive effect on their choices. Consumer trust, corporate reputation, privacy and security issues, website information quality, and company reputation all have a significant impact on how much Internet users trust a website.

Teo and Liu (2007) in their research look at the causes and effects of consumer trust in China, Singapore, and the US. The findings indicate a positive relationship between an Internet vendor's credibility and system assurance and clients' tendency to trust. Consumer trust is positively correlated with attitude and negatively correlated with risk perception.

Shao et al. (2019) in their inquiry created a framework for looking at trust-building mechanisms in third-party mobile payment systems, relying on the theories of trust and innovation dissemination. They specifically unravelled whether there are notable disparities between male and female clients when it comes to different trust-building strategies in the context of mobile payment. A valid survey of seven hundred and forty people who use Alipay and Wechat Pay in China was done empirically. According to the findings of the statistical investigation, security, platform reputation, mobility, and customisation are the most important predictors of client trust. The perception of risk is inversely correlated with customer trust, while intentions to stay loyal are inversely correlated with customer trust. Furthermore, a multi-group analysis demonstrates that sex plays a role in the relative influence of trust-building methods. In particular, trust-building factors for male customers are reputation and mobility, but for female clients, trust-building factors are security and customisation.

Dogbe, Zakari, and Pesse-Kuma (2019) focusing on an immature e-commerce market in Ghana examine how perceived online risk affects mobile buying behaviour and how customer trust may be able to moderate that relationship. The study's sample is made up of Ghanaian university students. The validity and reliability of the measuring items were examined using confirmatory factor analysis. Following that, a hierarchical regression model was run. The findings demonstrate that the perception of a product and financial risk had a detrimental impact on consumers' m-shopping behaviour. The behaviour of m-shoppers was likewise positively impacted by the trust. Nevertheless, client trust considerably lessened the detrimental consequences of perceived financial and product risks on m-shopping habit.

In another study also from the Ghanaian context, Ofori et al. (2017) employed The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology model and the Initial Trust Model to examine user adoption of consumer-to-consumer e-commerce in an emerging market. One hundred and ninety-three university students who had some experience with Ghanaian consumer-to-consumer websites provided the data, which was analysed employing the PLS-SEM. The model's findings revealed that trust had the second-largest impact on behavioural intention after performance expectancy. It was also discovered that behavioural intention significantly predicted actual usage. They also found that their model explained around fifty-one per cent of the variation in the real use of e-commerce platforms.

Amofah and Chai (2022) in their research examined the mediating and moderating functions of trust and payment method as it explores the factors that influence consumer e-commerce penetration in Ghana. Five hundred and thirty-five purposefully chosen participants from six regions of Ghana were surveyed as part of the research, and their survey responses were estimated using the Partial Least Square Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM). The findings support the notion that some factors and the uptake of e-commerce are directly related. The payment mechanism, nevertheless, does not appear to have any moderating impact on the relationship between the adoption of e-commerce and trust. However, the adoption of e-commerce and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and use of Technology (UTAUT) variables are highly mediated by trust. Last but not least, there was a stronger correlation between social influence and trust than between effort expectation and trust.

Hassan and Lee (2021) examine how customer trust and online payment alternatives affect how consumers in Africa perceive and are conscious of e-commerce. Using the structural equation modelling method to examine responses for the investigated variables, a five-construct model was created and experimentally tested. Our online survey received 760 replies from professionals and college students in Somalia. Of those, seven hundred and forty-four clean replies were chosen after deleting incomplete responses. The research's findings showed that in Africa, the presence of locally preferred payment choices like mobile payments has an impact on how well-known e-commerce is and how the general public perceives it. Additionally, the available international internet payment methods ignore the indigenous African technologies that are widely used. Additionally, it was discovered that customer trust was a reliable indicator of how well-known and respected e-commerce was in the Least Developed Countries. According to this study, adding more payment alternatives would benefit Africa. It also demonstrates how low customer trust may be improved if consumers are offered guarantees regarding their financial transactions conducted online.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

As stated previously, the current study examines the effect of structures, policies, rules and regulations on consumer trust in e-commerce. Structures as used in this context include declarations, promises, guarantees, logos, symbols, shipping details, money-back assurances, security policies, privacy and cookie usage rules, toll-free customer care numbers and any other structural elements of a website designed by the vendor to lower perceived risks in conducting business on their website. Previous studies have looked into the effects of third-party certifications and assurance mechanisms on e-commerce (Noteberg et al., 2003; Odom et al., 2002; Lala, Arnold, Sutton and Guan, 2001; Kovar et al., 2000; Portz et al, 2000; Pennington et al., 2003-4) and retailer disclosures (Mauldin and Arunachalam, 2002; Houston and Taylor, 1999; Kaplan and Nieschwietz, 2003b) on the online consumer's purchase intentions, trust and trusting intentions. These studies confirm that all the retailer disclosures and third-party certifications as assurance frameworks reduce the risk for online shoppers and boost confidence and buying intent. Assurance structures have further been found to improve trust and encourage trusting behaviours like completing online purchases while lowering the risk connected to an unreliable provider. A third-party seal is again seen a structural guarantee provided by an accrediting body,

like a bank, an accountant, or the government, that enhances the buyer's trust (Pavlou & Gefen, 2004; McKnight & Choudhury, 2006).
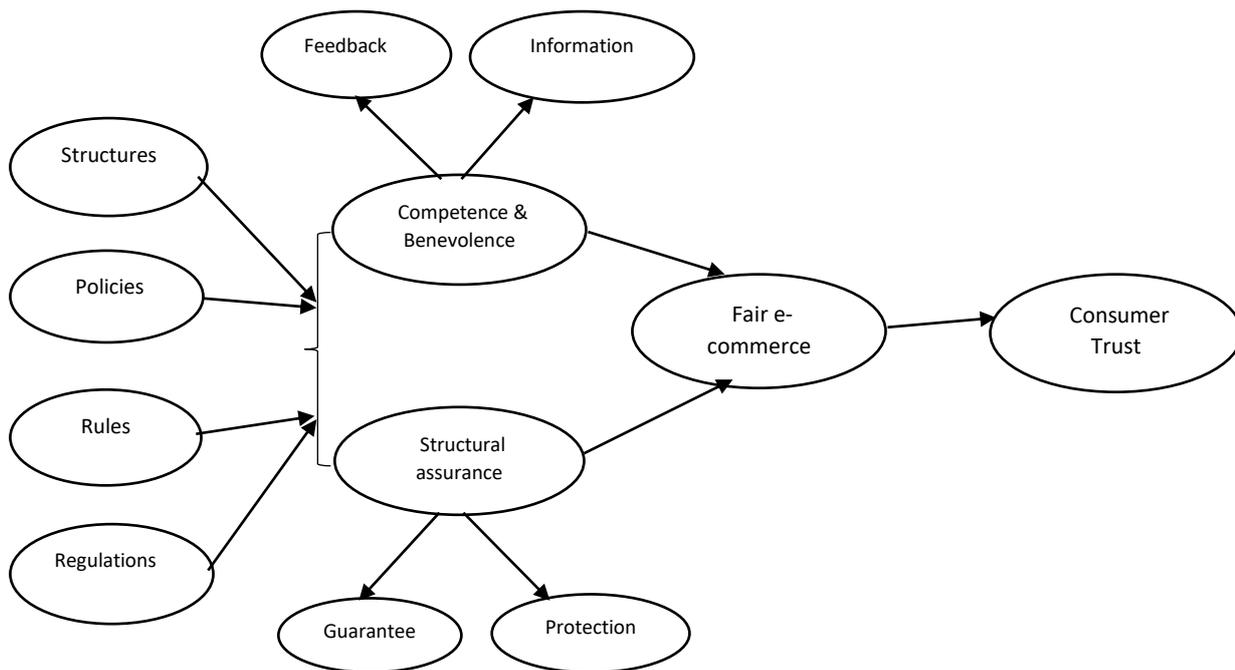

Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework
Created by authors

The phenomenon of Conceptual Framework is commonly understood as a dynamic and systematic interaction of the presented dimensions and it based on the idea that perceives consumer trust in e-commerce as a function of structures in the forms of rules, policies, and regulations as outlined by the vendor in the e-marketplace.

Determining the research hypotheses of the Model. Based on these theoretical perspectives, which are presented in the Conceptual Framework, hypotheses are formulated in the research for confirmations.

To support our future prospective investigation, two underlying statements have served as guides to understanding and analysing the responsibilities e-marketplaces have in shaping fair e-commerce practices. It can be stated, that the following research questions will be validated in the course of this empirical research.
This study is premised on:
Null hypothesis (H0): Effective e-marketplace structures (rules, regulations, policies, etc) do not have any significant association with consumer trust in e-commerce.
Alternative hypothesis (H1): Effective e-marketplace structures (rules, regulations, policies, etc) have significant association with consumer trust in e-commerce.

The operationalization of the Conceptual Framework. Criteria to measure the research dimensions: E-commerce
structures (rules, regulations, and policies); Consumer Trust; Effective e-marketplace.

Research Methodology Construction
Based on this Conceptual Framework (created by authors of this paper), a descriptive research design was adopted for the study. Also, we adopted the quantitative research approach. Conventionally, the quantitative research approach is adopted when the researcher aims to determine the presence of significant relationships between a dependent and an independent variable. The quantitative research approach is often described as value-free research since it requires the collection of data, measurement, testing, and estimation which lead to greater objectivity. Since the primary objective of the present research is to determine whether or not e-marketplace structures predict consumer trust, it is only appropriate to adopt the quantitative research paradigm which allows the researcher to test hypothesis.

Table 1. Research Design (*recommended by the authors of this paper*)

No.	Sample characteristics, data collection and analysis	Description
1	Target population	Active users of e-commerce
2	Sampling size	150 representative of 95 percent
3	Sampling technique	Non-probability sampling, Convenience and Purposive sampling technique
4	Data collection instrument	Questionnaire (Primary data source)
5	Data analysis technique	Descriptive and Inferential
6	Reliability Analysis	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
7	Descriptive Statistics	Showing the mean of the independent variable
8	**Coefficient:** the r-square and the adjusted r-square; Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)	Explaining the variables both negative or positive Which measures the degree of multicolinearity among the variables of the study

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

The study can be utilised on primary data sources. The processes of data collection started by identifying respondents through various sources including contacts with the case vendor to facilitate access to shoppers and also intercepting respondents at various social media sites. Following this, respondents asked to confirm participation in the study by filling questionnaires in forms convenient to them after which the researcher retrieved questionnaires for data coding and entry.

Questionnaires are the most widely used instrument of data collection under the quantitative research approach (Neelankavil, 2014). The questionnaires adopted from standardized scales that measure e-market regulations, rules, and policies and also consumer trust. Constructs were measured using multiple-item perceptual scales, using previously established survey items from prior studies. All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale where 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-undecided/neutral, 4-agree, and 5-strongly agree. Some of the items measuring consumer trust were adopted from the scales developed by Grazioli and Jarvenpaa,(2000) and Palvia (2009) which include items like "I believe this vendor behaviour meets my expectations", I believe this vendor behaviour keeps my best interests in mind" and "This vendor can be trusted", "I trust this vendor is consistent in quality and service," "I believe this vendor's website provides reliable information", and "I trust the vendor site enough to make a transaction over the internet" respectively.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Sampling can be defined as the determination of a sample in a population, the representative fraction of a population or a statistical set that will be questioned during a sample survey to obtain a representative result. Since not all consumers buying from the e-commerce shops could be selected, the researcher used a sample of the targeted population. In all, a total of 150 respondents were selected from the active users of e-commerce for the study. Respondents were selected by using a purposive and convenience sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was important in ensuring that respondents selected possessed adequate and in-depth knowledge on the research subject matter which led to greater accuracy in responses to the research questions. The convenience sampling technique on the other hand ensured that respondents who could easily be accessed and were willing to respond to the study were sampled.

Data Analysis Methods

The study utilised both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics as data analytical methods. The descriptive statistics mainly comprised frequency counts, mean scores, and standard deviations and were important in estimating the overall agreement of respondents on the scale items used. The inferential statistics comprised Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) aided by the use of PLS-SEM software. This was important in assessing the presence of significant relationships or otherwise among the research variables. SEM has been regarded as an important data analytical technique for research variables that involve both observed and unobserved variables making it most appropriate in this study (Richter, et al., 2016).

Research Location

Ghana serves as the study's location. Ghana is a nation in West Africa that is located on the Gulf of Guinea coastline. Ghana is considered as among the most important nations in Africa, despite its tiny size and low population density. This is partially due to its abundant natural resources and partly because it was the earliest black African nation south of the Sahara to gain independence from colonialism. Jumia, the country's leading online store, was chosen as the e-commerce vendor (e-marketplace). It was founded in May 2014 with the goal of becoming Ghana's one-stop shop for shopping with the adoption of best practices both online and offline. The leading internet retailer in Ghana is Jumia. We used to make deliveries within a week in general, however, these days we deliver packages in 1 to 5 days. Jumia began with just three people and now employs eighty young, enterprising Ghanaians, as well as an 8-person customer service team that is accessible six days a week. Right now, it delivers to each of Ghana's ten regions. Its goal is to transform the African retail experience.

Ethical Issues

Researchers are often entreated to observe ethical protocols in particular where the research involves human participants. According to (Connolly and Reid, 2007), issues of ethics in research relate to informed consent, anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality. To get the consent of subjects in research, it is recommended that the target respondent is briefed about the purpose of the study and any possible implications before seeking the consent of the person. In this study, respondents were made to understand the purpose of the study before their consent was sought voluntarily. Respondents were also given the opportunity to discontinue participation in the study even after initial participation. Also, issues of anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality were accomplished by keeping the identities of respondents' secret both during reporting of results and in subsequent dissemination of research findings.

Discussion and Conclusions

As it has been emphasised, the present study primarily sought to assess the relationship between e-marketplace structures (rules, regulations, and policies) on consumer trust in e-commerce. The findings emerging lead to the conclusion that e-marketplace structures have a significant positive relationship with consumer trust.

The main scientific result of this study is the construction and presenting of the Conceptual Framework. Overall, the Conceptual Framework demonstrates how e-marketplace structures of various dimensions such as rules, regulations, policies, assurance structures and competences play a significant role in engendering consumer trust in e-commerce networks.

The study further concludes the e-marketplaces have the responsibility to ensure fair e-commerce practices and these take place through regulations and rules including the description of descriptive information by the vendor regarding sellers and mandatory disclosure statements in the pre-purchase period, rules for fair, clear and transparent e-commerce , informing customers on whom the contract is being concluded with, duties of consumers, and exemptions for intermediaries from liabilities provided they do not host illegal content or activities, giving standards terms and conditions for sale and clarifications on who is responsible for product delivery, publishing terms of service on its website, and supplying information about financial risk and guarantees.

It is again concluded that the absence of these structures, rules, and regulations pose challenges that lead to unfair e-commerce practices. The responsibility therefore lies on e-market players to ensure all these.

The Conceptual Framework presented by the authors of the article may be useful to other researchers who will be able to apply it in their own research.

The conclusions presented by the authors regarding the relationship between the responsibilities of e-marketplaces in shaping fair e-commerce practices, are beneficial for science. The authors point out that there is still no conceptual approach to analyze the impact of e-marketplace liability on fair e-commerce trade practices.

There are still barriers to the existence of such an approach, especially between e-companies. Furthermore, new activities could be identified for science–business–public-policymakers to strengthen the implementation of Conceptual Framework of presented phenomenon to all actors.

Directions for future research: based on the Conceptual Framework, the analysis of the empirical research will be discussed.

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FINTECH CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN BANKING

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Abstract

The potential and impact of fintech on banks is becoming an increasingly important topic. Electronic banking, mobile phone payments and other innovative financial services have become an integral part of every person's life. FinTech is a new, fast-growing part of the financial services industry, so they have limited understanding of emerging phenomena (Anagnostopoulos, 2018). Fintech analyses are important not only for understanding financial innovation, but also for all aspects of finance in terms of consumer adaptation using fintech (Chen, 2016). Investments in FinTech are reaching record highs, so it is often said that FinTech institutions can change the banking system and reduce its popularity. Authors Jünger and Mietzner (2019) analysed in their article on the digitization of banking transactions that consumers tend to choose FinTech companies more than banks when it comes to transparency policies. In this context, the preferences and perceptions of the Mauritian population are analysed when it comes to adoption, awareness, current and future use of fintech services, which defines the scientific novelty of this topic. Consumer adoption attitudes of fintech services in Mauritius were analysed using an Extended Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). A questionnaire was designed and sent to the population of Mauritius where 176 responses were obtained. The data was analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and a multiple regression was used to test the hypotheses and find out if the independent variables (subjective norms, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, trust and perceived risk) have a positive influence on the dependent variable (attitude) of users in the adoption of fintech services. Next, subjective norms, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and trust were found to positively influence consumer attitudes when choosing fintech services, while perceived risk did not of positive influence on consumer attitudes when adopting fintech services, which provides more information to the literature on fintech services personalization using TAM. Limitations and recommendations are discussed below.

KEY WORDS: Fintech, Digitalization, Consumer, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Multiple Regression.

Introduction

The 21st century has been witnessing some drastic changes in the financial industry with advanced technology like Financial Technology which is commonly known as Fintech has become a fundamental component in finance in today's world (Acar et al., 2019). According to Martin et al. (2019) the change in consumer habits and needs, as well as the development of technology, are among the main reasons for the emergence of FinTech. Technologies and innovations have made the life of people easier and faster therefore the fintech industry has indeed been booming (Yazici, 2019). Therefore, the goal of innovation is not to create better finance, but to apply it in real life and make life easier for consumers (Kordoš et al., 2018). Scientists do agree that Fintech has had a huge impact on global traditional banks. With the introduction of fintech industry globally, countries like Luxembourg, UK and Hong Kong are actively involved in the fintech market (Chang et al., 2016). Certainly, different countries in the world have been touch by it and Mauritius is not left out and has been influenced by Fintech. Gedeon (2018) said that since Mauritius is recognised as a financial centre it's taking initiative to provide a platform for fintech products. 'Fintech and Innovation-Driven Financial Services Regulatory Committee' was established in 2018 for the expansion of Fintech in Mauritius (Sitompul, 2019). To promote fintech in Mauritius there were created the Mauritius African Financial Technology Center (MAFH). This hub was created to invite government, entrepreneurs, innovators and experts to work together and to create better and bigger financial products in Mauritius. Mauritius is indeed a country who can promote the fintech growth since Mauritius is a well-established country with internet facilities, appropriate tax rate and proper legal system (Jünger and Mietzner, 2020). In this context, the preferences and perceptions of the Mauritian population are analysed when it comes to adoption, awareness, current and future use of fintech services, which defines the scientific novelty of this topic. Rogers Capital, KPMG, Sanne group and Apex Fund Services are examples of companies who provide a variety of fintech products (Bhalla and Singh, 2014; Gies, 2018). The implementation of the National Payment Switch is a big step forward in promoting digitalization in Mauritius. In June 2020, the Financial Services Commission (FSC) said that Securities Token Trading Systems will be licenced (Singh et al. 2020).

Nicole Anderson stated that before Covid19, there was an injection of USD\$ 1.34 in 2018/2019 which was on top in the African Ecosystem (Hill, 2021; Fu and Mishra, 2020). Post the pandemic, Ian Dhillon deduced that fintech companies in Mauritius were the conquerors since traditional banks could not go with the flow quickly (Guild, 2017). He also said that banks are now partnering with fintech companies to focus on digital applications, online banking, stronger KYC, and effortless transactions.

Innovation in the fintech industry fuels society without cash. Banks like Mauritius Commercial Bank (MCB) has already an application called Juice which is

online banking transactions without any liquid cash (Khiaonarong and Goh, 2020). The other online transaction application is MyT money, but it is not a banking system. The introduction of these technologies and innovations have enhanced and the attitudes of consumers towards them (Vivek, 2019).

Literature review

According to Lagna and Ravishankar (2022) Fintech field is the buzz of today with the introduction of smartphones, laptops and other devices, it can be seen that technology has had a great impact in the life of everyone be it a child or an elder person. This was hiked by the non-banks and technology-driven start-ups, Dabholkar and Bagozzi (2002) discussed. Arner et al. (2015) described fintech as the union of technology and financial services. To simplify, fintech is the incorporation of technology into resources of financial services to provide better and more modern services to consumers. Fintech start-ups depend on modern technologies to keep up to the expectations of consumers. Yazici (2019) argued that financial technology is an attempt to pursue stockholders, venture capitalists, consumers and the whole state. Many countries look up to fintech services with the intention to attract foreign investors as well as foreign currencies for a better economic situation in their countries.

Fintech connects businesses who are technology-based to provide new and innovative services in the market. Sung et al. (2019) said that fintech products are likely to be transparent, easy and efficient for customers to be interested in them.

Hu et al. (2019) discussed how fintech firms raised up from $12.2 billion to $153.1 billion from 2010 to 2016. MC Kinnon and Shaw introduced 'financial deepening' in 1973, this has therefore led to an advance in technology (Tan et al. 2018). Dabholkar and Bagozzi (2002) argued that companies adopt technology as a motivation to provide many financial services to customers for efficiency enhancement. Fintech has an objective of marking bigger volumes of transactions with smaller number of transactions by offering innovative products and technology-driven start-ups. Arner et al. (2015) argued that the habits of consumers have drastically changed with the introduction of online banking.

Zion market research believed that the mobile banking market will have a value of £2660.87 billion by 2024 globally (Dzhuruk, 2020). Vivek (2019) talked about how investment in fintech became US$ 12 billion in 2014 worldwide. He talked about payments in innovation. Cornelli, et al. (2023) said that the need for finance for small and medium enterprise (SMES) has led to the fact of lending from fintech financing. Three fintech accelerators were introduced in Hong Kong and Singapore within a year.

Fintech has contributed a lot in different sectors and has become one of the most active growing markets in the world.

Types of Fintech

Peer to Peer Lending. Sitompul (2019) defined peer to peer lending (P2P) as firms who connect borrowers and lenders without the need of traditional banks. This system is growing rapidly in the industry where they act as online intermediaries. This is beneficial for companies that do not have high costs (Sitompul, 2019). This system is beneficial because borrowers benefit from low interest rates and lenders benefit from high returns. Suryono et al. (2021) deduced that the two best and most successful peer-to-peer lending companies are Lending Club and Prosper.

Peer to Peer Payment is a bill payment method that allows you to make transfers anytime, anywhere between your online bank accounts. For example, we can use a peer-to-peer payment to cover a $30 lunch bill (Guild, 2017). It allows users to fund transfers from their personal accounts to another account using online banking or, for example, using mobile apps such as Paypal.

Mobile Wallet. Amoroso and Magnier (2012) defined mobile wallet as a virtual wallet that contains personal payment cards data on a mobile phone. It is useful and convenient for anyone to make cashless payment. It allows you to pay digitally very safely and fastly. Apple Pay, Android Pay and Samsung Pay are examples of mobile wallets.

Blockchain. Blockchain is a type of database that collects data electronically about certain information stored on a computer. Blockchain is designed to record and share information that can be used later. This type of database is decentralized, transparent and seamless (Junger and Mietzner, 2020). Entries are linked and known as blocks in a single list called a chain (Kuisma et al., 2007). Blockchain is considered as one of the greatest achievements of fintech, which uses blockchain, the transactions are cheaper and faster compared to the traditional banking system (Alt and Puschmann, 2012).

