PROCEEDINGS

The 5th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE on TOURISM & BUSINESS (ICTB 2024)

RETHINKING TOURISM SUSTAINABILITY:

THE ROLE OF DESTINATIONS

Bangkok, 21-23 AUGUST 2024

Co-hosted by: Mahidol University International College (Thailand)
Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts (Switzerland), and
Edinburgh Napier University (Scotland)

Special partner:
Asian Ecotourism Network (AEN)

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The 5th International Conference on Tourism & Business (ICTB 2024)

Rethinking Tourism Sustainability: The Role of Destinations

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Title

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PREFACE

These proceedings include 42 extended abstracts and full papers presented at the 5th International Conference on Tourism and Business (ICTB). This conference, jointly organized by Mahidol University International College (Thailand), the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts (Switzerland), and Edinburgh Napier University (Scotland), serves as a global forum for the exchange of knowledge in tourism and business. This year, we are also pleased to welcome a special partner from the industry, the Asian Ecotourism Network (AEN). The conference focuses on "Rethinking Tourism Sustainability: The Role of Destinations." Three supporting themes have been identified to encompass a verse range of up-to-date and relevant research topics: Rethinking Sustainability, High-Value Tourism Products for Enhanced Tourism Experiences, and Sustainable Event Destinations. On behalf of all co-hosts and the partner, we warmly welcome all conference attendees from 18 countries to Thailand, a destination renowned for its gastronomy and wellness tourism products, which serve as examples of high-value tourism offerings. As one of the world's most popular tourist destinations, Thailand is moving towards sustainability in various aspects, making it a highly relevant location for ICTB 2024. The local tourism offerings and environment are well-suited to enhance discussions around the conference themes. We sincerely hope that all attendees will have a rewarding experience, engaging with academics and practitioners who share their interests. We also hope that attending ICTB 2024 will inspire attendees through insightful presentations and discussions, stimulating further interest in the tourism and business disciplines.

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Leveraging AI-Generated Imagery for Sustainable Gastronomic Tourism

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Abstract

This study examines the rising trend of sustainable cuisine and how can promote it. The worldwide market for vegan food, valued at 15.77 billion USD in 2020-2021, is expected to see substantial growth by 2025. A diet based on sustainable cuisine can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, require fewer resources, and potentially decrease wildlife destruction by 66%. From a health standpoint, it offers numerous benefits, including lower cholesterol levels, reduced blood pressure, and a decreased risk of heart disease. Despite these advantages, sustainable cuisine is not yet a mainstream choice due to taste preferences and health concerns. This study aims to investigate the influence of AI-generated images on consumers' perception of the quality of sustainable cuisine and their motivation to purchase. It seeks to answer a main question of what kind of AI-generated images have a greater impact on consumers' perception of food quality in sustainable cuisine?

Keywords: AI-generated imagines, sustainable cuisine, gastronomy tourism

1 Introduction

The academic study of the overlap between sustainable tourism and gastronomy tourism, with a focus on AI, is not extensive. Gastronomy tourism, is a type of tourism that focuses on local dining experiences during travel (Güneş, 2013). More than being culinary tourists who mainly engage with local cuisines for savory enjoyment, there is also an integral part of their dedication to sustainability (Güneş, 2013). Statistics indicate that over 80% of global travelers consider sustainable tourism crucial (Statista, 2024). Among these travelers, millennials are the most inclined towards eco-sensitive behaviors, with Gen Z mainly aspiring to eco-friendly behaviors, (PwC, 2021). In order cater to these traveler preferences, today's gastronomy tourism is gravitating towards principles of sustainability. These principles include efficient use of resources, environmental protection, climate change mitigation, and the preservation of food biodiversity (Güneş, 2013).

Recent surveys reveal that, although over half (56%) of adults have altered their consumer behavior due to climate change concerns, this figure represents a decrease from the 69% reported in the previous year (Ipsos, 2021). This suggests that while consumers are adopting more sustainable habits, the growth of this trend may not be as swift as expected. Raptou and Manolas (2022) studied the effects of climate change on food consumption, finding that unfamiliarity with the taste, variety, and quality of climate-conscious foods often causes hesitation. However, these concerns are largely unfounded. Climate-conscious foods, which promote the consumption of locally sourced, fresh produce, often have a richer flavor due to being harvested at peak ripeness (De Boer et al., 2016). A wide array of such foods is available due to peak seasonal output, including fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, and sustainably sourced meat and seafood (Koehn et al., 2022). This variety dispels the myth that climate-conscious foods equate to vegetarianism (Varela et al., 2022). In terms of quality, these foods are typically less processed and free from harmful pesticides and fertilizers (Güneş, 2013). Thus, climate-conscious foods offer not only a wider range of options and richer flavors but also high quality, being organic and pollution-free. Despite these benefits, most consumers remain unaware of them, a trend reflected in demand patterns and supported by previous research. This raises important questions: How can we encourage consumers to try climate-conscious foods?

This research project is designed to explore the potential of AI-generated images in promoting sustainable cuisine. The primary tool used for this purpose is a type of artificial intelligence model known as Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) (Creswell et al., 2018). GANs operate through a dual-component system: a generator and a discriminator. The generator's role is to create images from what is essentially random noise. These generated images are then evaluated by the discriminator, which compares them against real images. The discriminator's feedback is used to refine the generator's output, gradually improving its ability to produce images that closely