Cryptocurrency. Meyliana et al. (2019) defines cryptocurrency as a digital or electronic money which can be used to make payments or transfers using computers. Cryptocurrency is used as an intermediary where a person's coin ownership records are kept in ledger form in a computer to record, secure, control and verify transactions of coin ownership (Lagna and Ravishankar, 2022; Nakashima, 2018). The main cryptocurrency is Bitcoin, which was invented in 2008 under the unidentified name of Satoshi Nakamota (Nakashima, 2018). This virtual currency is the first decentralized cryptocurrency that allows payment for trade and transactions. It is fast, cheaper and does not require any transaction fees.

Crowdfunding. Akinwale and Kyari (2020) defined crowdfunding as a way to finance a business or venture by assembling little sum of money from bigger number of people online. By using crowdfunding, US$ 34 billion was raised in 2015 globally (Romanova and Kudinska, 2016). Funding is easier and faster when using crowdfunding and the best examples are Kickstarter and Indiegogo (Romanova and Kudinska, 2016).

Models/Theories used to measure consumer's behaviour when using fintech:

Theory of Reasoned Action/ Theory of Planned Behaviour. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) derived that Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) was utilized to explain the behaviour of an individual with his

willpower, control, and consciousness but it could not explain the behaviour of an individual without his willpower and control. It is due to this failure of explanation that the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) was established by Icek Ajzen (2002) himself with lots of improvements. It is a forecast of a person's intention to behave in a certain way at a precise time and place. Also, TPB is expected to derive the behaviour of people over which people have the capacity to apply self-restraint (Sandhu and Arora, 2020). TPB falls into 6 forms that shows an individual's control over his behaviour:

• Attitudes

This is based on the approach of a person's behaviour. It can be both negative and positive.

• Behavioural Intention

This is simply where the better is the intention, the better will be the behaviour.

• Subjective Norms

This refers to whether peer or close people to the person believe that he or she needs to engage in such a behaviour. This influences the person's behaviour since he or she needs the consent and acceptance of other people.

• Social Norms

This represents the code of conducts that is certain formalities or policies deciding one's behaviour. Also, the behaviour is influenced by a larger group. Social norms are ontological and rational.

• Perceived Power

This includes factors which have control and power on the behaviour of people.

• Perceived Behavioural Control

This refers to people's perception of easy and difficult situations and actions. The way they behave depends greatly on circumstances.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was developed by Fred Davis and Richard Bagozzi (Davis, 1989). Hu et al. (2019) analysed that Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was planned to conceal the flaws of the TRA in 1986. TAM is used to examine the behavioural attitudes of individual to implement technology. TAM is a broadly used model since it is efficient in the technology adoption research. TAM shows the contrast in the consumer willingness to adopt technology (Nakashima, 2018). The behavioural attitudes are classified into perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use which are significant in the adoption of new technology. Here, they are significant to the adoption of fintech services by consumers in Mauritius. The attitudes are categorized in the following:

• Perceived Usefulness

In the context of TAM, perceived usefulness (PU) is defined as a factor which is applied in the adoption of information system and as a degree to which a customer will enhance efficiency by adopting new technology. Fred Davis (1989) derived that perceived usefulness is to derive to what extent the usage of a new technology will enhance and facilitate the life of an individual. In our thesis, perceived usefulness is used to study whether consumers in Mauritius opt for this service if they believe that fintech is beneficial over traditional banks. Lots of past studies showed a positive relationship between perceived usefulness and consumer's attitudes and

intentions in the context of the adoption of technology. Perceived usefulness is part of our hypothesis testing.

• Perceived Ease of Use

Perceived ease of use (PEU) is another main factor of TAM and is defined as the degree of effort and knowledge which is expected to be used by adopters of fintech (Davis, 1989). In this study, perceived ease of use is defined as the extent that consumers will want to use an effortless fintech service. Consumers adopt fintech by considering the ease of use of fintech which is considered as an important aspect. If fintech is easy to use and more convenient, any consumer will wish to adopt this technology showing a positive relationship between perceived ease of use and consumer's attitudes when adopting financial technology which is also part of the hypothesis testing.

• Attitudes

Attitude is a factor of TAM and TPB as well. Attitude (ATT) refers to the behaviour comprising of personal views, judgements and inclination towards something. (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1975). Norman and Conner (2006) derived that attitude is determined by both perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Attitudes are used to determine the intention of a consumer when adopting any technology. Regarding TAM, it is observed that positive attitude regarding new technology is an assumption of intention to adopt this technology (Tang et al. 2020). The more positive attitude of a consumer, the more likely is the intention of adopting fintech services. Attitudes is the dependent variable of our study.

• Trust

Trust (TRU) is another factor and component in TAM where trust is used to attract users to adopt fintech. Trust can be defined as the integrity, belief and ability towards someone or something (Zhang et al., 2018). Since fintech is new and modern, trust is the confidence which is important. Trust is significant that attracts the attitude of an individual when adopting new technology (Nakashima, 2018). The more trust there is, the more the consumer will tend to incline towards the adoption of fintech. Trust is used to analyse whether it has a positive impact on the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services in the hypothesis testing.

• Brand Image

Brand image (BI) is the good reputation of any product or service. A good brand image can attract users easily as it already has a goodwill which is desirable and of high standard. Sandhu and Arora (2020) said that a good brand image can build the trust of an individual. Brand image has a positive impact on the trust of consumers when adopting fintech.

• Perceived Risk

Perceived risk (PR) is a type of risk where there is a lacune of trust. Also, some studies found that perceived risk is an element which negatively affects the consumers from adopting technology that is fintech. In our study, we refer perceived risk as an economic and personal risk which the consumer perceives when adopting fintech services. Economic risk also known as financial risk is monetary crisis and fiscal detriment. Personal risk is private data about consumers which they do not want to disclose when adopting the financial technology. Paulet and Mavoori (2020) considered perceived risk as a main

component influencing the consumers adopting fintech. The riskier the technology, the poorer will be the attitudes of consumers when adopting this technology. PR is also used for the hypothesis testing.

• Government Support

Government support (GS) is an important factor when adopting fintech. Good government improves the credibility and reliability of good and services (Hu et al 2019). Vivek (2019) showed that government support positively influences the attitude of consumers when adopting fintech.

Hypotheses for proposed model:

H1: Subjective norm has a positive impact on the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services.

H2: Perceived usefulness has a positive impact on the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services.

H3: Perceived ease of use has a positive impact on the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services.

H4: Trust has a positive impact on the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services.

H5: Perceived risk has a positive impact on the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services.

The figure below shows the conceptual model of this thesis where the independent variables (Subjective norms, Perceived usefulness, Perceived ease of use, Trust and Perceived risk) are shown to have an impact on the dependent variable (Attitude).
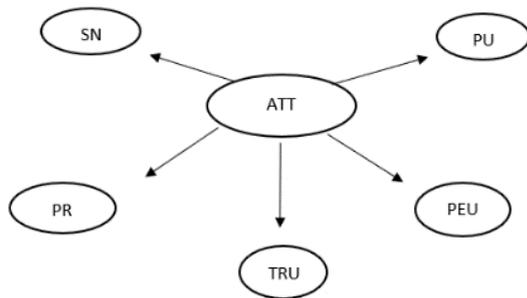

Fig. 1. Conceptual model

Methodology

Research methodology is the way to identify, process and analyse information and data about a particular subject. In our study, data have been identified and analysed on people's perception and attitudes when they adopt fintech. Research methodology serves as a purpose for decision making. Primary data have been used and online questionnaires have been sent to respondents. The sample size is 176 respondents of the Mauritian population. After the collection of data from the questionnaires, the data are run into a Statistical software. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) has been used. This helps in calculating the data and converting them in charts. In addition, a multiple regression analysis is done which is utilized to analyse the relationship and between the independent and dependent variables. The dependent variable is the attitudes when adopting fintech services and the

independent variables are the subjective norms, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, trust and perceived risk.

Research Objectives
• Mauritians' awareness of fintech and knowledge about how to use fintech.
• The factors affecting the adoption of fintech services.
• The impact of the factors on attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services.
• The future of fintech.

Research Questions
• Are consumers aware and know how to use fintech in Mauritius?
• Is TAM model relatable to Mauritians?
• What are the factors affecting the adoption of fintech in Mauritius?

Model Specification
A multiple regression analysis is utilized to analyse the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The dependent variable is the attitudes when adopting fintech services and the independent variables are the subjective norms, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, trust and perceived risk.

The regression equation is as follows:

$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \beta_3 x_3 + \beta_4 x_4 + \beta x_5 + \varepsilon$

Where:

Y is attitude (ATT) and is the dependent variable.

β_0 is a constant term.

x_1 = Subjective Norm (SN)

x_2 = Perceived Usefulness (PU)

x_3 = Perceived Ease of Use (PEU)

x_4 = Trust (TRU)

x_5 = Perceived Risk (PR)

ε is error term.

Data analysis and results

The Cronbach Alpha measures the reliability and consistency of a Likert scale of the questionnaire. Table 1 illustrates the reliability statistics of the factors affecting the adoption of fintech services. The Cronbach's Alpha is 0.889 which indicates that the questions or factors are 88.9% reliable. This shows that the data are reliable and can be used.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.889	10

Table 2. Demographics results

Table 2: Demographics results

variable	category	frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	60	34.1
	Female	116	65.9
Age	18-25	156	88.6
	26-35	10	5.7
	36-45	2	1.1
	46-60	7	4.0
	Above 60	1	0.6
Residence	Urban area	113	64.2
	Rural area	63	35.8
Educational level	Primary	1	0.6
	Secondary	42	23.9
	Undergraduate	120	68.2
	Postgraduate	13	7.4
Profession	Student	106	60.2
	Employed	60	34.1
	Self-employed	6	3.4
	Unemployed	4	2.3
	Not applicable	108	61.4
Income level	<15000	19	10.8
	15001-25000	32	18.2
	25001-40000	8	4.5
	> 40000	9	5.1
Bank account user	Yes	176	100
	No	0	0
User of which bank	SBM	99	33.1
	MCB	125	41.8
	Absa bank	10	3.3
	Maubank	61	20.4
	HSBC	4	1.3
Aware of fintech	Yes	140	79.5
	No	36	20.5
Usage of fintech	Yes	155	88.1
	No	21	11.9
Frequency of usage	Always	76	43.2
	Sometimes	79	44.9
	Never	21	11.9

Table 2 shows the demographics results where more females have responded to the questionnaires than males. Respondents aged between 18 till 25 years have the highest frequency. 113 out of 176 respondents lives in Urban area as compared to 63 respondents who live in Rural area. 68.18% are undergraduates and 60.23% are students. 108 respondents have zero income and only 9 respondents earn more than Rs40000. All the 176 respondents have a bank account. MCB has the highest frequency followed by SBM which are the two most dominant banks in Mauritius. 36 respondents did not know about fintech services before this survey and 155 use fintech services. 76 respondents always use fintech, 79 sometimes and 21 respondents do not use fintech at all out of the 176 respondents.

Multiple Regression

Multiple Linear Regression is used to analyse how independent variables have an impact on a dependent variable. In this study, we have as independent variables- Subjective Norms(SN), Perceived Usefulness(PU), Perceived Ease of Use(PEU), Trust(TRU) and Perceived Risk(PR) and as dependent variable we have the Attitudes(ATT) of consumers when adopting fintech services.

The following hypotheses were tested:

Hypothesis 1: Subjective norm

H0: Subjective norm does not have a positive impact on the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services.

H1: Subjective norm has a positive impact on the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services.

Hypothesis 2: Perceived Usefulness

H0: Perceived usefulness does not have a positive impact on the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services.

H1: Perceived usefulness has a positive impact on the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services.

Hypothesis 3: Perceived ease of use

H0: Perceived ease of use does not have a positive impact on the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services.

H1: Perceived ease of use has a positive impact on the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services.

Hypothesis 4: Trust

H0: Trust does not have a positive impact on the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services.

H1: Trust has a positive impact on the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services.

Hypothesis 5: Perceived Risk

H0: Perceived risk does not have a positive impact on the attitudes of consumers adopting fintech services.

H1: Perceived risk has a positive impact on the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services.

Table 3. Model Summary

Table 3 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.810a	.657	.647	.52844

a. Predictors: (Constant), PR, PEU, SN, TRU, PU

b. Dependent variable: ATT

Table 3 represents the model summary of the independent and dependent variables.

R is the multiple correlation coefficient which has a value of 0.810 which signifies a high level of correlation between variables. R Square is the coefficient of determination which is a more accurate measure of the strength of the relationship between the variables. R square has a value of 0.657, this shows that 65.7% is the percentage of variation in the dependent variable which is being explained by the independent variables. Since R square is relatively high, this shows a strong relationship between the variables. Adjusted R square is 0.647 which represents a good degree of prediction. Independent variables cause 64.7% of the variance in the dependent variable.

Table 4. ANOVA

Table 4 ANOVAª

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	90.778	5	18.156	65.017	.000b
	Residual	47.472	170	.279		
	Total	138.250	175			

a. Dependent Variable: ATT

b. Predictors: (Constant), PR, PEU, SN, TRU, PU

Table 4 shows the ANOVA Table where the F-ratio shows whether the model is a good fit for the data. The table shows the independent variables significantly predict the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services. The p-value of $F_{(5, 170)}$ is 0.000 which is less than 5% significance. This proves that the regression model is good fit and has significantly describes the variance in the attitudes of consumer when adopting fintech services.

Table 5. Coefficients

Table 5 Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.288	.278		1.035	.302
	SN	.130	.048	.178	2.743	.007
	PU	.287	.079	.252	3.650	.000
	PEU	.352	.072	.346	4.900	.000
	TRU	.175	.063	.190	2.759	.006
	PR	-.019	.044	-.020	-.434	.665

a. Dependent Variable: ATT

Unstandardized coefficients show how much the dependent variable varies with an independent variable when the other independent variables remain constant. A positive coefficient indicates a direct relationship between the dependent and independent variables whereas a negative coefficient indicates an inverse relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Subjective norm, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and trust have a positive coefficient which shows a direct relationship between them and attitudes. Perceived risk has a negative coefficient which shows an inverse relationship between it and the attitudes.

The constant 0.288 means that if the values of the independent variables are zero then the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services will be 0.288. When 1 unit of subjective norm will increase, there will be an increase in the unit of attitudes of consumers by 0.130. When 1 unit of perceived risk will increase, there will be a decrease in the attitudes of consumers by 0.19. Perceived ease of use has the greatest coefficient which indicates that a change in its unit will bring a greater change in the unit of attitudes of customers.

Beta coefficient shows the degree of change that the independent variable will have on the dependent variable. Beta of perceived ease of use has the greatest value of 0.346 which indicates that it will have the greatest impact on the attitudes of customers when adopting fintech services.

The significance value shows the significance of contribution that each independent variable has on the dependent variable. If the value is less than 5%, then we can conclude that there is more significance contribution between the independent and dependent variable. Subjective norms, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and trust have significance value less than 0.05 therefore, it can be said that they are more significant to the attitudes of consumers than perceived risk which has a value of 0.665 which is more than 0.05 indicating no significance of contribution towards the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services.

The multiple regression becomes as follows:

$$Y = 0.288 + 0.130x^1 + 0.287x^2 + 0.352x^3 + 0.175x^4 - 0.19x^5$$

Where Y= Attitude (ATT) of consumers that affect the adoption of fintech (dependent variable)

x^1 = Subjective Norm (SN)
x^2 = Perceived Usefulness (PU)
x^3 = Perceived Ease of Use (PEU)
x^4 = Trust (TRU)
x^5 = Perceived Risk (PR)

As we can see that subjective norm, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and trust have a positive impact on the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services. Perceived risk does not have a positive impact on the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services. Basically, the alternative hypothesis of hypothesis 1,2,3 and 4 are accepted and not rejected whereas the alternative hypothesis of hypothesis 5 is rejected and not accepted.

Conclusions

From the analysis, it is be deduced that the data of this study is highly reliable since the value of Cronbach Alpha is 0.889. Out of the 176 respondents, 156 are aged between 18 to 25 years which shows that more youngsters were interested in filling in the questionnaires and showed interest in the concept of fintech. All the respondents have a bank account and most of them use fintech services which shows how modern and updated they are with new technologies.

From the results of the multiple regression, it can be observed that there is a high correlation between the variables. The regression model is good fit. The independent variables, subjective norms, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and trust have a positive and direct relationship and impact with the dependent variable that is the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services. This matched with Davis (1986) who said that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are highly correlated and significant to the usage of fintech. Patel and Patel (2018) found that subjective norms have a positive impact on the adoption of fintech services. Faradynawati (2018) also derived that trust has a positive impact on the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services. Hu et al. (2019) also agreed that perceived usefulness and trust have a positive impact when adopting fintech. Norman and Conner (2006) found that trust, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use have a positive impact on the attitude of consumers when adopting fintech services. On the other hand, perceived risk has an inverse, indirect and negative relationship, and impact with the attitudes of consumers when adopting fintech services which is consistent to the findings of Dowling (1986) and Hu et al. (2019) who observed that with high level of perceived risk, it prevents the consumers from adopting new technology.

In a nutshell, Mauritius is a small island where its citizens need to adopt to new technologies to ease their lives. With the introduction of new facilities, traditional banks must also adopt them to stay active and updated. Taking this study in consideration, the impacts of fintech on traditional banks have been well discussed with its opportunities and threats. Traditional banks will continue to operate, not in the traditional way but with more modernisation and innovation with the help of fintech services. For years, banks have dominated the market but now they must collaborate with fintech innovations to survive in the future.

Limitations of the study

The number of respondents is 176 which is very less as compared to a population of over 1.2 million in Mauritius. The results generated from the 176 respondents cannot really be used to generalize the behaviour, attitudes and views of the entire population. Also, considering that almost the sample consisted of

only the youngsters, the views of the older generation could not be taken since the questionnaires were online. The questionnaires were shared online because of the Corona Virus which prevented the distribution of printed questionnaires. In addition, there are not many research available on fintech in Mauritian context therefore lots of data were provided referring to the research of other countries. Lastly, this study is based on the current situation in Mauritius where everything is uncertain because of the second wave of Corona Virus and there may be a third wave, or everything can get better in the future therefore the information gathered from this survey can vary and can change in the future.

Recommendations

The authors recommend further research and studies on fintech and the application of fintech to Mauritians, as this new concept is not well known among Mauritians. Workshops can be held to educate people, especially seniors, about fintech and its purpose. Similarly, Fintech could also be incorporated into current school and student curricula. Traditional banks have the opportunity to apply fintech to modernize their services. It is important to mention that fintech ensures that less or no paper is used, thus saving resources and efforts to create a greener and better environment. It is important to note that the research of future researchers can be used to assess the impact of fintech on a greener and more sustainable environment.

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TARGETS OF MUSIC INDUSTRY IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES: A SHORT REVIEW

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Abstract

The object of this paper is to set grounds for future research in music business by carrying out scientific literature review analysing music industry from global economy perspective. Since technologies are sensitive to time a time frame for the research was set from 2020 until 2022. Only articles in English and Lithuanian were analysed. In total there were 75 articles used for the basis of the research in "Web of Science" database. According to their content, these articles were categorized into 5 sections: ICT (information and communication technologies) and neural networks; New business ventures; Creativity and education; Intellectual property rights and blockchain technology; Digitization, streaming. Research of scientific articles was a result of a compound search of keywords music industry and technologies. In order to widen the search keywords were used with a logic operator "or". Scientific review of the articles showed that technologies affect the music business in these areas: lessened limitations, satisfied customer needs, digital economy force, overtaking old systems, collaboration, staying relative and creative, fighting against homogenization, digital education, increased safety and security, increased financial gain and market share, autonomous and transparent intellectual rights, eliminating piracy, content accessibility, artistic relevance. In order to carry out representative and valid research in music business, more research has to focus on the global aspects of how this industry operates. This article is a steppingstone in that direction showing which aspects of the business are discussed at the moment thus enabling other scientists to start narrowing the gap and provide more in-depth research. The findings suggest that research towards providing solutions to music industry participants on how to effectively deal with fast approaching technological advancements is necessary.
KEYWORDS: music business, music industry, technologies, technological advancement.

Introduction

Music industry is a complex notion the definition of which depends on researchers' comprehension on terms music and industry separately. To provide an in-depth view, this article analyses music industry from global economy perspective. There are 4 economy sectors which further subdivide into 1 678 industries where music industry is not listed as one. This is due to fact that music industry is an umbrella term that incorporates such industries as music publishing, digital music downloads, online music instrument sales, arts, entertainment, and recreation and many more (IBISWorld, 2022). The broad industry historically has undergone several crises which were brought upon by technological advancement. In 1999, internet-enabled audio downloads changed the way music is consumed, later, data streaming and new digital platforms as YouTube, Spotify hit record companies once again (Pallotta, 2020). To prepare for Industry 5.0 and to be able to face future technological challenges it is essential to understand how music industry participants are dealing with technological advancement and which areas are gaining momentum. Thus, the paper aims to identify current research being carried out in the music industry. For the purpose, a short literature review was chosen as a method.

The paper consists of the following sections: a context of the research, i.e., presentation of music industry and technological development concepts, methodology and materials, research results. Finally, findings of the scientific literature review are summarized, and further research perspectives are drawn.

Theoretical background

A term music industry is combined of two words which separately present distinct notions. Godt (2005) researched different approaches to defining music and suggests understanding music as a "humanly organized sound, organized with intent into a recognizable aesthetic entity as a musical communication directed from a maker to a known or unforeseen listener, publicly through the medium of a performer, or privately by a performer as listener" (Godt, 2005). Industry is perceived as "any grouping of individual manufacturing businesses which is relevant when we study the behaviour of any one such business" (Andrews et al., 1993). However, the definitions presented above have their limitations, and does not reveal the concept of the music industry because an industry's development can be analysed by time-frame sections (Xu et al., 2021) while it is not appropriate for the music industry. According to Xu and others (2021), industry covers five periods which the last one, so called Industry 5.0, complements the fourth industrial revolution. Music, on the other hand, can no longer be researched without addressing "complexion of our processes of production, consumption, and, importantly, discourse amidst new, global order of digital connectivity" (Clarke, 2018). Due to the fact that terms industry and music itself do not have a concise universal definition, providing a definition of music industry requires an understanding of industries in general.

First and foremost, economy is made of four sectors (Kenessey, 1987): primary (utilization of earth's

resources), secondary (transforming raw materials into products), tertiary (production) and quaternary (knowledge-based activities). Other authors distinguish a quinary sector (consists of high-level decision making) as well (Thakur, 2011). However, North American Industry Classification System presents 14 sectors (Statistics Canada, 2021). In the United States 30 sectors are distinguished, which are then further subdivided into 1 678 industries (IBISWorld, 2022). Even though classifications vary, none have a listing under the name "music industry". This can be explained by looking at the music industry as a collective unit made of different sections. Applying terms music, audio, instruments, production, events and performance additional 22 music industry subsections have been found.

Table 1. Sections of the music industry

Sections of the music industry	Subsections of the music industry
Section 1 Sales, distribution and production	Musical instrument and supplies stores, audio and video equipment distributors, musical instrument rental services, independent label music production, audio and video equipment manufacturing, major label music production, musical instrument repair services, sheet music publishers, audio and visual equipment rental, music publishing, online audio equipment sales, the retail market for musical instruments, audio production studios
Section 2 Digitalization	Music streaming services, digital music downloads, online event ticket sales, online music instrument sales
Section 3 Arts	Arts, entertainment and recreation, performers and creative artists, musical groups and artists
Section 4 Education and promotion	Private music classes, concert and event promotion

Source: the authors' compilation according to (IBISWorld, 2022).

Table 1 verifies that the term music industry incorporates other industries. However, the industries are more intertwined than Table 1 can show. For example, if we look at section 1 we see that online audio equipment sales are categorized in the same subsection as audio and video equipment distributors. Both of the subsections are associated with the section 1 – Sales, distribution and production. However, online audio equipment sales could be also classified as a subsection of category 2 - Digitization. If the equipment sold would be purchased by a music school, this could then also be put in section 4 education and promotion. Another example of close relationships between subsections and sections can be made with section's 3 subsection entry musical groups and artists. If the said entry was to perform in schools and

carry out educational programmes, they could become a part of section 4, if they choose to upload their connect to streaming platforms, they then can become a subsection of section 2 (IBISWorld, 2022). Thus, combining subsections, but not putting them into separate categories, i.e., following traditional parameters of categorization seems a more accurate way of researching the music industry.

To sum up, complex nature of defining music industry spreads amongst other art fields as well which verifies Clark's (2018) notion that production, consumption and technological environment are important factors when addressing, researching or working with arts. Furthermore, these intertwined relationships between subsections of the music industry support H. Tessler's research where he views the music industry as a transformational process not a consumerism model based on sales (Tessler, 2016) and explains J. Sterne's claim that music industry is a combination of industries "whose activities directly affect the performance, production, circulation, consumption, recirculation, appropriation, and enjoyment of music" (Sterne, 2014). Moreover, it is underlined that music education complexity differs from other subjects and the approach of it has to be broader due to such distinctive features as content, methods etc. (Pan, 2014). To explore the aspect of collaboration in music business "motivation for partnership, the respective industry infrastructure and state cultural policies" as well as countries' where the collaborators work at markets have to be researched separately and globally (Um, 2019). New intellectual property models based on blockchain technology provide the industry with solutions that require IT and engineering skills as well to be knowledgeable in legal matters (Kapsoulis et al., 2020; Khan & Shahaab, 2021), thus, case studies in music industry support the notion of complexity even more.

Music industry, which includes phonography, concerts and performances, and the publishing sector in 1999 experienced its first shock with internet-enabled audio downloads (Szymkowiak et al., 2020). The second wave of recessions hit record companies with such technological developments as data streaming or new digital platforms as YouTube (Pallotta, 2020). Currently, slowly reactive music industry is still recovering from technological innovations and experiencing new ones. It is estimated that in 2023, its revenue is expected to increase by 43% compared to 2014 (Götting, 2019).

Lithuania Depending on the average national wage and population Spotify's monthly subscription range from 0.87 USD to 23.14 USD (Vahid, 2022), whereas artist pay-out varies from $0.003 – $0.005 per stream on average (Carter, 2021). Musicians who have granted their song rights to Spotify receive 1$ for approximately 300-400 streams depending on where they live (Jacob, 2021). Moreover, if the artist does not have a wide audience, it is likely that their songs will not be offered or will be offered infrequently by the Spotify algorithm. Despite the fact that some well-known artists have removed their songs from Spotify, claiming that their policies are opaque, this has not reduced the revenue and power of the market leader, on the contrary, the consumer base has grown by 16% in recent years (MBW, 2022). Thus, there are more listeners, economically strong countries pay

more to have a Spotify subscription, however that doesn't affect artists' salaries.

The technological revolution of the 21st century, processes such as the development of information and communication technologies, production standardization, artificial intelligence, neural networks, digitization, cloud engineering, the interconnection of the physical and virtual worlds (L. Da Xu et al., 2018), is changing not only business or principles of production but also of the cultural sectors. For current and future artists to remain competitive in the face of the fourth and fifth industrial revolutions it is necessary to understand how it affects the art market. Beier distinguishes key often cited features of technological advancement and enumerates areas of effect (Beier et al., 2020): employees, communication, human-machine interaction, collaboration, automation, big data, decentralization, flexibility, interconnectedness, customization, efficiency, internet of things, cyber-physical systems, integration, autonomy, service-orientation, data management.

Summing up, the context in which music business exists is complicated and complex. The inability to define music business as a clear and representative notion makes music research at best problematic since a researcher has to be knowledgeable in 22 subsections of the industry (Table 1). However, presenting a literature review of music business areas clarifies how the business is viewed and researched as well as sets grounds for niche areas that are yet to be researched. out.

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Research of scientific publications was a result of a compound search of keywords music industry and technologies. To carry out the search, keywords "music industry", "music sector", and "music market" were used with a logic operator "or" and with "and" "technology or technologies". For the review, the global citation database "Web of Science" was chosen. This database is known for indexing cited articles thus creating not as an extensive as others but assessed and verified scientific research database.

Since technologies are sensitive to time and what was five years ago a novelty or a breakthrough, a time frame for the research was set from 2020 until 2022. Only articles in English and Lithuanian corresponding to the object and purpose of the study were analysed. In total 75 articles were selected for the research. The remaining articles were not analysed du to them focusing on a different subject, other than the music industry or being inaccessible in their full version.

Results

After being analysed, articles were categorized into 5 thematic sections: 1) Information and communication technologies (ICT), and neural networks; 2) New business ventures; 3) Creativity, and education; 4) Intellectual property rights, and blockchain technology; 5) Digitization, and streaming. The categories also were divided into 15 sub-categories (Table 2).

Table 2. Research directions of the music industry in the last two years.

No.	Thematic section	Sub-section	Research in subsection
1.	ICT (information and communication	Lessened limitations	Bossey, 2020; Hao, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2020; Weng & Chen, 2020; Roy et al., 2020; Yi et al.,

No.	Main category	Theme	References
	technologies) and neural networks	Satisfied customer needs	2022 Dimitrakopoulos & Panagiotopoulos, 2021; Fan, 2022; Tiple & Patwardhan, 2022
2.	New business ventures	Digital economy force	Psomadaki et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2021; Etzkowitz et al., 2021; O'Grady, 2021; Peng-Li et al., 2020; Hermawan & Abiyusuf, 2021; Tan et al., 2020; Yulianto & Hillebrandes Oroh, 2021; Rendell, 2021; de Beukelaer & Eisenberg, 2020; Wilson et al., 2020; Schlarb et al., 2021; Wang, 2021; Yang & Nazir, 2022; Hwang et al., 2020
		Overtaking old systems	Bossey, 2022; Poulios & Kamperou, 2022; Eriksson, 2020a; Khamis & Keogh, 2021; Kim & Oh, 2021; Siddiqui et al., 2021; Barboza et al., 2021
3.	Creativity and education	Collaboration	Fauchart et al., 2022; Wei, 2021.
		Staying relative and creative	GÜVEN, 2020; Woods, 2021; Li, 2020; Barneva et al., 2021
		Fighting against homogenization	Faure-Carvallo et al., 2022; Cao, 2021; Walzer, 2020) Sun, 2021; Yende, 2021; Havrilova et al., 2021; Li & Li, 2021; Cruz-Cárdenas et al., 2021
		Digital education	Budoiu Bălan & Bardazzi, 2022; Liu, 2022; Xue & Jia, 2022
4.	Intellectual property rights and blockchain technology	Increased safety and security	Chalmers et al., 2021; Gürfidan & Ersoy, 2021
		Increased financial gain and market share	Coccia, 2020; Lovett, 2020; Owen & O'Dair, 2020
		Autonomous and transparent intellectual rights	Esmaeilian et al., 2020; Kapsoulis et al., 2020; A. Kim & Kim, 2020; Lin & Lin, 2018; Lovett, 2020; Trequattrini et al., 2022; Watson & Leyshon, 2022
5.	Digitization, and streaming	Digital economy force	Li & Suping, 2022; Zanella et al., 2021; Stratton, 2021; Kim et al., 2021; Parc & Kim, 2020; Colbjørnsen, 2021; Szymkowiak et al., 2020
		Eliminating piracy	Barata & Coelho, 2021; Li et al., 2020
		Content accessibility	Li & Ren, 2020; Mulla, 2022
		Artistic relevance	de Waard et al., 2022; Duvall, 2022; Zhang & Negus, 2021

Source: the authors' compilation.

Next, the conclusions and insights of the analysed articles are presented in more detail. Articles in the first category *Information and communication technologies and neural networks* focus on researching how technologies *lessen* previous *limitations* and *satisfy customer needs* in the music industry. For example, the ability to identify music signals enables tuning musical on a level that previously did not exist (Hao, 2022), a trained artificial neural network is able identify "different types of musical instruments and has an accuracy rate of ~96.47%" (Roy et al., 2020). New technologies allow addressing new audiences by adapting to the way they are used to consume music (Nguyen et al., 2020). Moreover, whilst addressing deep learning, new technological advancement bridges the gap between music producers, allows new members to enter music creation market which consequently affects how many products can be offered to the listeners (Weng & Chen, 2020).

The second category, New business ventures, focuses on how technologies act as a driving digital_economical force and how they are overtaking old systems. Authors underline the importance of smartphones in musical entrepreneurship. Musicians now are able to be visible and form relationships with audiences (Psomadaki et al., 2022) as well as to measure their influences (Y. Liu et al., 2021), an emerging virtual reality world opens up new business ventures (Bossey, 2022). What was once controlled by a set group of businessmen who owed music labels, now is in hands of every musician who is able to employ the use of Spotify (Eriksson, 2020). Case studies show that "granular data provided by music

intelligence technologies, combined by machine learning prediction algorithms, can help the music industry's practitioners to make better decisions" (Kim & Oh, p. 8, 2021) It is important to note, that technologies now form specific algorithms which suggest what music a potential listener is supposed to listen to or which songs are to become hits (Yulianto & Hillebrandes Oroh, 2021). Even though audiences and music developers gain more power on their own, it is also shown that development requires all parties to participate, since listeners, developers, manufacturers etc., are a part of the same circle (Wilson et al., 2020). Furthermore, it is presented that music industry would have been destroyed by COVID-19 if not for the technological advancement (Wang, 2021), it enabled musicians and their audiences to control and prolong their relationships online.

The third set of articles in a section Creativity and education has researched how technologies enabled collaborations between humans and machines by creating new sounds that are spread to expansive digital audiences (Barboza et al., 2021; Li, 2020), new content by employing digital recording, production, and distribution technologies (Woods, 2021). Authors also note that computers are becoming more equipped in creating their own music, listeners are moving towards consuming products that are trendy and simple and that technological advancement homogenizes music (Faure-Carvallo et al., 2022). The music industry's pricing, retail models and the industry itself are undergoing dramatic changes (Li, 2020). Musicians experience difficulties securing a steady job (GÜVEN, 2020), some teachers are made redundant because technologies carry certain musical performance assessments that were previously made by teachers (Liu, 2022). Cao notes that the gap between digital technologies, computers, software programs and education is narrowing (Cao, 2021). Due to 5G, new media, digital audio workstations, new scoring systems education can now be accessed where it was previously inaccessible, music can be performed by machines and human input is likely to be less necessary (Wei, 2021; Xue & Jia, 2022; Yi et al., 2022).

Another area of music business affected by technological advancement is intellectual property rights and blockchain technology. Scientists propose employing blockchain technologies in new music wallet models that eliminate third parties, which makes it more secure and cheaper for musicians to control their rights (Coccia, 2020; Gürfidan & Ersoy, 2021). Smart contracts and cryptocurrencies are removing intermediaries from a previously stagnant music industry supply chain (Chalmers et al., 2021). Blockchain technologies are shown to have potential for recognizing music ownership (Lovett, 2020) and enabling musicians to earn revenue from their production in an autonomous and timely manner (Owen & O'Dair, 2020; Trequattrini et al., 2022).

The final set of articles focused on *Digitization and streaming*. The combination of the two enables 5G, big data, artificial intelligence, cloud computing and the Internet of Things to continue increasing the amount of digital content which drives digital economy (Li & Suping, 2022). Several authors note that piracy levels have significantly dropped down due to affordable music steaming services (Barata & Coelho, 2021; Mulla, 2022).

Content sharing has never been employed as much but such platforms as YouTube make it easy and legal, moreover content quality is no longer required to be of a high standard (Stratton, 2021; Q. Zhang & Negus, 2021). Due to high demand streaming services are evolving, changing and unstable, since new members enter the market constantly (Colbjørnsen, 2021; Szymkowiak et al., 2020).

Five categories presented above show that music business researchers tend to find positive outcomes of technological advancement. There is a considerable amount of prospects for industry participants to extend their business without having to share profits with third parties since music production and distribution can be done without hiring specialists or belonging to labels, however audience reception, requirements for digital world's technical skill, trends in consumerism and increase in music supply have to be taken into consideration.

Discussion and conclusions

The research showed that even though the majority of scientific literature focuses on how technology advances music business, very few researchers point out how to deal with the negative effects. Whereas A. de Waard focuses on providing solutions (de Waard et al., 2022), X. Liu demonstrates how efficient new piano player evaluation system is, and how effectively it could sort the shortage of music teachers in the market, nothing is said about the consequences exchanging human skill with technology (Liu, 2022). Researchers note that lack of technological skill or fast-moving adaptation of new technologies is an issue (Bossey, 2022; Psomadaki et al., 2022; Watson & Leyshon, 2022; Zanella et al., 2021) do not proposehow to approach it.

Positive trends, increased security and revenue brought by technology in regard to intellectual property are enumerated and supported (Chalmers et al., 2021; Esmaeilian et al., 2019), yet competencies and skills required to be had by an artist who seeks to use these positive effects of technology are not discussed or reviewed. Moreover, no research is done on how artists who aren't skilled in internet technologies nowadays adapt to them.

There is a need for scientific approach to finding solutions how to address technological advancement and lack of technological knowledge for those who are in the music business. It could be a promising direction for further research which has practical use.

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ASSESSMENT OF COMPETENCES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA

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Abstract

The Government of the Republic of Lithuania is a state governance body that changes every four years. Good state governance is also essential for politicians to gain the trust of the citizens living in the country. The importance of state governance is critical because it depends on the well-functioning functions of government. Since the beginning of the restoration of independence, seventeen governments have completed their terms, and the eighteenth government is currently in power. The paper analyses the composition of the last ten governments in Lithuania (1999-2022) and the appointment of individuals to ministerial positions, categorising them as either politicians or specialists in their respective fields. Out of the ten governments analysed, it was discovered that eight consisted of politicians serving as ministers, while the other two had specialised ministers. The 17th government of Saulius Skvernelis had the highest number of specialist ministers. The majority of ministers in the 9th to 15th governments had backgrounds in law or economics. Political ministers are the dominant type in Lithuania and can be considered more stable and successful. These ministers are capable of withstanding political pressure, engaging with the public, and handling a variety of diplomatic situations. Specialist ministers, on the other hand, excel in their specific fields but are better suited for lower levels of government to support political ministers. These ministers tend to be less stable, experiencing more frequent changes during their tenure. Professional specialists face challenges in political work, as effectively identifying societal and workplace issues becomes more difficult due to factors such as communication, public interaction, reform drafting, and decision-making. The 15th government led by Andrius Kubilius was the most successful in terms of stability and duration in office.
KEY WORDS: Government of the Republic of Lithuania, specialist ministers, politicians ministers, state governance.

Introduction

The government, as part of the executive branch, is responsible for administering the country. Good state governance is vital, as it directly impacts the government's performance. Ensuring national security, targeted budget implementation, and lawmaking are crucial steps towards achieving good governance, and a strong group of ministers is essential. K. Thomas B. Swanton and Alex Blaszcynski (2019) argue that government actions, particularly in law enforcement and technology, can lead to modernization and significant changes in various sectors. However, relying solely on a robust cabinet may not always guarantee the proper functioning of the government. The success of the executive branch in governing a country can be influenced by the types and models of government, as well as the political culture and traditions.

A democratic government plays a crucial role in the state governance of a state and the practice of democracy. The Prime Minister holds significant importance within the government, often occupying the highest position in the country's governance, as seen in Germany (Dostal M., 2017). In many cases, the Prime Minister assumes the responsibilities of a head of state, particularly evident in the United Kingdom (Dowding K., 2013). The governments of Canada, New Zealand, and Malta also highlight the significance of the Prime Minister (Jalalzai F., 2011). However, different regions of the world operate with distinct models and types of government. France, for instance, has a relatively weak government in terms of power balance, where the President nominates the Prime Minister according to the French Constitution (French Constitution TITTLE II, TITTLE III). Nonetheless, in democratic systems, the government plays a vital role in governing the state and providing guidance for its operations. Governments exhibit various patterns and structures. There are different models such as coalition governments, majority governments, minority governments, as well as governments composed of professionals or politicians, as explained by A. Krupavičius and A. Lukošius (2004). They also have different compositions, which are apparent in each of the models. This shows just how complex the state governance is. It is important to note that the success of a government in power does not solely rely on the model or composition, but also on the political culture of the country. A democratic government is a component of the executive branch, consisting of ministers and a head of government, namely the Prime Minister. The government often possesses significant authority within the state's governing apparatus, operating within its own structures and models. In some democracies, the Prime Minister is at the heart of government. Challenging periods, such as unexpected pandemics or global economic crises, serve as indicators of a government's competence. It is worth mentioning that each government in Lithuania had a unique composition and functioned under different circumstances. Differences also arise in the approach to the qualifications and competencies of ministers. Throughout the country's independence, governments have been evaluated based on professionalism versus policy (Krupavičius, Lukošaitis, 2004).

The activities of the government are defined in the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, the government is responsible for national affairs, safeguarding the integrity and security of the territory; it executes laws, parliamentary resolutions, and presidential decrees, while coordinating the activities of ministries and other government bodies; preparing and enacting the state budget, developing draft laws for parliamentary consideration, establishing diplomatic relations with other nations, and fulfilling other responsibilities outlined by the Constitution and other laws and orders established by the Government (Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, Article 94).

The Government of the Republic of Lithuania serves as the governing body of the country, with a change in leadership occurring every four years. Since the restoration of independence, a total of 17 governments have completed their terms in Lithuania, with the 18th government assuming office in 2020. It is worth noting that there have been different types of governments, with the 17th Government of the Republic of Lithuania being composed solely of professional ministers in their respective fields (Programme of the 17th Government, 2016). However, governments led by politicians often include professionals in lower-level positions to assist with the government's operations (Alexander D. Lewis M. Considine M., 2010). This is an under-researched topic, which is why it is so important to analyse it. Given the limited research on this topic, it is crucial to analyse and understand the characteristics of these two types of governments, determine their prevalence in the government of the Republic of Lithuania, and assess their effectiveness.

This study aims to examine the composition of the governments of the Republic of Lithuania between 1999 and 2022 in terms of ministerial specialists and/or ministerial politicians.

The focus of the study is the composition of ministers in the government of the Republic of Lithuania based on their competencies, distinguishing between specialist ministers and political ministers.

Objectives of the research:

1. The study emphasises the importance of managerial and professional skills for ministers within governments from a theoretical perspective.

2. It seeks to analyse the differences and duration of work between ministerial politicians and ministerial specialists in the Lithuanian government.

3. Additionally, the study aims to assess the composition of the most successful government in terms of specialist ministers and ministerial politicians.

The research methodology involves a systematic analysis of scientific literature, comparative analysis of documents, and summarisation. The research carried out can be defined as applied.

The analysis focuses on ten different governments of the Republic of Lithuania from 1999 to 2022, starting with the ninth government led by Rolandas Paksas and including the current eighteenth government. In total, ten different governments of the Republic of Lithuania are analysed. The comparative analysis utilises government composition data from the official website of the

Government of the Republic of Lithuania, as well as legislation based on specific government programmes. These documents serve as valuable resources for identifying government formation characteristics.

Theoretical background

While examining the ministers and their abilities in the Lithuanian government, it is important to also analyze the concept of democratic governance itself. J. M. Dostal (2017) studied the authorities of the German Federal Chancellor, the process of election, specifically focusing on A. Merkel. F. Jalalaza (2011) delved deeper into the significance of women as figures in positions of state power. Additionally, different models of state governance that exhibit an increase or decrease in government or presidential power are identified. These models have influenced the approach of the German Federal Chancellor towards the role of the state. J. Dowding (2013) analysed the behaviour and competences of the British Prime Minister. E. O'Malley (2007) discussed the powers of prime ministers and argued that the prime minister holds the most political influence in Canada. The author developed an index to measure the power of the selected Prime Ministers in their respective countries. In his publication, Pennings (2000) acknowledged the impact of parliament on the executive's work. A. Krupavičius and A. Lukošaitis (2004) studied government models and analysed the importance of majority governments. A. Jungar (2002) referred to the formation of a coalition government in his analysis. The author also described the methods employed to establish a majority government. Hazel and Paun (2009) analysed the characteristics of the minority government model, which was also examined by L. B. Stehpenson, L. B. Aldrich and A. Blais (2013). The formation of professional governments was studied by K. Rasmussen (2014) and V. Radcliffe (2012), who emphasised the significance of professionals within the political structure. D. Alexander, J. M. Lewis, and M. Considine (2010) discussed the interaction between professionals and politicians in the context of politicians' governance. The introduction of innovation in policymaking by non-experts in the field was addressed by V. Radcliffe (2012).

Kohn (2014) outlined the government's role not only in budgeting but also in ensuring equal rights for individuals. The topic of decentralisation was mentioned in the work of D. Allain-Dupre (2018), who described it as a popular concept and referred to it as a silent revolution. L. Paškevičienė (2022) focused on the government and legislation, specifically discussing the challenges faced by the Lithuanian government during a pandemic and the difficulties of working within the legislative framework. The modernisation of government and the importance of e-government were highlighted by C.M. Shea and G.D. Garson (2019). These authors analysed the increasing prevalence of state governance and the shift towards e-government. Estonian voting ID cards have also been discussed in relation to this topic (Official website of Estonian e-ID). In particular, K. Vassil, M. Slovak, P. Vinkel, A. H. Trechsel and M. Alvarez (2016) have provided insights on the topic of

Estonian e-elections. The analysis of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania has focused on examining the competences of the government across various scientific and regulatory aspects of its functioning. H. Šinkūnas (2003) has contributed to a better understanding of the principle of the separation of powers.

The evaluation of the competences and qualifications of the governments of the Republic of Lithuania was based on the research conducted by A. Krupavičius and A. Lukošius (2004) regarding majority governments. T. Birmontienė, E. Jarašiūnas, E. Kūris, and other authors (2012) discuss specific competences of the government, including regulatory aspects. For detailed insights into government formation, refer to the works of T. Bergman, G. Ilonszki, and W. C. Muller (2019). The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania serves as a basis for examining specific legislation that regulates the competences of the government. This includes the Law on the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, the Rules of Procedure of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, and government programmes. These laws outline the specific competences of the government and its members. The authors J. Martinkienė, M. Vaikšnoras (2019) point out the importance of empowering leaders, empowerment is a process started by a leader that starts with understanding the goals, leads to certain activities and ends with the successful execution of the results within the organisation. Employee empowerment should be an ongoing process within an organization, influenced by the leader's role in management and the resources, information, training, and autonomy provided to employees. The main responsibilities of the government include law enforcement, coordination of government agencies and companies, and budget provision. Kohn (2014) highlights that while the government manages the budget through taxes and social services, its role extends beyond that to ensuring equal human rights. Decentralization, as analyzed by D. Alain-Dupre (2018), reflects the devolution of government powers to lower administrative units. During emergencies like pandemics, the competences and skills of government members become particularly crucial (Paškevičienė, 2022). State management during a crisis demonstrates their ability to navigate through challenges when existing laws may not adequately address emerging issues, requiring compliance with various regulations. Modernizing the entire government apparatus and expanding e-government have become important competences in the present era. The increasing digitization of activities necessitates the modernization of state governance. However, the primary role of the government in Lithuania is to implement decisions made by the legislators. (Birmontienė T. Jarašiūnas E. Kūris E.

et al. 2009, 752 p.). The competences of the government highlight its position in the governance structure, which is why various regulations define the specific responsibilities of this institution. The competences of the government are primarily defined by four key regulations: the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, the Law on the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, the Rules of Procedure of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, and government programmes. These documents provide an overview of the competences and objectives of both current and previous governments. Different situations can emphasize the advantages of possessing certain competences, particularly the ability to function effectively in various circumstances.

It is important to analyze specific government cabinets and categorize them as either composed of professionals or politicians. The professional government model consists of a government composed of professionals in their respective fields. K. Rasmussen (2014) argues that certain government positions, such as deputy ministers, are often occupied by career civil servants who remain politically neutral. This allows for the formation of a government comprising specialists in their fields, such as a former medical doctor serving as the Minister of Health. Vigi V. Radcliffe (2012) suggests that professionals in their fields engaging in politics can have both advantages and disadvantages. The author highlights that political detachment can be beneficial in making unbiased decisions. This can also be observed in government formation, where individuals from outside politics contribute to the advancement of their profession and its modernization. The politician-government model is characterized by ministerial cabinets filled by politicians who may have little connection to their respective backgrounds or fields of work. However, the interaction between politicians and practitioners at lower institutional levels holds particular importance (Alexander D., Lewis JM. Considine M. 2010). V. Radcliffe (2012) argues that while specialists in a field may not always bring innovation to their domain, individuals who have no direct connection to a specific job may bring fresh perspectives and innovation. This viewpoint suggests that practitioners within a field tend to focus more on the problems they encounter, whereas politicians can introduce innovative approaches.

Assessing the effectiveness of these government models is challenging, as different countries employ various models, and the success of a particular model may vary from one country to another. Nevertheless, the fundamental characteristics of each model are summarized in the table below (see Table 1).

Table 1. Key aspects of government models

Name of government model	Main characteristics
Coalition government	The government is formed by a coalition of multiple parties. It can also involve a rainbow government comprising parties with diverse ideologies or perspectives.
Majority	The government consists primarily of representatives from a single political party who hold complete

Andrius Kubilius served as Prime Minister from November 1999 until the next Seimas elections in October 2000. After the change in Prime Minister, the 10th government, also known as the Andrius Kubilius government, assumed office. It is worth noting that both the 9th and 10th governments were formed by the same party, the Patriotic Union, which held a majority in the Seimas at the time. (Matontytė I., Voblevičius V. 2014).

Additionally, it is important to highlight that the Ministry of Governance Reforms and Municipal Affairs no longer exists. The government led by Andrius Kubilius could be considered a minority or marginal government. This government remained in power for almost eleven months, from November 11, 1999, to October 8, 2000. The composition of the 10th Andrius Kubilius government is presented below (see Table 3).

Table 3. Composition of the 10th government

First name, Last name	Ministry	EDUCATION
Andrius Kubilius (P)	Prime Minister	Physicist
Raimundas Alekna	Minister of Health	Psychiatrist
Gintaras Balčiūnas	Minister of Justice	Lawyer
Arūnas Bėkšta (P)	Minister of Culture	Physicist
Česlovas Blažys (P)	Minister of the Interior	Lawyer
Irena Degutienė (P)	Minister of Social Security and Labour	Doctor
Rimantas Didžiokas (P)	Minister of Transport and Communications	Food Industry and Machinery Engineer
Vytautas Dudėnas	Minister of Finance	Humanities, Finance
Danius Lygis	Minister of the Environment	Physicist, Biologist, Ecologist
Edvardas Makelis	Minister of Agriculture	Agronomist
Valentinas Milaknis (P)	Minister of Economy	Radio Engineer
Kornelijus Platelis (P)	Minister of Education and Science	Engineer
Algirdas Saudargas (P)	Minister of Foreign Affairs	Biophysicist
Česlovas Vytautas Stankevičius (P)	Minister of National Defence	Construction Technician

*P indicates a mismatch between education and the relevant ministry.

Source: Website of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, I. Matontytė, V. Voblevičius (2014).

The second government of Rolandas Paksas, the 11th government of the Republic of Lithuania, was the first to have specialist ministers. After the Seimas elections, Rolandas Paksas became Prime Minister for the second time, representing the Liberal Union. His government, formed with the New Union (Social Liberals), lasted seven months before collapsing due to disagreements within the coalition. This government was formed in collaboration with the newly established Liberal Union Party. The 11th government, which consisted of specialist ministers, experienced significant instability. Within a short period, the government had to replace ministers in three ministries. One example was the replacement of the Minister of Transport, who was a specialist, with a politician. Despite these attempts, the failed coalition government was unable to become the first government composed solely of specialist ministers

in Lithuania. It is important to note that there was no official announcement indicating that this government was formed with a specific focus on appointing professionals in their respective fields as ministers. Although many ministers did not directly align their ministry with their area of expertise, it should be acknowledged that most ministers had educational or professional backgrounds relevant to their respective ministries. According to Andrius Navickas (2017), the essence of this party was to support Rolandas Paksas' candidacy for the Head of State election. However, the 11th government, another unsuccessful tenure of Rolandas Paksas, lasted for nearly eight months before the coalition dissolved due to internal disagreements. eight months before the coalition dissolved due to internal disagreements.

Table 4. 11-osios vyriausybės sudėtis

First name, Last name	Ministry	EDUCATION
Rolandas Paksas (P)	Prime Minister	Pilot
1. Vinsas Janušonis 2. Konstantinas Romualdas Dobrovolskis	Minister of Health	1. Doctor 2. Doctor
Gintautas Bartkus	Minister of Justice	Lawyer

Gintautas Kėvišas	Minister of Culture	Pianist
Vytautas Markevičius (P)	Minister the Interior	Lawyer
Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (P)	Minister of Social Security and Labour	Lawyer
1. Gintaras Striaukas 2. Dailis Alfonsas Barakauskas (P)	Minister of Transport and Communications	1. Road Engineer 2. Engineer, economist
Jonas Rudalevičius (P)	Minister of Governance Reform and Local Government	Economist
Jonas Lionginas	Minister of Finance	Economist
Danius Lygis	Minister of the Environment	Physicist, Biologist, Ecologist
Henrikas Žukauskas (P)	Minister of Agriculture	Architect, Engineer
1. Eugenijus Maldeikis (P) 2. Eugenijus Gentvilas (P)	Minister of Economy	1. Economist, Doctor of Social Sciences 2. Geographer
Algirdas Monkevičius	Minister of Education and Science	Physicist, Mathematician
Antanas Valionis	Minister of Foreign Affairs	Mechanical Engineer, PhD in Social and Political Sciences
Linas Linkevičius (P)	Minister of National Defence	Electrical Engineer

*P indicates a mismatch between education and the relevant ministry.

Source: Website of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, I. Matontytė, V. Voblevičius (2014).

Another government that exhibited characteristics of ministerial politicians was the 12th government, the first government of Algirdas Mykolas Brazauskas. This government remained in power throughout the parliamentary term, replacing four ministers. The trend that emerges is that three ministers, who were initially appointed as specialists, had to be replaced by other ministers, while only one of the thirteen ministries led by a politician was substituted by another individual. The government led by Algirdas Mykolas Brazauskas remained relatively stable, experiencing no significant changes in its composition. The 12th Cabinet is characterized by a considerable presence of lawyers and economists among its ministers. After the end of their term, a new government was formed, known as the 13th government of the Republic of Lithuania, also led by Algirdas Mykolas Brazauskas. This government was formed through a coalition agreement, initially displaying stability (Lukošaitis, 2008). However, it eventually faced failure and was unable to maintain its composition throughout its term. Scandalous ministerial appointments made by one of the coalition parties, coupled with allegations of political corruption, led to conflicts within the coalition. Consequently, a vote of no-confidence in the government was initiated by the then Head of State, V. Adamkus (Lukošaitis, 2008). As a result, Prime Minister Algirdas Mykolas Brazauskas and the entire government resigned.

Following the resignation of the 13th government of the Republic of Lithuania, the 14th government, led by Gediminas Kirkilas, assumed office.

Table 5. Composition of the 14th government

First name, Last name	Ministry	EDUCATION
Gediminas Kirkilas	Prime Minister	Lithuanian Language, Literature, Political Science
1. Rimvydas Turčinskas 2. Gediminas Černiauskas (P)	Minister of Health	1. Doctor 2. Economist
Petras Baguška	Minister of Justice	Lawyer
Jonas Jučas	Minister of Culture	Choir Conductor
1. Raimondas Šukys (P) 2. Regimantas Čiupaila (P)	Minister of the Interior	1. Lawyer 2. Mathematician, Engineer
Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (P)	Minister of Social Security and Labour	Lawyer
Algirdas Butkevičius (P)	Minister of Transport and Communications	Engineer Economist
1. Zigmantas Balčytis 2. Rimantas Šadžius (P)	Minister of Finance	1. Economist 2. Chemist
1. Arūnas Kundrotas (P)	Minister of the Environment	1. Economist

2. Artūras Paulauskas (P)		2. Lawyer
Kazimira Danutė Prunskienė (P)	Minister of Agriculture	Economist
Vytas Navickas (P)	Minister of Economy	Mathematician
1. Roma Žakaitienė (P) 2. Algirdas Monkevičius	Minister of Education and Science	1. Lawyer 2. Physicist, Mathematician, Teacher
Petras Vaitiekūnas (P)	Minister of Foreign Affairs	Physicist
Juozas Olekas (P)	Minister of National Defence	Microsurgeon

*P indicates a mismatch between education and the relevant ministry.

Source: Website of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania.

The government of the 14th Republic of Lithuania can be classified as a ministerial politician government. It is worth noting that the addition of a new party to the coalition, which was granted certain ministries, contributed to the government's instability. In political governments, there tends to be a prevalence of lawyers and economists as ministers. While previous governments predominantly appointed doctors as heads of the Ministry of Health, in Gediminas Kirkilas' government, R. Čiupaila became the first minister in that field without specialized expertise.

Andrius Kubilius, after three terms as a Social Democrat, forms his second government, known as the 15th government of the Republic of Lithuania. Under this government, a new Ministry of Energy is established. Similar to the 14th government, the 15th government is of the ministerial politician type, with the majority of ministers not experts in their respective fields. There is also an emerging trend towards economists as ministers and lawyers. Notably, this government holds the distinction of being the first in the Republic of Lithuania to serve a full term in office (Barcevičius, Nakrošius, 2015). However, E. Barcevičius and V. Nakrošius (2015) criticize the limited scope of reforms carried out by this government, deeming its progressiveness insufficiently advanced due to the narrow scope of reforms. This government is made up of ministerial politicians. The 15th government shares

similarities in composition with the previous 14th government, demonstrating a notable dominance of politicians.

Following the 2012 elections, the 16th government of the Republic of Lithuania, led by Algirdas Butkevičius, assumes power. The majority in the Seimas was formed through a coalition of four parties. This government, like its predecessors, serves a full term in office. However, due to changes in the coalition, numerous ministerial changes occur during the government's tenure. During Algirdas Butkevičius' government, there as a tendency to replace specialist ministers with political ministers while they are in office. This pattern was particularly noticeable in the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of the Interior. On the other hand, ministries with ministerial policies tend to have more stability. Throughout their term, a total of 11 ministers were substituted. As a result, it can be considered one of the least stable governments with ministerial policies.

The first government to claim itself as a professional government was established under SauliusSkvernelis. Both the 17th government and the chairman of the ruling majority party, R. Karbauskis, have publicly announced that they have formed a government consisting of professional ministers who are specialists in their respective fields (Budriūnaitė, 2016).

Table 6. Composition of the 17th government

First name, Last name	Ministry	EDUCATION
Saulius Skvernelis (P)	Prime Minister	Lawyer
Aurelijus Veryga	Minister of Health	Psychiatrist
1. Milda Vainiutė 2. Elvinas Jankevičius (P)	Minister of Justice	1. Lawyer 2. Economist
1. Liana Ruokytė-Jonsson 2. Mindaugas Kvietkauskas	Minister of Culture	1. Event Planner 2. Doctor of Humanities
1. Eimutis Misiūnas 2. Rita Tamašunienė (P)	Minister of the Interior	1. Lawyer 2. Teacher
Linas Kukuraitis	Minister for Social Security and Labour	Bachelor of Social Work
1. Rokas Masiulis(P) 2. Jaroslav Narkevič	Minister of Transport and Communications	1. Economist 2. Master of Public Administration
Vilius Šapoka	Minister of Finance	Economist
1. Kęstutis Navickas (P) 2. Kęstutis Mažeika	Minister for the Environment	1. Historian, MA in Sustainable Development Management and Administration 2. Doctor of Agriculture

1. Bronius Markauskas 2. Giedrius Surplys (P) 3. Andrius Palionis (P)	Minister of Agriculture	1. Engineer 2. Master of International Studies 3. Financier
1. Mindaugas Sinkevičius 2. Virginijus Sinkevičius 3. Rimantas Sinkevičius (P)	Minister for Economy/Economy and Innovation	1. Lawyer, Master's Degree in Marketing and Management 2. BA in Economics and International Relations, MA in European Politics 3. Chemical Engineer, Inorganic Materials and Fertilisers
1. Jurgita Petrauskienė 2. Algirdas Monkevičius	Minister of Education and Science	1. Teacher 2. Physicist, Mathematician
Linas Antanas Linkevičius (P)	Minister of Foreign Affairs	Electrical Engineer
Raimundas Karoblis (P)	Minister of National Defence	Lawyer
Žygimantas Vaičiūnas (P)	Energy	Political Scientist

*P indicates a mismatch between education and the relevant ministry.

Source: Website of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, I. Matontytė, V. Voblevičius (2014).

When examining the composition of Saulius Skvernelis' 17th government, it becomes evident that the entire makeup of the government aligns with the characteristics of a professional government. Notably, many ministries have been replacing professionals in their respective fields with politicians. This has resulted in a significant number of changes within the government, primarily due to poorly executed reforms by professional ministers. One particular reform, the salary scale adjustment for educational staff, has led the government to a crisis point. Jurgita Petrauskienė, the then Minister of Education, received unfavourable reviews from teachers themselves on the occasion of the Language Teachers' Day. Even a third of the way through the school year, some schools are uncertain about how to remunerate teachers, and teachers are lacking proper contracts. To address the issues, the Minister of Education and Science personally visits schools, but she is met with whistles from teachers during a festive concert (Miliūtė, 2018). In response to the failed reform and the communication breakdown, Head of Government Saulius Skvernelis dismissed the Minister. The lack of effective communication and ill-prepared reforms further contributed to changes in the government's composition. One can argue that the government of the Republic of Lithuania is highly unstable and frequently replaces field-specific ministers with politicians. During its term, more than half of the 17th government had to be replaced.

Moving on to the examination of the last government of politicians, the 18th government of the Republic of Lithuania, led by Ingrid Šimonytė.

Table 7. Composition of the 18th government

First name, Last name	Ministry	EDUCATION
Ingrida Šimonytė	Prime Minister	Economist, Political Scientist
Arūnas Dulkys (P)	Minister of Health	Finance and Credit Specialist
Evelina Dobrovolska	Minister of Justice	Lawyer
Simonas Kairys (P)	Minister of Culture	Political Scientist
Agnė Bilotaitė (P)	Minister of the Interior	Public Administration
Monika Navickienė	Minister of Social Security and Labour	Philosopher, Master in Tax Administration
Marius Skuodis (P)	Minister of Transport and Communications	Political Scientist, Master's Degree in Public Economic Policy and Administration
Gintarė Skaistė	Minister of Finance	Economist
Simonas Gentvilas (P)	Minister of the Environment	Sociologist
Kęstutis Navickas (P)	Minister of Agriculture	Historian, MA in Sustainable Development Management and Administration
Aušrinė Armonaitė (P)	Minister of Economy and Innovation	Political Scientist
Jurgita Šiugždinienė (P)	Minister of Education and Science	Doctor of Social Sciences
Gabrielius Landsbergis	Minister of Foreign Affairs	Master of International Relations
Arvydas Anušauskas	Minister of National Defence	Historian, Military Officer
Dainius Kreivys (P)	Minister of Energy	Economist

*P indicates a mismatch between education and the relevant ministry.

Source: Website of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania.

The current government is predominantly comprised of economists and political scientists. There is a noticeable trend of political scientists replacing lawyers in ministerial positions. This government took office on December 11, 2020, and since then, there have been no changes in its composition. Ingrida Šimonytė's government enjoys a relatively stable tenure. Additionally, this government includes a significant

number of women holding ministerial posts. The emerging trend for the type of ministerial politicians in this government is stability, with a composition primarily consisting of political scientists and economists.

Conclusions

The government plays a crucial role in the executive branch, governing the state and ensuring the functioning of democracy. As seen in countries like Canada, Germany, and Malta, the head of government often holds great importance in the country's political landscape. However, looking at the experiences of other countries, it becomes apparent that the government and its leader can sometimes hold little or no significance, as is evident in countries like Turkey and Croatia. An examination of the legal framework governing the government's activities reveals that the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania and the Law on the Government of the Republic of Lithuania serve as the main documents regulating the government's work. However, these documents provide a rather broad description of the government's functions and competencies, leaving much legislative discretion to other laws and regulations. Specific qualification requirements for individuals aspiring to become ministers are not outlined in the Constitution. As a result, ministers can be categorized into two groups: professional ministers and political ministers.

Those engaged in political affairs must possess expertise not only in their respective fields but also in a wide range of policy areas such as communications, diplomacy, and public relations. Analyzing ten different governments, it was observed that eight out of the ten governments consisted of political ministers, while the remaining two comprised specialist ministers. It is worth emphasizing that only one government, the 17th government formed by Saulius Skvernelis, can be considered a true specialist ministerial government. This particular government has emphasized its professionalism within ministries and various media platforms. A notable characteristic of ministerial policies in these governments is that a significant number of ministers in the 9th to 15th governments had backgrounds in law or economics. In subsequent governments, the trend shifted towards ministers with expertise in economics or political science. This dominant type of ministerial politician also tends to exhibit more stability. One of the major drawbacks associated with ministerial politicians is the occurrence of corruption cases and scandals. These negative aspects have been prominent within this group.

The study reveals that the dominant type of government in the Republic of Lithuania between 1999 and 2022 is that of ministerial politicians, with eight out of the ten selected governments falling into this category. Specialist ministerial governments, on the other hand, tend to face challenges and display a higher level of instability. In governments comprised of professional ministers, it is common to witness the replacement of professional ministers with political ministers. Another noticeable trend in political minister

governments is the prevalence of ministers who have backgrounds in law, economics, or political science.

An analysis of the Lithuanian government's composition and the competencies of ministers reveals a scarcity of specialist ministers in Lithuania. Such ministers often experience a lack of stability in their positions and are frequently rotated. This type of minister is not a common feature within the political culture of Lithuania. The infrequent presence of professional or specialist governments suggests that this particular government composition is challenging to adapt to in Lithuania. Ministers, in general, have relatively short tenures in their positions. It is worth highlighting that professional ministers face greater difficulties in dealing with political challenges compared to political ministers, especially in certain ministries. In summary, politicians constitute the dominant type of ministers in Lithuania. and can be considered more stable and successful. These ministers tend to withstand political pressure, engage in public communication, and handle diplomatic situations more effectively. Professional ministers, on the other hand, despite their expertise in their respective fields, are better suited for lower-level government roles and supporting the work of political ministers. Professional ministers often experience instability, and it is not uncommon to see three different ministers in a single term within a ministry.

The complexities of political work impose significant burdens on professionals in their fields, as they encounter difficulties in understanding and addressing societal and work-related issues due to factors like communication, public engagement, reform drafting, and decision-making.

The most successful government in terms of stability and duration in office was the 15th government led by Andrius Kubilius. The first government that exhibited the characteristics of a professional government was the 11th government of the Republic of Lithuania, formed under Rolandas Paksas, Saulius Skvernelis formed the first official professional ministerial government, which adhered to the principles and composition of a professional government. However, despite its alignment with the concept of a professional government, it has been one of the least stable governments with frequent changes in its composition. The government is currently facing a crisis due to inadequate reforms in the field of education, leading to a loss of trust from both the Head of State and the public. The most prevalent type of government formed in Lithuania is the minister-politician type, characterized by the following traits: ministers often have backgrounds in economics, political science, or law. - ministers in key areas such as health, education, and justice tend to possess expertise in their respective fields - common issues faced by such governments include coalition disagreements, political misconduct within the coalition, and various scandals. governments of this type tend to be more stable and have a higher likelihood of completing a full term in office.

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SANCTIONING REQUESTS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION ENTITIES

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Abstract

The sanctioning of requests by public administration authorities in administrative proceedings is the least analysed, debated and completely unstructured institute of administrative law. The sanctioning of actions of public administration entities is closely related to the administrative supervision of the activities of economic operators, which helps to ensure the harmonisation of the individual economic operators and economic sectors, as well as of public health, environmental protection, and other constitutional values. Administrative supervision and other control by public administration is defined in the academic literature as a public administration activity in which a public administration entity monitors the compliance of the behaviour of its subordinates with legal norms, and, in the event of non-compliance, responds with the measures for the correction or punishment of behaviour. Despite the importance of administrative supervision and the impact it has on economic operators, we do not find any mention of sanctioning requests from public administration authorities in either the Law on Administrative Proceedings or the Law on Public Administration. The article presents the variety of requests for sanction submitted by public administration entities to the administrative court, possible classifications of applications submitted to the court and peculiarities of individual types of requests. The article also presents an analysis of the statistical data on the last few years of the examination of applications for sanctioning of public administration authorities before the Vilnius Regional Administrative Court, which has exclusive competence for the examination of these applications, the diversity of this type of applications (administrative cases), the main procedural peculiarities and problems of the examination of administrative cases of this type in the court, and provides insights and recommendations.

KEY WORDS: sanctioning, public administration, administrative supervision, supervision of economic operators, administrative procedure.

JEL: K1; K19.

Introduction

The sanctioning of actions of public administration entities is closely linked to the control and administrative supervision of the activities of economic operators, where the compliance of the behaviour of subordinate entities with the norms of the legislation is monitored, and in case of non-compliance, the response is to correct the behaviour or to sanction it. The concept of sanctioning derives etymologically from the Latin word "*sanctio*" or "*sanctionis*", meaning "*the strictest decree*". In the Lithuanian language, this term is synonymously used in legislation as permission, approval, giving of a sanction. It is also synonymous with the concepts of approval, endorsement and approbation used in the literature. In accordance with the Lithuanian dictionary, "sanction" can have several meanings: 1) approval from a higher authority, authorisation; 2) The part of a legal rule that specifies the state measures to be applied to the person who violates the rule; 3) a measure of public action taken against a person who is in breach of established rules and regulations; 4) a measure of sanctions against a state or group of states for violating a rule of international law or its international obligations.

By means of sanctioning actions, the supervision of economic activities in individual areas of economic activity is carried out, the improper behaviour of the market participants concerned is promptly responded to, information (data) is rapidly collected and/or obtained during the investigations carried out, and negative consequences or possible greater damage to the interests of consumers, the State or other honest market participants are prevented by the authorised measures until the final conclusions of the investigations are drawn. In addition, the sanctioning action may also ensure the proper implementation/enforcement of decisions taken or sanctions imposed by the relevant public administration entities. Due to its impact and scale, further investigation of the judicial sanctioning action is necessary. The content of the issues raised by the decisions taken in the sanctioning requests, the nature of measures taken and the impact on the activities of economic operators call for greater attention to be paid to this area of administrative law. The author hopes that the article will contribute to the discussion on this topic, including the promotion of lawyers, possible legislative initiatives and greater interest of legal scholars in this heterogeneous institute of administrative law, as the rights and guarantees of freedom of economic activity, inviolability of private life, premises and property, freedom of information and opinion dissemination and other constitutional rights and/or guarantees are significantly discussed upon on the basis of the actions carried out on the basis of this institute. The concept of an economic operator used in this article is enshrined in the Law on Public Administration: economic operator means a natural or legal person or another organisation, a branch of a legal person or another organisation carrying out economic activities governing by legal acts in the territory of the Republic of Lithuania and supervised by entities authorised to carry out public administration in accordance with the procedure laid down by this and other laws (Article 2 (14)). The concept established in the Law on Competition is also used: economic operators

mean undertakings, their combinations (associations, unions, consortia, etc.), bodies or organisations or other legal or natural persons which carry out or may carry out economic activities in the Republic of Lithuania or whose actions or intentions, if implemented, could have an impact on economic activities in the Republic of Lithuania. Public administration entities of the Republic of Lithuania are economic operators if they carry out economic activities (Article 3 (22)).

The aim of the article is to analyse the main peculiarities of the legal regulation of sanctioning actions in administrative courts, the available statistical data on sanctioning actions in court, and to present the conclusions and recommendations that follow from this.

The subject of the investigation of the article is the acts of sanctioning carried out in administrative courts.

Methodology. The theoretical part of the article uses methods of analysis, logical analysis, synthesis and comparison of legal acts. The research uses qualitative and quantitative methods of statistical data analysis, synthesis, comparison and generalisation. A generalisation approach is used to formulate conclusions.

Theoretical background

The notion of sanctioning in the Lithuanian legal system is also found in the branches of criminal or administrative law, but the purpose of this article is to disclose the notion of sanctioning by administrative courts and the content of sanctioning in administrative law. In this respect, there are authors who have written scholarly work on the subject of sanctioning in administrative offences (formerly administrative offences) which are not directly relevant to the subject of this article. The main focus of the academic literature is on the investigation of covert surveillance activities under criminal procedure law or actions regulated by the Law on Criminal Intelligence. A number of criminal law specialists have published scholarly publications or conducted research in this area, but again, this is not the direct object of this article.

The sanctioning of actions of public administration entities is closely related to the administrative supervision of the activities of economic entities, which is understood as one of the necessary preconditions for the functioning of a sustainable and efficient economy, helping to ensure the harmonisation of individual economic operators and economic sectors and the general public health, environmental and other constitutional values. As the sanctioning of actions of public administration entities by administrative courts is closely related to the supervision of economic operators, the insights of researchers investigating administrative supervision and administrative coercive measures were significant in the preparation of this article. Administrative supervision and other control by public administration is defined in the academic literature as a public administration activity in which a public administration entity monitors the compliance of the behaviour of its subordinates with legal norms, and, in the event of non-compliance, responds

with the measures for the correction or punishment of behaviour. In the course of supervision of the activities of economic operators, public administration entities carry out certain supervisory actions which could be considered as actions that could be requested by the courts to be sanctioned or the content of a sanction, as they are largely related to the implementation of preventive actions aimed at preventing possible infringements of legislation or the application of impact measures.

In the Vilnius Regional Administrative Court, sanctioning cases account for approximately 3-4% of all cases heard by the court, but this institute is not given sufficient attention in administrative law, although the analogous institute is given a considerable amount of attention in criminal law (e.g., sanctioning of covert surveillance, seizure or search, authorisation of checking and collecting data on electronic communications, etc.). Sanctioning in administrative law is most often referred to in the context of administrative supervision or coercive measures imposed on economic operators, and in the description of the rights of the supervising officials. Sanctioning actions are used to supervise economic activity in specific areas of economic activity (e.g. consumer protection against low-quality or unsafe products, misleading advertising, prevention of illegal gambling, market surveillance of investment or insurance services, protection of personal data, compliance with competition rules, control of alcohol or tobacco, etc.) is carried out by means of authorisation actions, and prompt response to inappropriate behaviour of the market participants concerned, as well as the prompt collection and/or receipt of information (data) during the investigations. Sanctioning measures also prevent negative consequences or potentially greater damage to consumer interests, the State or other fair market participants before the final conclusions of the investigations. It should also be noted that it is also through sanctioning actions that the proper implementation (enforcement) of the decisions taken by the relevant public administration entities or the impact measures imposed can be ensured.

Content of sanctioning and possible classifications of sanctionable acts

Neither the Law on Public Administration nor the Law on Administrative Proceedings, which are the main legal acts defining the procedure before administrative courts and the criteria for assessing the decisions taken by public administration entities, contain any competence to be attributed to administrative courts in the context of sanctioning activities. However, Article 1(3), Article 17(2) and Article 20(4) of the Law on Administrative Proceedings establish the possibility to provide for additional competence of administrative courts in separate laws at the level of the law. It is precisely the fragmentation of sanctioning actions that makes them stand out, due to the existing legal regulation exclusively in individual legal acts, the drafting and coordination whereof falls within the competence of individual institutions supervising individual sectors of the economy. The legislative process and legal regulation on a sector-by-sector basis also leads to heterogeneity in sanctioning procedures, terms and terminology. We will find the institute of sanctioning assigned to the

competence of administrative courts over 20 laws, among which the following are the most frequently applied in the case-law: Law on Gambling (*Official Gazette* 2001, No 43-1495), Law on the Bank of Lithuania (*Official Gazette* 2001, No 28-890), Law on Copyright and Related Rights in Lithuania (*Official Gazette* 2003, No 28-1125), Law on the Provision of Information to the Public (*Official Gazette* 2006, No 82-3254), Law on Competition (TAR, 2017, No. 2017-01075), Law on the Protection of Consumer Rights (*Official Gazette* 2007, No 12-488), Law on Alcohol Control (*Official Gazette*, 2004, No 47-1548), Law on the Legal Protection of Personal Data (TAR, 2018, No. 11733), etc.

The administrative supervision to which sanctioning actions by courts requested by public administration entities are related shall be carried out, inter alia, by imposing certain sanctions on economic operators or individual economic sectors. In the theory of administrative legal coercion, various forms are found. The broadest classification is by the purpose of the measures: administrative preventive, administrative supervision and administrative liability measures (Deviatnikovaitė, 2021). However, sanctioning actions taken by the courts are not to be equated with measures taken by public administration entities in the course of administrative supervision, as they are actions taken by different entities and different legal categories in their essence. The following article attempts to shed light on the variety, content and possible classifications of sanctioning actions.

Despite the variety of sanctioning actions and legislation, the content of sanctioning is not defined in any single piece of legislation. While in the case of procedural coercive measures, by analogy with similar procedural coercive measures in criminal or administrative offences law, it could be argued that the content of the sanctioning is clear in this case, there is no such clarity in the case of the sanctioning/approval of the decisions taken by public administration entities. The same applies to the actions for the authorisation of requests to secure the decision of a future public administration entity or its execution. The scarce case law of the higher administrative courts on the application of this institute also creates uncertainty. For example, the Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuania has stated that "the fact that a decision has been sanctioned does not mean that the legality and reasonableness of the decision has been substantially established" (Case No A-638-492/2017 of the Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuania). In such a case, the question logically arises as to what should then be assessed and verified by the administrative court during the performance of the sanctioning actions, if no verification of the legality and validity of the decision taken by the public administration entity (or of the action requested) is carried out during the sanctioning. A closer inspection of the fable of the aforementioned administrative case shows that such a court conclusion was made due to the factual situation of the particular case and due to the peculiarities of the regulation of legal sanctioning actions and the case-law, since the parties to the proceedings were not able to appeal against the sanctioning action, despite the significant consequences of the sanctioning action for the

activities of the particular economic operator. Similarly, the reasons for the preliminary assessment of the request/decision at the time of sanctioning were also due to the need for the court to respond to the arguments of the parties to the proceedings in the light of the existence of two final judgments on the same decision taken by the same public administration entity: one administrative case involves an unchallenged court order sanctioning a decision and another administrative case involves a court decision on a decision of the same public administration entity. Thus, at present, it is generally considered in the case-law that during the sanctioning of decisions, the requested sanctioning action (the decision adopted) is provisionally assessed, but a detailed judicial assessment of its legality and validity is carried out when economic operators challenge decisions taken by public administration entities in a separate administrative case by means of a judicial appeal. Usually, the decision sought to be sanctioned (in the case of sanctioning of a decision) will specify the normal procedure for appealing against decisions of public administration entities.

In terms of their purpose (what the public administration entity is seeking to achieve) and nature (the procedural result sought and the impact on the economic operator), sanctioning actions can be classified in relative terms as:

1) Sanctioning of procedural coercive measures (e.g. request to sanctioning access to the premises of an economic operator or natural persons associated with it, to allow seizure of documents, to allow the collection of information transmitted by electronic means, etc.)

2) Sanctioning of decisions (e.g. a request for sanctioning of a decision to issue binding instructions to credit or financial institutions on the prohibition or suspension of business operations, a request for sanctioning of a decision on the requirement to block websites or access to a website containing infringing objects of copyright or related rights; request for sanctioning of a decision ordering a ban on access to a website offering illegal gambling, etc.)

3) Sanctioning of supervisory actions, which could be divided into:

a) Sanctioning preventive measures (e.g. temporary seizure of assets of individuals, order to stop illegal activities pending completion of the investigation and final decision)

b) Sanctioning of measures to enforce a judgment (e.g. temporary suspension of export or import operations, suspension of banking operations, suspension of authorisations to engage in certain activities may occur if economic operators fail to comply with the sanctions imposed).

In accordance with the specificities of the procedure, the sanctioning actions requested by the administrative courts could be divided into the following types:

1) Ex ante sanctioning. Under this procedure, in order to carry out certain actions, the public administration entity must first apply to the court for authorisation. Under this procedure, the court is asked to authorise certain procedural and/or coercive actions or to authorise the enforcement of a future decision of a public administration entity.

2) Ex post or sanctioning of decisions. In accordance with this procedure, a public administration entity which has adopted an administrative decision within its competence and procedure must, after the adoption of the decision, apply to an administrative court for its sanction. This procedure involves applications to the court for sanctioning of decisions taken by a public administration entity, and some laws provide for the possibility of obtaining subsequent sanctioning following coercive procedural steps taken, if necessary, without the prior authorisation of a court.

Advance sanctioning

Prior checking or sanctioning of the actions of a public administration entity is found in Law on Gambling, Law on the Bank of Lithuania, Law on Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing TAR, 2017, No. 2017-12068), Law on Competition, Law on Alcohol Control, Law on the Provision of Information to the Public, Law on Consumer Protection, Law on Legal Protection of Personal Data, Law on Animal Welfare and Protection (*Official Gazette*, 2012, No 122-6126), Law on Electronic Communications (*Official Gazette*, 2004, No 69-2382), Law on the Control of Tobacco, Tobacco Products and Related Products (*Official Gazette*, 2003, No 117-5317), Law on Energy (*Official Gazette*, 2011, No 160-7576), Electronic Identification and Trust Services for Electronic Transactions (TAR, 2018, No. 2018-07474), Law on Plant Protection (TAR, 2017, No. 2017-09793). In essence, this type of sanctioning action consists in the fact that the public administration authority, before carrying out certain supervisory or other actions in relation to economic operators, first applies to the court for sanctioning (approval, authorisation) of the supervisory action to be taken. It should also be noted that these sanctioning actions are not homogeneous: some are to be regarded as acts of administrative supervision, while others are procedural actions.

For example, with the intensification of acts of war propaganda, an amendment to the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public was adopted this year, which gives the right to the Inspector of Journalistic Ethics to issue binding instructions to providers of electronic information hosting services or providers of public electronic communications networks and/or public electronic communications services to remove or eliminate the possibility of accessing the information referred to in Article 19(1)(1) or (3) of the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public (TAR, 28 April 2022, No. 2022-08772). At the request of the Inspector, the Vilnius Regional Administrative Court may suspend the activities of the producer and/or disseminator of public information for a period not exceeding three months if the producer and/or disseminator of public information manifestly, seriously and gravely infringes the requirements of Article 19 (1) of this Law after all the conditions provided for in Article 52 of the Law have been established.

The pre-sanctioning procedure also deals with the sanctioning of preventive or supervisory actions related to the enforcement of administrative decisions. In these cases, the public administration entity does not collect

data for the investigation, nor does it exercise the procedural rights of officials in relation to inspections, but, in one case, during the course of the investigation, it determines the necessity to apply preventive measures until the final conclusions/results of the investigation are known, and in the other case, once the final conclusions and results of the investigation have been reached (the investigation decision and the decision to apply the impact measures have been adopted), it seeks to ensure that the decision is actually implemented and enforced. Thus, in this case, there are two types of sanctioning situations. In both cases, when sanctioning the requested action, the court will carry out the assessment of the request similarly to the application of security measures when examining the requests in accordance with the procedure of Article 70 of the Law on Administrative Proceedings. Only in the absence of a final decision on the investigation in one case and in the presence of a final decision in the other. It should be noted that, in the latter case, the sanctioning of measures to comply with the decision is not linked to the entry into force of the public administration's decision on the final conclusions of the investigation without appeal.

This type of sanctioning action is provided for in the Law on the Bank of Lithuania and the related laws already mentioned above (Law on Collective Investment Undertakings for Informed Investors Article 63, Law on Managers of Alternative Collective Investment Undertakings Article 58, Article 61 of the Law on Occupational Pension Accumulation, Law on Collective Investment Undertakings Article 164, Law on Markets in Financial Instruments Article 102, Law on Insurance Article 207, Law on Supplementary Voluntary Pension Accumulation Article 5800 and Law on Energy, Law on Competition, Law on the Provision of Information to the Public. Exclusive Legal Regulation Provided for Article 73 of the Law on Electronic Communications (rights relating to inspections) and Article 18 of the Law on Electronic Identification and Trust Services for Electronic Transactions. In one case, coercive procedural steps may be subject to prior judicial sanctioning, while in the other case they may be subject to a subsequent review of the legality and reasonableness of the same steps (sanctioning). This conclusion can be drawn from the legal norm which provides that the officials of the Communications Regulatory Authority (hereinafter referred to as the CRA) may, with the permission of the court, enter and inspect the premises, territory and vehicles used by and/or residing with a person, review the data and/or documents necessary for the investigation, obtain copies and extracts thereof, and the information contained in the computers and media, however, in cases of urgency, these procedural actions may also be carried out by a decision of the Director of the CRA, which is submitted to the court for sanctioning. Thus, in urgent cases, the decision to apply the procedural private measures referred to above may also be taken by the Director of the CRA, in which case the decision must be followed by a subsequent verification (sanctioning) of the legality and reasonableness of the decision taken by the public administration entity. It should be noted that similar provisions were laid down in the Code of Criminal Procedure on searches and seizures, which

provided that in urgent cases a search or seizure could be carried out by a decision of a pre-trial investigation officer or prosecutor without the authorisation of the pre-trial judge, but that the search or seizure had to be submitted to the pre-trial judge for approval within three days of the search or seizure (Articles 145, 147 of the Code of Criminal Procedure in the wording in force until 1 September 2011, amended by Law No XI-1478 of 21 June 2011 (*Official Gazette*, 2011, No. 81-3965).

Subsequent (decision) sanctioning

In these cases, the decision, usually on certain measures of impact on economic operators or administrative supervision actions, is taken by the public administration entity, after taking into account all the circumstances relevant to the decision. The decision must provide for an appeal procedure. For a decision to become effective or enforceable, the law requires that it be sanctioned by a court.

This type of sanctioning is provided for in the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public, the Law on the Protection of Copyright and Related Rights and the Road Transport Code.

For example, Article 31(17) of the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public (relating to the licensing of radio and/or TV broadcasting activities and retransmission content) provides that the Lithuanian Radio and Television Commission, when adopting a decision on the temporary suspension or revocation of a licence, shall set a specific time limit from which the licence shall be suspended or revoked. The Commission's decision to suspend or revoke a broadcasting licence or a retransmission licence shall be sanctioned by the Vilnius Regional Administrative Court, with the exception of the Commission's decisions to revoke a broadcasting licence or a licence for retransmitted content where the licence holder refuses the licence.

Article 33 of the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public (regulation of unlicensed broadcasting and retransmission of radio and TV programmes) provides that Upon receipt of information in accordance with the procedure established by the Law on Protection of Objects of Importance for National Security or in accordance with the procedure established in this Law that any of the circumstances (threats) referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article exist, the Lithuanian Radio and Television Commission shall adopt a decision to prohibit <...> a person from carrying out broadcasting and/or retransmission activities in the Republic of Lithuania, from providing to the consumers of the Republic of Lithuania the distribution of TV programmes and/or individual programmes on the Internet or on-demand audio-visual media services, until such time as the circumstances (threats) referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article have ceased to exist. The Commission's decision must be sanctioned by the Vilnius Regional Administrative Court.

Article 34-1 of the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public provides that audiovisual media services provided from outside the Member States of the European Union, the countries of the European Economic Area and other European countries that have ratified the Council of Europe's Convention on Television without Frontiers, broadcast or retransmitted, or distributed on the internet, of television programmes and/or individual programmes, where only an individual programme is transmitted, and/or catalogues in the Republic of Lithuania may be suspended by a decision of the Commission if the audiovisual media services, television programmes and/or individual programmes and/or catalogues of such countries violate the requirements laid down in Article 17 (protection of minors) or Article 19(1) (sensitive information) of this Law. A decision to suspend the reception of audiovisual media services, television programmes and/or individual programmes and/or catalogues on the territory of the Republic of Lithuania for more than 72 hours may only be taken with the sanction of the Vilnius Regional Administrative Court. Article 78(8) of the Law on Copyright and Related Rights also provides for the sanctioning of decisions. The Lithuanian Radio and Television Commission, after assessing the request submitted by the rights holder, his authorised person or collective management organisation <...> and in order to apply the mandatory instructions provided for in paragraph 3 of this Article to the Internet access service provider, shall, no later than within 14 calendar days from the date of receipt of all the documents, adopt a decision on the application of the mandatory instructions in accordance with Article 47, paragraphs 12, 13, and 14 of the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public. The Commission's decision to impose binding instructions on internet access providers must be sanctioned by the Vilnius Regional Administrative Court. Upon rectification of the infringement of copyrighted content and submission of the information to the Commission, access to the blocked internet domain name identifying the website shall be resumed within 5 business days from the date of receipt of the information on the rectification of the infringement of copyrighted content. This does not require court sanction.

Article 18-1(4) of the Road Transport Code (*Official Gazette*, 1996, No 119-2772) (tax inspection of carriage of passengers for remuneration) provides that the organiser of passenger carriage is obliged to provide the State Tax Inspectorate with information on the income from the activity of carriage of passengers for remuneration by passenger cars on request and other data related to the calculation and declaration of taxes in accordance with the procedure and within the due dates established by the State Tax Inspectorate. In the absence of this information, the State Tax Inspectorate is entitled to issue binding instructions to Internet access service providers to withdraw access to the website of the passenger transport organiser's services, which is used to accept orders for the carriage of passengers for remuneration by car on request, by blocking the internet domain name identifying the website until the infringement is remedied. The decision of the State Tax Inspectorate to impose the mandatory instructions on Internet access service providers must be sanctioned by the Vilnius Regional Administrative Court.

Research and discussion

The investigation was carried out on the basis of the statistical data of several years of sanctioning actions in administrative cases before the Vilnius Regional Administrative Court and the analysis of the main legal acts regulating these actions of the public administration. The article was prepared on the basis of the report read at the scientific practical conference and the court investigation of the cases of sanctioning.

Investigation of sanctioning actions in Vilnius Regional Administrative Court in 2019-2021

The sanctioning requests submitted to the Vilnius Regional Administrative Court by public administration entities in the period 2019-2021, each whereof is a basis for a separate administrative case, were examined. Among all administrative cases heard by the Vilnius Regional Administrative Court, sanctioning cases account for about 3-4% of all administrative cases heard by the court each year. For example, in 2021, among the 4809 administrative cases heard by the court, sanctioning action cases (category 36) accounted for 190 cases. In 2019, the court received 140 applications for sanctioning. In 2020, the court received 128 requests for sanctioning, and in 2021, 190 requests for sanctioning. The statistics for the last three years show a clear increase in the number of applications for sanctioning received by the Court and the number of sanctioning actions carried out by the Court.

Moreover, the requests for sanctioning received are not homogeneous. In particular, a single application for sanctioning may also request the sanctioning of several surveillance actions. For example, the Gambling Authority routinely requests sanctioning for two actions in its applications for sanctioning: both binding instructions to credit institutions on the suspension or termination of payments, business operations, settlements, and binding instructions to hosting service providers or network providers on the prompt removal of information or the restriction of access to information. It should also be noted that a single application for the sanctioning of an action may request the sanctioning of an action in respect of individual economic operators (for example, in respect of company A and persons associated with it) or in respect of individual objects (for example, websites to be blocked, copyright or audiovisual work to be protected). In such cases, it is questionable whether separate requests should not be made, as each subject or object is subject to a separate judicial assessment at the time of sanctioning. It also ensures that unrelated persons do not receive sensitive, redundant or unnecessary information about the investigation, and that related persons do not share information sensitive to the conduct of the investigation and do not compromise the results of the investigation. It would also protect the institutions, including the courts, from the additional and essentially administrative burden and activity of producing extracts of court proceedings not foreseen in the administrative procedure, which is not related to the administration of justice and the court's direct role.

As regards the qualitative indicators of sanctioning requests, it should be noted that, although fewer sanctioning requests were received in 2020, the percentage of requests received and dealt with in relation to other administrative cases pending before the Court remained statistically similar (about 3-4% of all cases received and heard in court). Taking into account the fact that a single sanctioning request does not request the sanctioning of a single procedural or coercive measure in respect of more than one economic operator or object to be protected, and that it strengthens the administrative supervision of economic operators, there is no reason to believe that the number of sanctioning requests has been decreasing, or that it will continue to do so. This is confirmed by the number of sanctioning requests received in 2021.

The outcome of the sanctioning requests received between 2019 and 2021 shows that the vast majority of sanctioning requests were granted. In 2019, 7 sanctioning requests were rejected and 1 was partially granted. In 2020, 3 sanctioning requests were rejected, 5 were partially granted and 1 was deemed not to have been filed. In 2021, 1 request was rejected and 1 partially granted. Sanctioning requests were rejected on the grounds of abstractness or lack of specificity of the requests, as well as on the grounds that it was considered disproportionate to authorise certain coercive procedural steps in relation to the objectives pursued, and on the grounds that sanctioning requests were unfounded or not sufficiently substantiated by objective data. Sanctioning requests were partially granted when certain actions were requested on the premises of a number of legal persons, some of whom were not investigated and were not suspected. Requests were also partially granted, where sanctioning was sought for mandatory orders to block a number of websites related to illegal activities of economic operators in the Republic of Lithuania, without providing an exhaustive list of websites, but only stating that the request was for authorisation to block "other websites containing......" (without specifying existing or potential mirror websites of illegal economic activities).
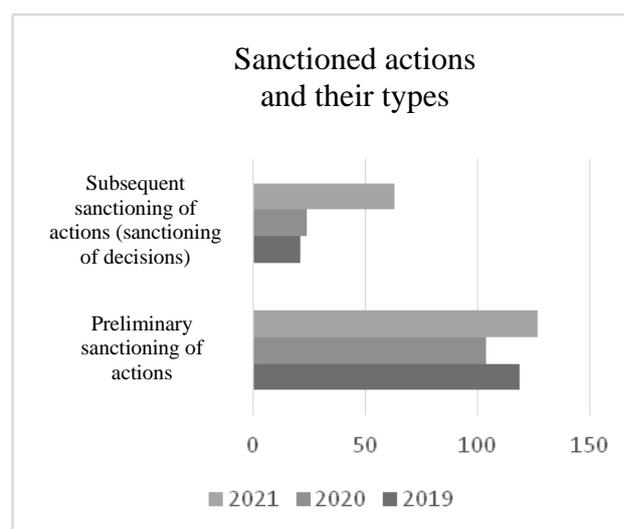

Fig. 1. Sanctioned actions and types of actions

In accordance with the applicants, the requests for sanctioning show that the Gambling Supervision Authority, the Bank of Lithuania, the Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania and the Lithuanian

Radio and Television Commission are the most active users of the statutory means of supervision of market participants (Table 1). The Competition Council, the State Data Protection Authority, the Drug, Tobacco and Alcohol Control Department, and other public administration entities have also applied to the court for sanctioning in 2019-2021. It should be noted that Table 2 shows the "activity" of public administration entities in terms of the number of requests submitted, but as mentioned above, a single request for sanctioning can in fact accommodate several requests for sanctioning actions, therefore, the data should be considered as relative.
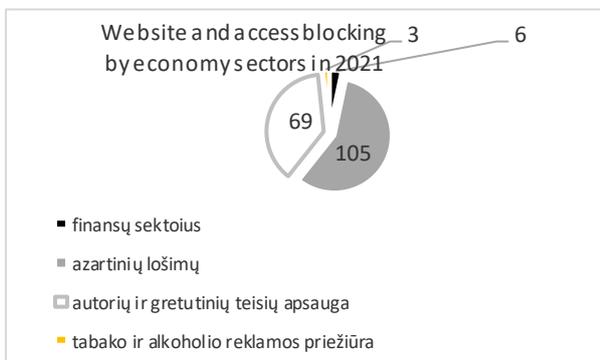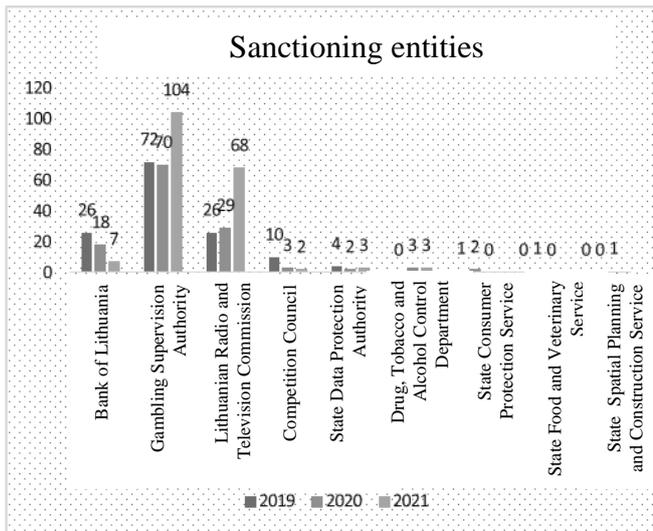

Fig. 2. Sanctioning entities

The nature of the requests between 2019 and 2021 shows that the number of sanctioning requests is quite varied, as this is also due to the different legal regulation of individual economic activities or sectors (branches of the economy), the particularities of the competences of individual institutions, etc. (Table 3). Nevertheless, in general terms, the majority of the applications before the Administrative Court were requests to sanction decisions or binding orders to block certain Internet pages or access to them or their content (Table 4). This is essentially related to the active role of supervisory authorities in supervising the activities of economic operators in the sector falling within their competence and in responding to the activities of economic operators that do not comply with the requirements of the legislation. In this way,

Lithuanian consumers are protected from illegal gambling websites and illegal investment service providers website content. It should be noted that the separate line "sanctioning of decisions" also includes, in principle, the blocking of websites or access to them, as far as the protection of copyright and related rights is concerned. The second most frequently requested coercive measure is the issuing of instructions to credit institutions to terminate or suspend financial or economic transactions. This involves tackling essentially illegal gambling activities that are normally licensed (gambling, lotteries). Only depriving of financial benefits or, more precisely, separating them from illicit financial earnings makes it possible to combat illegal economic activities more effectively and to encourage economic operators to license and more motivates existing licensed market participants to act in good faith and to comply with the established licensing conditions.
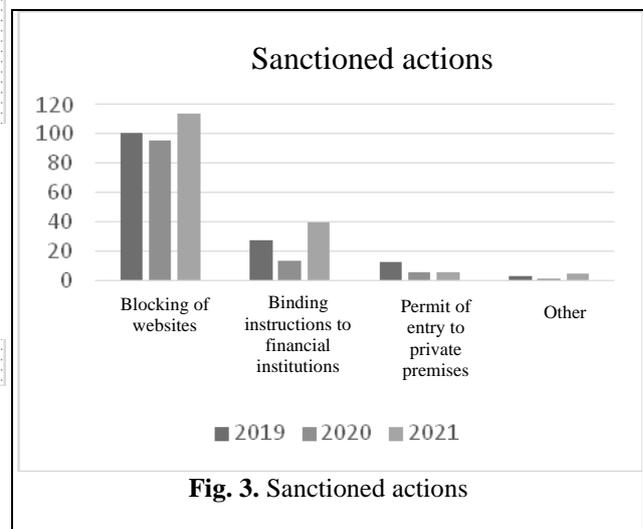

Fig. 3. Sanctioned actions

Requests for sanctioning also account for a significant proportion of the requests received. In 2019-2021, requests were also received for access to the premises of economic operators, permission to carry out certain procedural data collection actions, and permission to receive (collect) electronic communications data for investigative purposes.

Fig. 4. Relative percentage mapping

The survey shows that the vast majority of requests for sanctioning are pre-screening requests, where the court is essentially responsible for ensuring the proportionality, lawfulness and reasonableness of the application of certain procedural coercive measures.

Conclusions

Sanctioning in administrative law is most often referred to in the context of administrative supervision or coercive measures imposed on economic operators, and in the description of the rights of the supervising officials. Sanctioning actions are used to monitor economic activity in particular sectors of the economy, to react swiftly to misbehaviour by market participants, and to collect

and/or obtain information (data) swiftly in the course of investigations. Sanctioning measures also prevent negative consequences or potentially greater damage to consumer interests, the State or other fair market participants before the final conclusions of the investigations. It should also be noted that it is also through sanctioning actions that the proper implementation (enforcement) of the decisions taken by the relevant public administration entities or the impact measures imposed can be ensured.

The sanctioning of requests by public administration entities constitutes an important part of the administrative cases before the administrative courts, and the actions carried out on the basis of this institute have a significant impact on the freedom of economic activity, the rights and guarantees of privacy, the inviolability of premises and property, the freedom of dissemination of information and opinion, and other constitutional rights and/or guarantees.

Sanctioning actions are fragmented due to the existing legal framework, which is exclusively regulated by individual legal acts, the drafting and coordination whereof are the responsibility of separate authorities overseeing individual economic sectors. This also leads to a lack of uniformity in the sanctioning procedure, terms and terminology. The institution of sanctioning, which falls within the competence of administrative courts, is found in over 20 laws. Despite the variety of sanctioning actions and legislation, the content of sanctioning is not defined in any single piece of legislation.

In terms of their purpose (what the public administration entity is seeking to achieve) and nature (the procedural result to be achieved and the impact on the economic operator), sanctioning actions could be relatively divided into the sanctioning of procedural coercive measures, the sanctioning of decisions, and the sanctioning of supervisory actions. In accordance with the specificities of the procedure, the sanctioning actions requested by the administrative courts could be divided into ex ante sanctioning and ex post, or decisional sanctioning.

After summarising the results of the aforementioned investigation and the existing legal regulation of sanctioning cases in administrative courts, it should be considered whether at least the basic rules of the court's sanctioning procedure should not be established in the Law on Administrative Proceedings, thus ensuring clearer court proceedings and procedural status and guarantees of economic operators and persons subject to sanctioning actions.

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ERASMUS DEVELOPMENT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF STUDENTS: THE CASE OF KLAIPĖDA CITY

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Abstract

In a world that is becoming more globalized, education is one of the top priorities for nations. Countries have started to invest more money into global education. Numerous short and long-term education and exchange arrangements are created with this aim. One of the most popular of these exchange agreements is the Erasmus+ Exchange Program. Based on this, the study sought to examine the causes, incentives, expectations, and experiences that led students participating in the Erasmus+ Exchange Program in Klaipėda, Lithuania, to participate in Erasmus as well as the benefits of Erasmus to students. The study used a qualitative research methodology, and the semi-structured interviewing approach was utilized to gather data. Comparative analysis and content analysis were used for the gathered data. The analyses conducted revealed that most of the expectations of the Erasmus-participating students were similar. For example, traveling in Europe, socializing, experiencing a different educational system, and language development. Additionally, it has been observed that Erasmus affects students in both positive and negative ways. It has been observed that these effects are within the framework of personal development, education, socialization, language development, and cultural experience. Students who enrol in Erasmus with similar goals and expectations may experience the program in quite diverse ways from one another. It has been noted that most students choose the country for Erasmus, particularly considering economic considerations, and it has been emphasized that in some cases their economic predictions may not come true.

KEY WORDS: Erasmus+ Exchange Program; Erasmus in Klaipėda; Erasmus Experience; Study Abroad; Cultural Exchange.

Introduction

Education directly affects the quality of a country's human resources. Considering the globalization movements, one of the areas of education that countries can invest in is an international education and student exchange. International education and student exchange, i.e., student mobility; foreign language, academic development, basic competencies, communication skills, social skills, cultural awareness, entrepreneurship, etc. helps the development of students in terms of qualifications. At the same time, students can gain the ability to "learn to learn" (Konevas and Duoba, 2007).

In the developing and changing world order, countries want to raise more qualified individuals. In this direction, they support their students to study abroad. In this direction, they support their students at the point of studying abroad for the short or long term (Karadağ, 2022). Nowadays, studying abroad, culture, exchange, etc. there are many programs in the fields. Students are increasingly demanding at the point of participation in these programs. The Erasmus+ Exchange Program is just one of them.

Knowing a foreign language is not enough to communicate and cooperate with people from other countries in the globalizing world. It is necessary to have other intercultural competences that make it possible to live successfully and work effectively. Such as to know more about different cultures, to reduce misunderstandings between people of different nationalities, understanding the opinions and thoughts of different nations, identifying cultural differences and similarities, to provide effective communication and cooperation with people from different countries (Mauricienė, 2013). In this context, the Erasmus

Program appears as an exchange program that can offer multiple competencies together.

In this study, it is aimed to analyse the reasons for participating in Erasmus and choosing Lithuania for Erasmus students coming to Lithuania within the scope of the Erasmus+ Exchange Program, their motivation to participate in Erasmus, their expectations and experiences in the Erasmus process, and the achievements of students from Erasmus and Lithuania. Although Lithuania is developing to the point of welcoming Erasmus students, it is thought that this study will contribute to the field summer due to the fact that there is not much research on Erasmus+ mobility in Lithuania in the literature.

Literature Review

Erasmus+ Exchange Program provides grant support to the participants in the fields of education, training, and sports to support education and youth. The program is conducted by the National Agency under the European Commission (Özel, 2021). Erasmus+, is aimed to ensure that participants educate themselves well and improve employment opportunities

(https://www.ua.gov.tr/programlar_/erasmus-programi/, National Agency of Turkey)

Similarly, students participate in the Erasmus+ Program for assorted reasons such as supporting their personal development, improving their foreign language levels, benefiting from a different education system, and experiencing foreign cultures. The studies of Aslan and Jacobs (2014) show that in parallel with other studies in the literature, the reasons for students to participate in Erasmus+ exchange programs are to learn a language and live in a different culture. According to the study of Karadağ (2022), many dimensions such as parental

income status, parental education level, and the participant student's own personality traits affect the participation of students in Erasmus (Karadağ, 2022).

Higher education students want to develop and educate themselves in the best viable way during their education and to be able to find an easier and better job after graduation. In recent years, the effect of the knowledge and skills gained by the students participating in the Erasmus program on their employment opportunities has also started to be examined (Dinçer, Aslan, and Bayraktar, 2017). Considering the current competitive environment, it is common for students to want to prepare themselves for life after education and to consider or participate in the Erasmus+ Program accordingly. Thus, they will have the chance to be employed more easily as more qualified and equipped individuals (Gözcü, 2021). In this context, it is stated that studying abroad has a positive effect on the future professional careers of students, helping career development, student mobility, employment possibilities of individuals, their chances of working abroad, and increasing their language proficiency. (Schnepf and Colagrossi, 2020; González, Mesanza, and Mariel, 2011). In addition, it is believed that studying abroad helps to develop language learning, intercultural skills, self-confidence, and self-awareness in addition to professional career and education (Feyen and Krzaklewska, 2013).

There are assorted reasons for students to choose the country or university where they will do Erasmus from an academic, economic, cultural, or political point of view. There is often more than one preference criterion for the preferred university or country. In particular, the professionalism of the institution that will provide education, academic goodwill, flexibility in courses, international awareness of the institution, the number of grants to be given, living and tuition expenses, etc. These are the main criteria for students to choose the country and university where they will do Erasmus (Selickaite and Reklaitiene, 2015). On the other hand, geographical location, weather, culture, the economic and social position of the country, cost of living, education system, language used, perceived image, and recommendations are also among the factors that are effective in choosing the country to study (Lee, 2014).

There are many countries that students can choose from within the scope of Erasmus's mobility. According to Breznik and Skrbinjek's research, the countries that send and receive the most students under Erasmus are Spain, France, Italy, and Germany; the countries with the highest number of students are Sweden, Finland, the UK, and Portugal; the countries that send the most students are Belgium and the Czech Republic (Brenzik and Skrbinjek, 2019).

Erasmus students are one of the indicators of the internationality of institutions. The number of incoming Erasmus students is considered as an important indicator of the performance of a higher education institution. For this reason, it is important to understand the reasons and motivations of Erasmus students for choosing a country or university, as well as their expectations from that country and university correctly. Lithuania has become increasingly preferred by students within the scope of the Erasmus+ exchange program. In particular, the number of

students who prefer Lithuania from countries outside the European Union is higher than the number of students who prefer it from European Union countries. Some of the reasons why incoming students prefer Lithuania are the natural beauties that the country has, and the fact that it has a coast to the Baltic Sea and is considered a safe country. The city of Klaipėda is generally preferred because of its climate or on the recommendations of people who have experienced it before (Štraupaitė, 2020).

Erasmus has some effects on students. These effects are seen as individual effects, academic effects, social effects, and language skills (Özdem, 2013). Studies in the literature show that studying abroad has many benefits such as improving students' language skills, critical thinking skills, intercultural communication skills, and personal development (Erdem Mete, 2017). It has many positive contributions such as the development of foreign language levels, changing perspectives and becoming more open to diverse cultures, and improving communication skills (Adanır and Susam, 2019). In addition, after Erasmus, students can understand diverse cultures more easily and may want to experience cultural changes again. This shows that Erasmus has a transformative effect on the participants. As can be seen, there are different experiences of participants in the Erasmus process. The contribution of the process to people is not always in normal ways. During the Erasmus process, students also gain many benefits from different angles, such as being faced with unusual and unexpected situations (Nada and Legutko, 2022).

In general, Erasmus mobility provides many cultural benefits to students. Students have the opportunity to get to know diverse cultures through Erasmus, to make friends from diverse cultures, to experience the cuisines of different countries, to travel to different countries, to exhibit their own cultures, etc. they can have a lot of cultural awareness (Tetik, 2019). Another benefit is the elimination of prejudices and the strengthening of international solidarity among students due to the continuation of student mobility and intercultural communication (Mutlu, 2020). In this context, the benefits that stand out are personal development and intercultural harmony (Button, Green, Tengnah, Johansson, and Baker, 2004).

Methodology

The sample of the study consists of 25 students who came to Lithuania, Klaipėda from 9 different countries for the Erasmus+ exchange program in the Autumn semester of the 2022-2023 academic year. "Easily Accessible Case Sampling" was used to determine the sample. This research was planned and conducted within the framework of the qualitative research approach. In the process of data collection, a semi-structured interview form consisting of four main sections and 24 questions in total, prepared by the researchers in accordance with the literature, was used as a data collection tool. The semi-structured interview method was used because it provides a very flexible technique for small-scale research and provides more useful data when the sample size is relatively small and allows thematic analysis of qualitative data (Pathak and Intratat, 2012). The interview

form sections are Demographic data, Before Erasmus, During Erasmus, and after Erasmus. The data were collected through interviews. After the data collection, the comparative analysis method was used as the analysis method. Comparative analysis improves our descriptive abilities and is crucial in the concept-formation process since it draws out suggested similarities and differences across cases (Finifter, 1993). The content analysis of the data was made by the researchers and the MAXQDA 2022 program was used to evaluate the analysed data. Content analysis Formally, content analysis is a research technique that uses context to make iterative and reliable inferences from data (Krippendorff, 1989).

Results

Ages: When we examined the ages of the participants, it was seen that 52% of the participants were between the ages of 20-22, 36% were between the ages of 23-25 and 12% were over the age of 25.

Gender: When the gender of the participants is examined, it is seen that 88% of the participants are male and 12% are female.

Country: When we examined where the participants were from, it was seen that 14 of them were Turkish, 4 were Spanish, 1 was French, 1 was German, 1 was Afghan, 1 was Egyptian, 1 was Gambian, 1 was Croatian and 1 was Italian.

Departments; When the departments of the participants are examined; Business Administration (n=4), Management Information Systems (n=3), Political Science and Public Administration (n=2), Technology (n=2), Economy (n=2), Tourism (n=2), Tourism Guidance (n=1), Maritime Management (n=1), Marine Sciences (n=1), Finance (n=1), Electrical and Electronics Engineering (n=1), İnformation Systems (n=1), Physiotherapy (n=1), Energy Management (n=1), Classical Philology (n=1), and Marine Transportation Management (n=1).
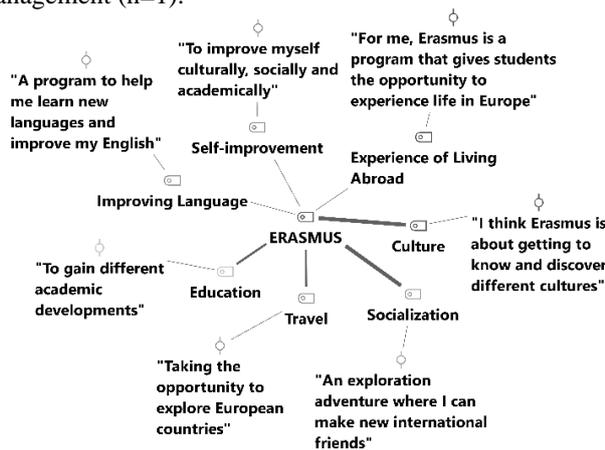

Fig. 1. Definition of Erasmus in terms of students

The participants were asked what Erasmus means to them and it was observed that the participants mentioned the dimension of culture and socialization more often. After the Code-Sub code-sections model analysis, it is seen that the participants mentioned the cultural dimension 15 times, the socialization dimension 15 times, the travel dimension 10 times, the education dimension 9 times, the language development dimension 5 times, the personal development dimension 3 times and experience of living abroad dimension 3 times. When we examine the dimensions, Erasmus for the participants is "experiencing new cultures" in terms of culture, "meeting with people from different cultures and making friends" in terms of socialization, "having a chance to discover Europe" in terms of travel, "experiencing the education system and academic structure of Europe" in terms of education, "learning new languages and improving English skills" in terms of language development, "contributing to their academic, social and cultural personal development" in terms of personal development, and "experiencing life in Europe" in terms of life experience abroad.

If a new definition of Erasmus is required considering the pertinent responses to this question, "Erasmus is an experience of living abroad that provides the opportunity to discover new cultures while traveling in Europe, to meet people from different cultures and languages, and to improve oneself in terms of language development, education and personal development."
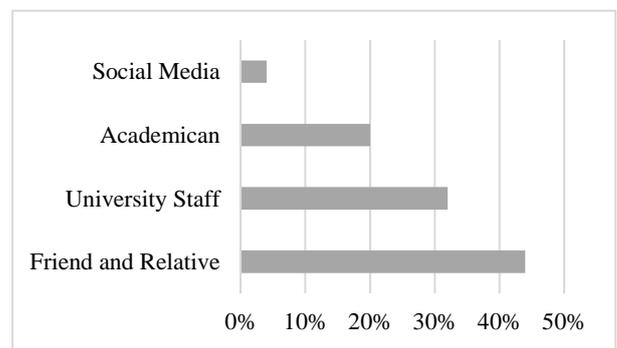

Fig. 2. Resources for students to learn about Erasmus

Participants were asked where they learned about the Erasmus exchange program and document-based frequency analysis was applied to the answers received. Accordingly, 44% of the participants stated that they learned Erasmus from friends and relatives, while 32% stated that they learned it from university staff, 20% said that they learned it from academics and only 4% stated that they learned Erasmus through social media.
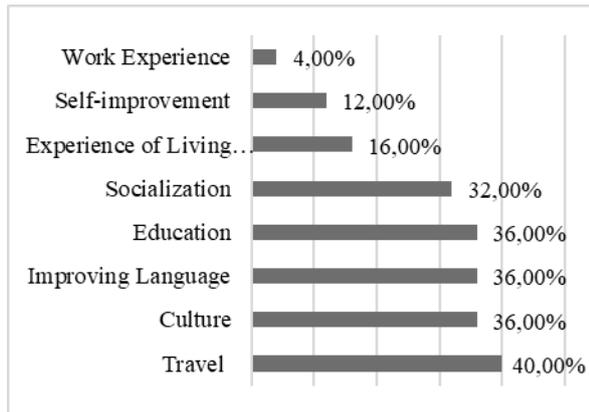
Fig. 3. Reasons for students to choose their first preferred countries

The participants were asked in which order they preferred Lithuania for the Erasmus program and a document-based frequency analysis was applied according to the answers received. After the analysis, it was observed that 52% of the participants preferred Lithuania as the first choice, 32% preferred Lithuania as the second choice, 8% preferred Lithuania as the third choice and the remaining 8% preferred Lithuania as the fourth choice. When we examine the first preferred countries of the participants, it is seen that there are a total of six countries. These countries are Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, Spain, Finland, and Croatia. In this context, it is seen that 13 participants included Lithuania as their first choice, while 7 participants chose Poland as their first choice, 2 participants Hungary, 1 participant Spain, 1 Participant Finland, and 1 participant Croatia as their first choice. When the reasons why the participants preferred the relevant countries in the first choice were examined, it was observed that the Economy, Education, Socialization, Culture, Language Improvement, Lack of Options, Advice, and the Nature of the Country were the effective elements.

When the main reasons why the countries preferred under the Erasmus program are in the first place are examined, it is seen that 35.1% of the participants mentioned the Economy, 21.6% Education, 13.5% Socialization, 10.8% Culture, 8.1% Language Development, 5.4% Lack of Options, 2.7% Advice and 2.7% Nature at least once. When the contents of the related reasons are examined, it is observed that the fact that it is an economically more liveable and cheaper country increases the priority of the country to be selected from the point of view of Erasmus. In addition, the education system, universities, and academicians of the relevant country are among the factors that bring a country to the forefront during the choice. When we examine preferences in terms of socialization and culture, the fact that a country has an interesting culture and provides opportunities to explore this culture is observed as one of the essential elements that help to bring the relevant country to the forefront during the choice. Further, if a country can provide different opportunities for language improvement, this country is also at the forefront of preference. Again, it is observed that the recommendation and the natural structure of the country also affect the preference of the relevant country in the

first place. Only 5.4% of the respondents stated that they chose the relevant country because they did not have any different options.
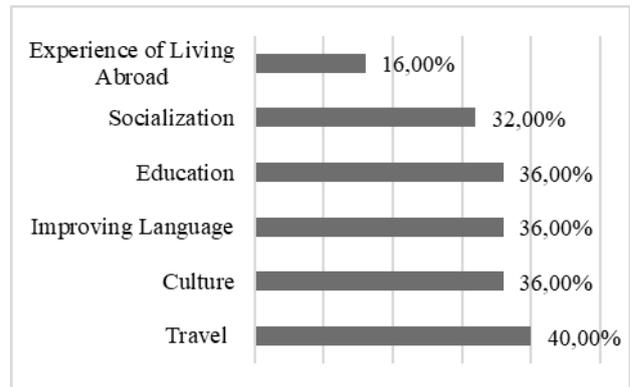

Fig. 4. Expectations of students before coming to Erasmus

When the expectations of the participants before participating in the Erasmus program are examined, 34% of the participants have an expectation of socializing, 20.8% have an expectation of traveling, 17% expect quality education, and 13.2% learn about new cultures. It is seen that 13.2% of them expect to improve their English language level and learn new languages, and finally 1.9% of them expect to contribute to their personal development.

When asked whether the Erasmus process they went through met their expectations, 60% of the participants said that Erasmus met my expectations, while 40% said that it did not meet their Erasmus expectations. When the answers of the participants, who stated that their expectations were met were examined, it was seen that the expectations of language development, travel, socialization, and access to quality education were met, and when we examined the answers of the participants who said that they did not meet my expectations, the problem was mostly the behavioural attitudes of the Lithuanian people towards foreign students.
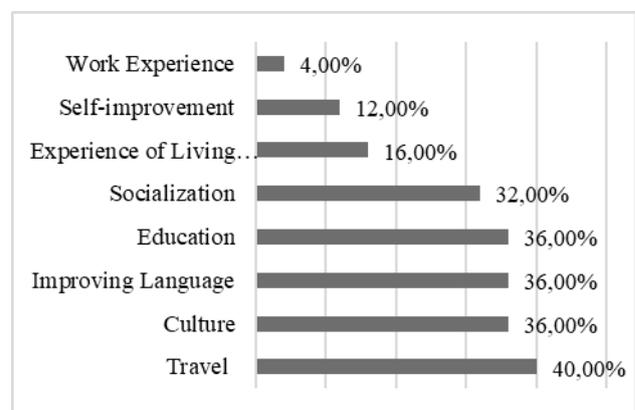

Fig. 5. Reasons for students to participate in Erasmus

When asked why students participate in Erasmus, it was determined that 40% of the participants mentioned the travel dimension, 36% of the participants mentioned the cultural dimension, 36% of them mentioned the language development dimension, 36% of them

mentioned the education dimension, 32% of them mentioned socialization dimension, 16% of them mentioned the life experience in abroad dimension, 12% of them mentioned the personal development dimension and 4% of them mentioned the gaining work experience at least once. In general, when the students' reasons to participate in Erasmus+ Exchange Program were examined, it was seen that some of the reasons were to travel easily within Europe, getting to know and experiencing new cultures, learning new languages, and improve their current English level, to study at universities that provide quality education, taking courses from qualified academicians, meeting new people and making friends from different cultures, to leave their comfort zone and gaining new experiences in the new environment, to contribute their personal development and gain new work experiences.
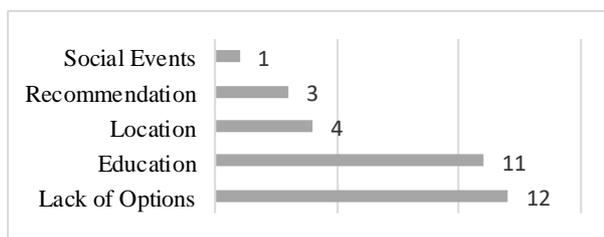

Fig. 6. Reasons for students to choose the universities they have chosen for Erasmus

When students were asked why they chose the university where they are currently doing Erasmus+ Exchange Program, it was determined that 12 participants preferred it because they did not have the option to choose any other university except the relevant university, 11 participants choose it because they thought the university's education is in a good quality, 4 participants choose it because they thought the location of the university close to important areas, 3 participants preferred it because of the recommendations they received from people, and one of them preferred it because of the social activities offered by the university are sufficient.
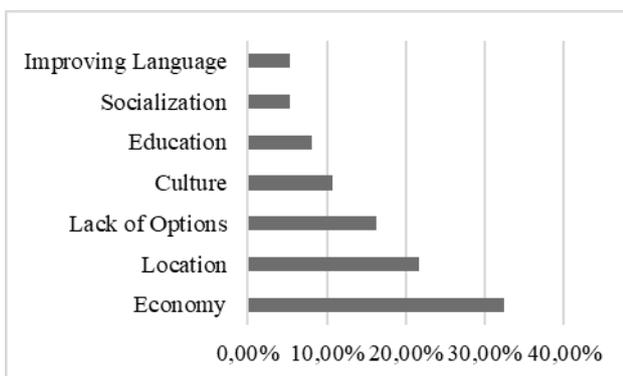

Fig. 7. Reasons why students choose Lithuania for Erasmus

When examined why the participants preferred Lithuania for Erasmus, it was seen that 32.4% of participants preferred Lithuania due to economic reasons, 21.6% of them choose it because of the location of

Lithuania, and 16.2% of them preferred it because of their limited options. 10.8% of them were interested in Lithuanian culture because 8.1% of them wanted to take quality education, 5.4% of them chose it because of socialization opportunities and activities and 5.4% of them preferred it to improve language skills. When the participant's reasons for choosing Lithuania are examined, the most mentioned reason by the participants is economic reasons. It is seen that the most important reasons for the participants to choose Lithuania are that they think that Lithuania is a cheap country to live in and that the amount of grant given is sufficient for their general living expenses in Lithuania. Regarding the location of Lithuania, which is another reason, the participants mentioned that Lithuania is located in the Baltic Region and is close to other northern countries. Regarding the lack of options, there was not any other country that the participants could choose for Erasmus+ caused the students to choose Lithuania. When the cultural reason was examined, it was determined that the cultural values of Lithuania were seen as interesting by the participants, and therefore they preferred Lithuania. In terms of education reason, it was seen that the participants thought that the education system of Lithuania was successful, so they wanted to study in Lithuania. In addition, it was seen that a group of participants thought that it would be easier to socialize in Lithuania and they preferred Lithuania due to the diversity of social activities. Another reason the participants preferred Lithuania for Erasmus+ was that they thought that Lithuania would provide a good opportunity for improving language skills.

Living Experience Abroad: According to the answers of the participants, it was seen that 52% of the participants had previous living experience in different countries, while 48% of them had no experience of living in a different country. In addition, when the participants were asked about their opinions about living abroad after their Erasmus experience, 68% of the participants stated that they want to live abroad and 32% of them stated that they do not want to live abroad. Only 11% of students who want to live abroad stated that they want to live in Lithuania.

Contribution of Erasmus to Self-Improvement: At the point of whether Erasmus+ contributes to personal development, 88% of the participants stated that participating in Erasmus+ contributes to personal development, and 12% of them stated that participating in Erasmus+ does not contribute to personal development. When the answers of the participants who thought that Erasmus+ contributes to personal development are examined, it has been seen that leaving their comfort zones, and living abroad with foreign cultures are factors that contribute to self-development.

The Contribution of Erasmus to Education: When asked whether Erasmus+ has any contribution in terms of education, 68% of the participants stated that Erasmus+ contributed to education, and 32% of them stated that Erasmus+ did not contribute to education. When the answers of the participants who said that Erasmus+ contributed in terms of education were examined, the

education system of the universities in Lithuania, methods of applying lectures by academics, variety of course content, and the absence of any language barriers in universities identified as the main reasons.

Culture Shock: When the participants were asked whether they had experienced any culture shock within their Erasmus+ experience, 56% of the participants stated that they experienced culture shock, while 44% of them stated that they did not experience any culture shock. When the answers of the participants who experienced culture shock were examined, it was seen that the participants experienced culture shock in terms of food, economy, and behavior of Lithuanian people. Among these three reasons, the most emphasized point was the behavior of the Lithuanian people. It was expressed by the participants that Lithuanian people are closed-minded, cold, introverted, and intolerant towards foreigners. At the same time, some of the participants stated that they encountered rude behavior from the local people. This situation was described as a culture shock by the participants as it was a situation, they were not unusual in the country they came from.

The Amount of The Grant and Its Sufficiency: The participants were asked whether they received any grant from the university they came from, it was seen 56% of the participants received grants between 1700-2000 Euros, 20% of them received grants below 1700 Euros, 20% of them did not receive any grant, and 4% of the participants received grant more than 2000 Euros. Afterwards, the participants were asked whether the grant they received was sufficient for the Erasmus process in Lithuania. Accordingly, it was seen that 8 of the 20 grant recipients said that the amount of the grant they received was sufficient, while 12 people said that the amount of the grant they received was not sufficient for this process. There are some common basic reasons such as the fact that Lithuania is a more expensive country than expected, increasing costs of meeting basic needs in Lithuania, socializing areas are limited in Lithuania and the cost of the available areas is high expressed by those who find the grant amount insufficient. When the answers of the participants who thought that the amount of grant, they received was sufficient were examined, it was stated that the amount of the grant would be sufficient for basic living expenses while it was seen that they stated that the grant would not be sufficient for additional elements such as socialization, entertainment, and travel.
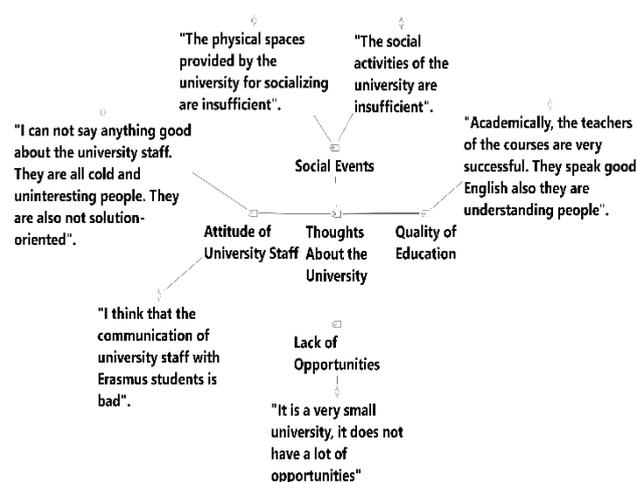

Fig. 8. Students' thoughts about the university where they did Erasmus

The participants' opinions about the university where they are participating in the Erasmus program were solicited. When the responses were evaluated, it was discovered that 91.7% of the participants spoke of the quality of education, 50% spoke of the conduct and attitudes of the university staff, 25% spoke of the lack of opportunities at the institution, and 12.5% spoke of social events. When the replies of the participants were examined, it became clear that those who spoke about the quality of education mostly focused on the calibre of the university's academics and the suitability of the course materials it provided. Additionally, it was noted that participants had unfavourable opinions regarding the conduct and attitudes of university employees, particularly regarding communication issues. In addition, it is seen that the participants have negative evaluations of the physical facilities and social activities of the universities as they are insufficient. The participants were asked whether they thought about choosing the universities they were doing Erasmus at again. While 28% of participants said they may choose the same university again, 72% said they would not choose the same university again.

When the participant's reasons for considering the same university were explored, it was discovered that they typically believed that the education the university provided was of a high caliber and that the physical facilities were adequate for instruction. When we examine the reasons of the participants who do not intend to choose the same university again, it was observed that the participants generally wanted to have a different experience in a different place and stated that they would not prefer the same university again for reasons such as the negative attitudes and behaviours of the staff of the university and the lack of opportunities of the university and the city.
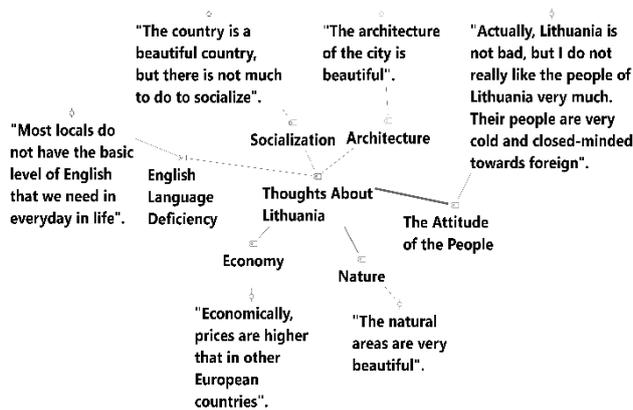
Fig. 9. Students' thoughts about Lithuania

When we asked the participants about their thoughts about Lithuania, it was observed that 85.7% of the participants mentioned the behaviour and attitudes of local people, 33.3% the nature of the country, 33.3% the economy, 14.3% the lack of English language, 9.5% the socialization and 4.8% the architecture of the country at least one time. When we looked at what the participants thought about Lithuania, we found that they had positive opinions of the country's nature and architecture but negative opinions of its economy, socialization, English language proficiency, and the attitudes and behaviour of the locals. Some participants stated that they thought that their living costs would be more affordable before coming to Lithuania, but when they came to Lithuania, their living costs were high, and inflation was higher than they expected.

When the answers to the questions about choosing Lithuania again were examined, 72% of the participants stated that they would like to choose Lithuania again, while 28% stated that they would not choose Lithuania again for Erasmus. The participants who are thinking of choosing Lithuania again mostly stated that they would prefer Lithuania to study at the same universities again because they are satisfied with the quality of the education they received. Other participants stated that they would not prefer Lithuania again, especially due to the negativity in the attitudes and behaviours of the local people and the fact that they want to have different experiences in different countries.

Conclusions

With globalization, it is seen that countries are trying to improve their activities in the field of education. Thus, they will be able to develop their countries with more qualified graduates. However, this target is a process that will take time and therefore it will not be sufficient for a country to organize educational activities only within itself, to produce more qualified graduates, and to improve the conditions of the country. From this point of view thanks to the international agreements made regarding education, students are encouraged to take short or long-term education outside their own country. It allows students to experience the educational standards and life opportunities of different countries, interact with diverse cultures of students and further develop themselves in many aspects, such as language, vision, and

personal development. Since it is believed that students who have acquired these skills and requirements will become qualified employees after graduation, many agreements are being made between countries and universities today in order to contribute to the development of their countries. The Erasmus+ Exchange Program is one of these agreements. Erasmus is extremely popular among student exchange programs because of the grant support provided to students by the European Commission and the advantages that students from both countries within the European Union and countries outside the European Union can benefit decently from the education system of different countries of Europe.

With the Erasmus+ program, it is possible to study in many countries of Europe today. Due to the differences in living standards, the potential expenses of the students were considered on a country basis, and accordingly, they were grouped among the countries included in the Erasmus program. First and second group countries are: Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Sweden, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Norway, Germany, Austria, Belgium, France, Southern Cyprus, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Malta, Portugal, and Greece; third group countries are: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Turkey. Students who will go to the first and second group countries with educational mobility receive a monthly grant of 600 euros, and students who will go to the third group countries with educational mobility receive a monthly grant of 450 euros. Students who go to the first and second group countries with internship mobility are provided with 750 euro grant support, and students who go to the third group countries with internship mobility are provided with 600 euro grant support.

According to the research conducted, most students who are considering participating in the Erasmus program choose a country based on economic concerns. Participants try to estimate their expenses by considering the cost of living in the countries they will go to. It has been observed that participants use their economic forecasts as the first criterion when choosing the countries, they will go to. Lithuania, where students come for the Erasmus+ exchange program, can take the first place in the preferences of some students for this reason, as well as for various other reasons. However, this prediction and foresight may not always give accurate results. Students' economic forecasts before coming to Lithuania for Erasmus and their experiences and thoughts after coming to Lithuania differ in this respect is observed that a large majority of respondents think that Lithuania is more expensive than expected and that the inflation rate is higher than in other European Union countries. This experience seems to have taken Lithuania out of the first place in their preferences for students who want to have a second Erasmus experience. Some of the Erasmus students emphasized that the grant amount was sufficient for basic living expenses, but the grant was insufficient for socializing and traveling. Considering that Erasmus is not only an educational program but also a cultural exchange program that can add vision to students, it is recommended to improve the grants given. It is thought

that students can become graduates and qualified employees of the future only when education and experience are together, and this proposal is thought to be important for the development of relevant experience.

In addition to the economic reasons, exchange students are also affected by the quality of education, the language of the education provided, the language commonly used in the country, the location of the country, the climate of the country, the nature of the country, the culture of the country, etc. It has been observed that they prefer Lithuania for Erasmus for many varied reasons. According to the data obtained from the interviews, it was observed that the students had a particularly strong motivation to socialize and travel before coming to Erasmus. Accordingly, it has been observed that students who are considering participating in Erasmus want to dare to go out of their comfort zone, want to push their own limits, be open to diverse cultures and new experiences, or at least have the desire to improve themselves at these points.

It has been observed that students' expectations before coming to Lithuania for Erasmus and their experiences after coming to Lithuania differ in some cases. It is seen that the Erasmus process in Lithuania does not contribute as much as some students expect, especially students who are considering improving their English language level. Some students also emphasize Lithuania's limited options for socializing. When we examine the main reason for the differences between the expectations and experiences of the students participating in the Erasmus+ exchange program, the most frequently mentioned factors are the fact that the local people in Lithuania are closed to foreign cultures, most of the local people do not know English, those who know do not speak a foreign language and their negative attitude towards foreigners and behaviours were found to be common causes. Although it was stated that there were some negative experiences by the participants, it is also seen that most of the Erasmus students have positive common ideas about the preservation of the nature and architectural structure of Lithuania. This situation is likely to cause students to intend to visit Lithuania again in the future. While it was seen that many of the participants wanted to experience living abroad again after the Erasmus experience, it was seen that only a few people could choose Lithuania again.

When the main reasons shaping the participants' university preferences for Erasmus are examined, reasons such as the quality of academicians and education, and the adequacy of the physical facilities of the institution are mostly encountered. It is seen that some of the students who evaluated the education process they received stated that they would prefer the same university. These reasons are basically that the language of education is English, the academicians they take courses from, and the quality of education meets their expectations. It was observed that most of the participants stated that they would not prefer the universities they did Erasmus in Lithuania again because they wanted to have new and different experiences at a different university. Also, similar participants had some expectations about the physical, academic, and other facilities of the university before coming to Lithuania. However, they state that they will not choose the same university again

on the grounds that they think that their expectations are not met. This shows that, contrary to the opinion of Štraupaitė (2020), it is not correct to associate a significant part of an institution's performance with the number of Erasmus students who prefer it. It is seen that it would be more accurate to evaluate the performance of the institution in line with the opinions of the students who are in the Erasmus process and have completed the process.

It is seen that Erasmus has a significant impact on students in many areas such as language, education, cultural exchange, personal development, and life experience. It was stated by students that studying in Lithuania generally improves their English foreign language level. One of Erasmus' benefits for students is the chance to learn new languages and the opportunity to strengthen their language skills. Among the other benefits of Erasmus for students are opportunities to experience a different educational system for students from outside of Europe and study abroad for students from within Europe. In keeping with the chances offered to students by Erasmus, students can benefit from simpler career opportunities in the future by gaining a more varied education, increasing the number and proficiency of foreign languages, and fostering their personal growth.

The majority of students who have participated in Erasmus believe that it has had a substantial impact on their personal growth. Living with foreign cultures and understanding them, accepting cultural differences, and avoiding prejudices, developing crisis management skills, living in a different country, having an international experience that they can use multiple languages, making foreign friends, experiencing different food cultures, and getting out of the routine and comfort zone can also be defined as growing, maturing, and learning. From this vantage point, it becomes clear that in addition to enrolling in a course at a foreign university, living with people from distinct cultures also significantly contributes to an individual's personal growth. As mentioned in previous studies on Erasmus (Jacobone and Moro, 2015; Tekin and Gencer, 2013; Cuzzocrea and Krzaklewska, 2022), personal development manifests itself as a positive output of Erasmus. From this point of view, it can be thought that personal development is a part of education.

Most of the students reported experiencing culture shock when questioned about their Erasmus experience in Lithuania. The primary causes of the culture shock mentioned are the food culture and the negative traits seen in the attitudes and behaviors of the Indigenous people. It is believed that one factor that will prevent students from picking Lithuania again in the future is the locals' lack of receptivity to other cultures. At this point, to ensure more positive cultural interactions in the future, it is proposed that Lithuanian universities, academics, and other interested parties provide more incentives for Lithuanian students to go to various countries for Erasmus. In addition, it is suggested to give motivation to students at the point of recognition and understanding of diverse cultures. Promoting students' international travel for academic objectives need to be seen as an advantage rather than a loss. Thus, the foundations for a society with more diverse viewpoints in the future can be established.

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THE IMPACT OF HIGH-PERFORMANCE WORK SYSTEM PRACTICES ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

In these times, purposeful organizations are more likely to create significant long-term value, leading to better financial performance, greater employee engagement, and greater customer trust (Komm, Pollner, Schaninger, and Sikka, 2021). According to the authors, a lot of attention is paid to the role of human resources management and what result it creates in the organization. A key factor in the success of today's organization is competent employees in which proper investment is required in order to get the desired performance results. Armstrong (2010) presents the concept of a high-performance work system, emphasizing that a high-performance work system becomes a tool that determines the effective performance results of both individual employees and the organization as a whole. In the article, the problematics of the research of the influence of high-performance work system practices on the performance results of employees is revealed, and the theoretical approach to the influence of high-performance work system practices on employee performance is conceptualized. Based on the constructed theoretical model, the research methodology of the influence of high-performance work system practices on the performance results of employees is based, and the methodology has been developed and the influence of high-performance work system practices on the performance results of employees has been empirically evaluated. Based on the results of a quantitative research (n=476), a model of high-performance work system practices influencing employee performance was adjusted, which includes three practices: recruitment and selection; reward policy; the results of employee performance evaluation, task performance, and adaptive performance. This model can be implemented in organizations to improve employee performance by ensuring high employee productivity.
KEY WORDS: High-Performance Work System (HPWS), HR Practices, Impact, Employee performance.

Introduction

Over the past two decades, researchers have focused much attention on human resource management practices that, as a system, contribute to better employee performance (Messersmith and Guthrie, 2010). Such a human resource management system is described as a *High-Performance Work System (hereinafter* HPWS) and is considered the main prerequisite for improving employee performance. The aim is to use the potential of each employee as best as possible, creating favourable conditions for effective work and using competencies for successful growth. A number of researchers have examined the links between high-performance work system practices and the company's performance efficiency, productivity, company competitiveness, employee loyalty, commitment, and resilience. Most of them (Becker and Huselid, 2006; Gittell, Seidner, Wimbush, 2010; Bartram et al., 2014; Fu et al., 2015; Covey, Conant, 2016; Shahriari et al., 2017; Zhang, Akhtar, Bal, Talat, 2018; Sun, Mamman, 2022, etc.) confirm the positive influence of individual practices on overall company performance. Another group of authors (Flores, Posthuma, and Campion, 2016; Raineri, 2017; Jiang and Messersmith, 2018; Ogbonnaya and Messersmith, 2019; Peccei and van de Voorde, 2019; Kloutsiniotis and Mihail, 2020; Agarwal, 2021) presents the opposite research results, where excessive work productivity due to HPWS leads to internal competition, higher absenteeism, a sense of loss of well-being at work, or even burnout.

In summary, most of the research conducted includes individual HPWS practices such as employee participation, recruitment, performance-based reward policies, training, employee performance evaluation, or others; and research covering the full range of HPWS practices to identify which ones have the greatest influence on high employee performance at the individual level of employee performance is lacking.

The **main aim of the paper** is to determine the influence of high-performance work system practices on the performance results of employees. In the article, the problematics of the research of the influence of high-performance work system practices on the performance results of employees is revealed; the theoretical approach to the influence of high-performance work system practices on employee performance is conceptualized; the research methodology of the influence of high-performance work system practices on the performance results of employees is based; the methodology has been prepared and the influence of these practices on employee performance results has been empirically evaluated.

Theoretical framework

A high-performance work system is designed to increase employee productivity, improve work performance, provide flexibility and provide more responsibilities within the organization (Ogbonnaya and Valizade, 2018). A high-performance work system is generally defined as a form of human resource management or a set of specific HRM practices that can improve company's performance (Katou, 2008;

Marchington and Wilkinson, 2008; Subramony, 2009; Boxall and Purcell, 2012; Soens et al., 2012; Posthuma et al., 2013; Madison et al., 2018; Kooij and Boon, 2018). The authors not only describe the concept of HPWS but also specify exactly the essential characteristics of human resource management (HRM) practices that guide the development of a strategy for high performance in an organization. It is emphasized that in the presence of a certain set of HRM practices, the organization experiences a rapid improvement in performance, increasing employee productivity; the organization functions effectively in the context of employee job satisfaction. A summarized set of HPWS practices and their attributes is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. High-Performance Work System Practices (compiled by the authors)

Author	Description of practice (PR.) and HPWS attribute (A.)
Soens et al., 2012	**PR.** *Recruitment and selection* The practice includes clearly defined recruitment criteria and processes, recruiting candidates based on specific and existing skills. **A.** Candidates are selected only based on competencies and required skills.
Cooke, 2001; Aragón-Sánchez, Barba-Aragón and Sanz-Valle, 2003; Zacharatos et al., 2007; Barzegar and Farjad, 2011; Mihardjo et al, 2020; Al Sinawi and Sharma, 2020	**PR.** *Training and development* Practices include employment security, comprehensive training, teams, decentralized decision-making, and information sharing. **A.** Targeted training according to competencies, the professionals in the field are trained.
Diaz-Carrion, Lopez-Ferninandez and Romero-Fernandez, 2017	**PR.** *Reward policy* The practice includes a transparent salary procedure for all members of the organization, rewards based on achieved results, a strong motivational system, available competencies and the ability to use them purposefully in the working environment, and rewards for increasing employee productivity. **A.** Transparent payment process.
Prieto and Pérez-Santana, 2014	**PR.** *Employee performance evaluation* Practice includes the evaluation of personal performance, objective procedures, acceptance of responsibility, and the employee's level of involvement in the organization. **A.** Personal performance results, additional work performed, competencies properly used, and goals achieved are evaluated.
Denison, 2007; Khalid and Nawab, 2018	**PR.** *Employee participation* Practices include direct and indirect employee participation. Employees are given the opportunity to participate in the management of the organization, which reveals the potential of employees to contribute to better organizational results. **A.** Enabling direct employee participation in organizational decision-making

HPWS includes five main HRM practices: recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation/reward policy, employee performance evaluation, and employee participation, which must have certain characteristics (attributes) in order to influence the performance of employees (see Table 1).

After analysing the concept of employee performance by various authors (Koopmans, Berhnaards, Hildebrandt, Vet, and Berk, 2014; Mensah, 2015; Pawirosumarto, Sarjana, Muchtar, 2017; and others), the research follows the definition of Pradhan and Jena (2017).

The authors distinguish three dimensions of employee performance results: task performance results, adaptive performance results, and context performance results. These dimensions have specific indicators that can be used to define and evaluate each of the dimensions (see Figure 1).
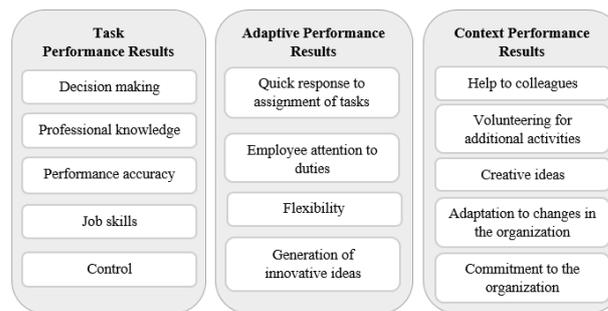

Fig. 1. Indicators of employee performance (compiled by the authors according to Pradhan and Jena, 2017)

The results of task performance are described as the performance of the organization's official regulations for example, the accurate execution of work that has specific deadlines, the implementation of supervision and resource control, and the very important skills and professionalism of the employee. Task performance results include the following sub-dimensions: decision-making, professional knowledge, accurate work performance, work skills, and control. The results of adaptive performance are manifested through the employee's quick response to the assignment of tasks, the employee's attention to duties, flexibility, and the generation of innovative ideas in organizational processes. The results of the context performance are identified by the changes and the microclimate in the organization. These performance results are manifested through the voluntary participation of employees in the company's activities, and the responsibilities to take on additional activities. This dimension is defined through a commitment to the organization, adapting to change, voluntary extra activities, and helping colleagues. All this increases the level of employee productivity and engagement in the organization. Based on the analysis of scientific literature, it is assumed that the high-performance work system practices influence the performance of employees.
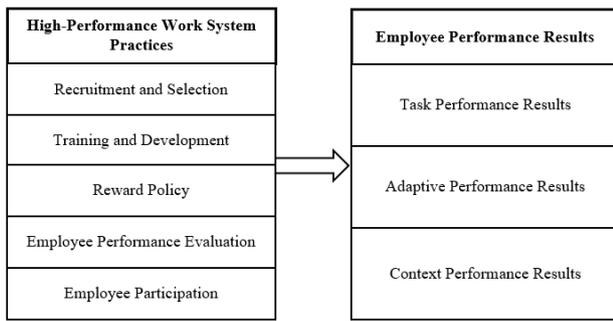
Fig. 2. A theoretical model of the influence of high-performance work system practices on employee performance results (compiled by the authors)

The developed theoretical model conceptualizes a theoretical approach to the research of the impact of high-performance work systems practices on employee performance (see Figure 2).

Based on the theoretical model presented in Figure 2, the methodology of the empirical research was compiled, which is presented in the next subsection.

Methodology

The aim of the empirical research is to evaluate the influence of high-performance work system practices on the performance results of employees. The aim is detailed into three research tasks: to investigate the expression of high-performance work system practices and employee performance results; to analyse the interrelationship between high-performance work system practices and employee performance results; to determine the influence of high-performance work system practices on employee performance results.

To achieve this aim, quantitative research was conducted, i.e., questionnaire survey and statistical data analysis. The questionnaire was compiled based on the sub-dimensions of two constructs (see Figure 2). The questionnaire consists of 3 parts: the first part covers HPWS practices: Recruitment and Selection (3 questions according to Soens et al. (2012)); Training and Development (3 questions based on Vanhala, Ahteela (2011); Reward Policy (5 questions based on Vanhala, Ahteela (2011); Diaz-Carrion et al. (2017)); Employee Performance Evaluation (5 questions according to Prieto et al. (2014)); Employee Participation (2 questions based on Vanhala, Ahteela (2011). The second part of the questionnaire consists of questions assessing the expression of employees' performance results: Task Performance Results, Adaptive Performance Results, and Context Performance Results (respectively 6, 7, and 10 questions based on the employee performance scale according to Pradhan, Jena (2017), Ratkutė (2022). It is important to mention that the approach of the subjective evaluation was chosen for the research of the performance of employees, i.e., how the employee himself evaluates his individual performance. The third part of the questionnaire consists of social/demographic questions: year of birth, work experience in the organization, income, sector, education, and position held. The selection of these demographic factors is based

on factors affecting employee performance analysed by Huy (2023), Fu et al. (2015), Bos-Nehles and Meijerink (2018), Cooke et al. (2019), and other authors.

Random (probability) sampling was carried out, SPSS programme was used to analyse the research data. A regression analysis was performed to evaluate the influence of high-performance work system practices on employee performance results. Persons working in Lithuania were selected for the research. 476 respondents participated in the research, so it can be stated that the sample is representative and the results are statistically significant.

Results and Discussion

Summarizing the research sample and the demographic characteristics of the respondents, it is identified that the majority of the respondents were born in the period 1982-2000 (56.09%). Most of the research participants work in the trade sector (31%). Most of the respondents have a university (42.4%) and higher (36.55%) education and work in non-managerial positions (57.57%). After analysing the performance of employees according to the studied demographic characteristics, it is found that $p < 0.05$ for all characteristics, except for the positions held by the employees, so the averages of the performance of employees are statistically different. It was established that, on average, the performance results of employees born in 1982-2000 are higher than those of employees born in 1961-1981. Also, the results revealed that the highest indicators were determined when evaluating the performance of employees born in the period 1982-2000 (4.02) and those born in 2000 and later (4.00). The performance results of employees working in different sectors are statistically significantly different (p=0.001). The performance results of employees working in the trade sector are the highest compared to the results of those working in other sectors. The relationship between employee performance and income was revealed (p=0.000). Employees, for whom money is usually sufficient, have higher performance results than employees for whom money is usually scarce or chronically scarce. There is a significant difference (p=0.015) in the performance of employees with different work experiences. The performance results of employees with 1-2 years and 2-3 years of work experience are higher. Based on the results of the research, it can be stated that employees with higher education (p=0.000) have higher performance results than employees with lower education. The results of the analysis of the relationship between the performance of employees and the positions held by employees showed that the averages are similar, i.e., the performance results of employees according to position do not differ statistically significantly (p=0.082).

According to the research results, all high-performance work system practices are manifested in the organizations where the respondents work, i.e., medium or high-resolution averages are obtained (see Figure 3.).
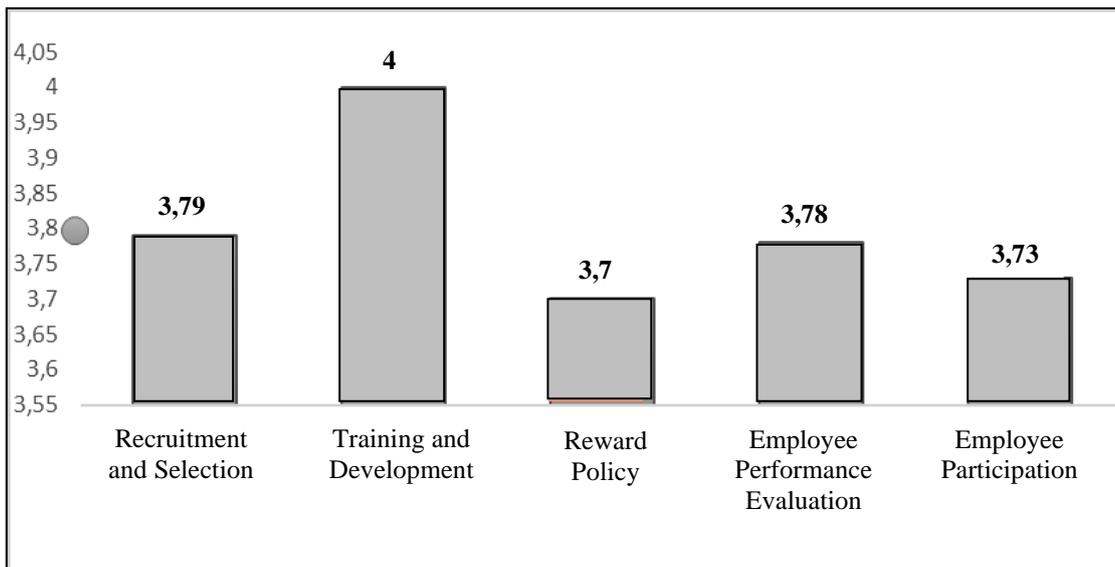
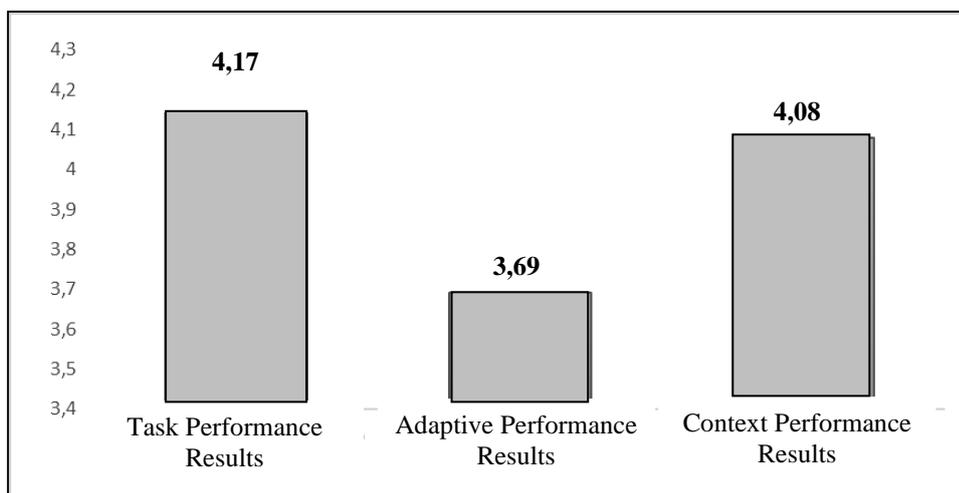**Fig. 3.** Averages of HPWS practices influencing employee performance

Fig. 4. Averages of evaluation of statements of employee performance dimensions

The training and development of employees has the highest average (4), and the reward policy has the lowest (3.7).

The summarized averages of employee performance results are presented in Figure 4.

The respondents rated the task performance results the highest (4.17), and the adaptive performance results (3.69) the lowest. It can be assumed that employees perform their tasks well according to their position regulations, but are less likely to adapt to changes that are directly related to their work.

The results of the correlational analysis of HPWS practices and employee performance are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlation coefficients between HPWS practices and employee performance

	Task performance results	Adaptive performance results	Context performance results
Recruitment and selection	0,429**	0,338**	0,282**
Training and development	0,433*	0,376**	0,319**
Reward policy	0,386**	0,238**	0,290**
Employee performance evaluation	0,431**	0,289**	0,366**
Employee participation	0,356**	0,294**	0,311**

** - p < 0,001

82

The obtained results show that all high-performance work system practices and employee performance have weak-to-moderate relationships with each other. For all correlation coefficients p=0.000, and the relationship is statistically significant at p < 0.001. Recruitment and selection practices (0.429**) have a moderate relationship with task performance results. Thus, the more efficient the recruitment and selection process in the organization, the higher the performance results of employees, which are associated with the tasks described in their position regulations. It can be assumed that the application of recruitment and selection practices with HPWS characteristics leads to a more targeted and clearly defined job position in the organization, so employees can achieve more effective results. A moderate, statistically significant relationship (0.433**) is found between training and development practice and task performance results. The results of the research show that the more often the training is carried out in the organization, the higher the ratio of the results of the employees' task performance. The correlation coefficient between reward policy and employee task performance results (0.386**) shows that employee task performance results are higher if fairer and more transparent reward policies in organizations. Fourth HPWS practice, i.e., employee performance evaluation, has an average relationship (0.431**) with task performance results. Thus, it can be stated that the more the performance evaluation in the organization is focused on employees' competencies and progress, and the performance evaluations are based on objective assessment, the higher the results of the employees' task performance. There is a weak relationship (0.356**) between employee participation and task performance results. Also, when analysing the relationship between HPWS practices and the results of adaptive performance, it can be seen that the

relationship between the components is weak but significant. The weakest relationship (0.238**) is found between reward policy and adaptive performance results, and the strongest (0.376**) – between training and development and adaptive performance results. Correlation analysis results revealed that recruitment and selection have a weak relationship (0.282**) with context performance results. This relationship shows that the efficiency of the recruitment and selection process in organizations increases the performance of the context. Also, as the number of trainings in the organization increases, the results of the context performance improve (0.319**), for example, employees are able to take on more responsibilities and undertake additional activities after training. Based on the established relationship (0.366**) between employee performance evaluation and context performance results, it can be stated that in the presence of objective, competency-based performance evaluation in organizations, the context performance results of employees improve, for example, the encouragement of colleagues increases, and available knowledge and abilities are improved. In summary, there is a statistically significant relationship between HPWS practices and employee performance results. The analysis of HPWS practices and employee task performance results revealed that there is a moderate relationship between them and a weak but statistically significant relationship between high-performance work system practices and adaptive performance results and context performance results.

A regression analysis was performed to evaluate the influence of high-performance work system practices on employee performance results.

Table 3. Results of examining the suitability of HPWS practices' influence on employee performance results

Dependent variable	HPWS Practices	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Standardized Coefficient β	p	VIF
Task performance results	Recruitment and selection	0,532	0,283	0,276	0,194	0,000	1,416
	Training and development				0,116	0,091	2,067
	Reward policy				0,172	0,011	2,962
	Employee performance evaluation				0,215	0,005	1,942
	Employee participation				-0,083	0,176	2,471
Adaptive performance results	Recruitment and selection	0,504	0,254	0,246	0,007	0,884	1,416
	Training and development				0,037	0,594	2,235
	Reward policy				0,267	0,000	2,962
	Employee performance evaluation				0,297	0,000	1,942
	Employee participation				-0,083	0,167	2,471
Context performance results	Recruitment and selection	0,411	0,169	0,160	0,031	0,542	1,416
	Training and development				0,096	0,193	3,067
	Reward policy				0,080	0,270	2,962
	Employee performance evaluation				0,065	0,410	3,708
	Employee participation				-0,032	0,625	2,471

The R2 values (0.283; 0.254; 0.169) confirm the linear regression model with two dependent variables: task

performance results and adaptive performance results. The model of the HPWS practices and employee context

performance results is not valid as R2 =0.0169. The HPWS practices: recruitment and selection (β=0.194, p=0.000), employee performance evaluation (β=0.215, p=0.005), and reward policy (β=0.172, p=0.011), have a significant influence on the results of employee task performance. A statistically significant positive influence was found between these HPWS practices and task performance results. Based on the obtained research results, it can be stated that the organization of recruitment and selection processes, objective evaluation of employee performance, and transparent reward policy have a positive influence on the results of the performance of employees' direct functions. Employee performance evaluations should be based on objective and quantifiable results. Employee performance evaluations should be based on objective and quantifiable results. According to the obtained Beta coefficient, this practice has the highest value, so it can be assumed that this indicator has the greatest impact on the results of employees' task performance results (in the decision-making, the performance of official functions, use of work skills). The results of the research revealed that training and development practices (β=0.116, p=0.091) and employee participation (β=-0.083, p=0.176) do not have a statistically significant effect on the employees' task performance results.

After evaluating the obtained coefficients of the regression function of high-performance work system practices and employees' adaptive performance results, it can be stated that the reward policy practice (β=0.267, p=0.000) and the performance evaluation practice (β=0.297, p=0.000) have a significant influence on employees' task performance results. A statistically significant positive influence was found between these practices and adaptive performance results. Also, the results revealed that the practice of recruitment and selection (β=0.007, p=0.884), the practice of training and development (β=0.037, p=0.594), and employee participation (β=-0.087, p=0.167) do not have a statistically significant effect for the results of adaptive performance. Thus, it can be stated that a reward policy based on high results and evaluation of employees' performance can directly positively influence the adaptive performance results (adaptation to changes, implementation of changes). Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the high-performance work system practices do not affect the employees' context performance results. This possibly proves that it is more important for employees to focus on the performance of direct functions or a certain task, rather than on the context performance results (voluntary and additional activities, behaviour with colleagues). Thus, the context performance results are important in the organization but are more oriented toward the evaluation of the organizational climate or the development of other research directions.

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that when conducting selections based on precisely and clearly identified competencies and accepting employees based on their skills corresponding to specific fields and the nature of work, the performance results of employees are higher. Also, it has been confirmed that employee participation has a significant,

but negative influence, so it can be assumed that effective employee participation can negatively affect employees' adaptation to changes (adaptive performance results) and negatively affect decision-making or achieving work quality (task performance results). On the other hand, the results of the research revealed that training and development do not have a statistically significant effect on employee performance results. This may also be due to the fact that employees are accepted into the workplace as specialists in that field, so the organized training must deepen their existing knowledge, not provide the basics.

Summarizing the results of the research, the created model of the influence of HPWS practices on employee performance results should be adjusted by eliminating the sub-dimension of context performance results from the employee performance construct and training and development and employee participation practices due to the result, as they do not have a significant positive impact on employee performance results. The adjusted model of the influence of HPWS practices on employee performance results consists of the following high-performance work system practices: recruitment and selection, reward policy, and employee performance evaluation, and employee performance results include task performance results and adaptive performance results.

It should be noted that one of the limitations of this research is that the respondents were selected using non-probability convenience sampling. For this reason, the structure of the survey respondents may not fully proportionally correspond to the structure of Lithuanian employees. Another limitation is related to the evaluation of the performance of employees, choosing a subjective approach, which assumes that the self-evaluation of the performance of one's own work may be better than what objective performance indicators could show. All this suggests opportunities for further research.

Conclusions

Conducted research reveals that a high-performance work system can contribute to improving performance and can influence employee loyalty, commitment, resilience, and productivity. At the individual level, the value of a high-performance work system for employees is presented: improved work quality, the faster performance of functional tasks, objective evaluation of performance, higher performance results, and participation in organizational decision-making. However, the increasing role of HPWS practices in the HRM of organizations presents a number of conflicting opinions, and the need for research on this topic only increases.

A conceptualized theoretical model of high-performance work system practices influencing employee performance results. The theoretical model assumes that high-performance work system practices influence employee performance results. The theoretical model includes two constructs: the first is HPWS practices: recruitment and selection of employees; training and development; reward policy; employee performance evaluation; employee participation. The second construct includes employee performance results: task performance

results; context performance results; adaptive performance results.

After carrying out the empirical quantitative research, the impact of high-performance work system practices on employee performance results was evaluated and the following conclusions were drawn: the vast majority of high-performance work system practices influencing employee performance results have higher than mean averages. Correlation analysis revealed that there is a statistically significant relationship between HPWS practices and employee performance results. The analysis of HPWS practices and employee task performance results revealed that there is a moderate relationship between them and a weak but significant relationship between high-performance work system practices and adaptive performance results and context performance results. The performed regression analysis showed that HPWS practices have a statistically significant positive influence (except for employee participation β= - 0.101) on employee performance results. Based on the results of the research, it can be stated that when performing selections based on precise and clear competencies and hiring employees based on their skills, which correspond to specific fields and the nature of work, the employee performance results are higher. Also, it can be seen that employee participation has a significant, but negative influence, so it can be assumed that effective employee participation can negatively affect employees' adaptation to changes (adaptive performance results) and negatively affect decision-making or achieving work quality (task performance results). On the other hand, the results of the research revealed that training and development (β= 0.086) does not have a statistically significant effect on employee performance results.

Based on the results of the research, the model of HPWS practices influencing employee performance results is adjusted, which in the final version includes three practices: recruitment and selection, reward policy, employee performance evaluation; task performance results, and adaptive performance results. This model can be implemented in organizations to improve employee performance results by ensuring high productivity. Also, based on the results of the research, it can be stated that the application of high-performance work practices as a system is important for organizations, rather than the application of individual practices.

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Vadyba 2023/1(39). Mokslo tiriamieji darbai

Klaipėda, 2023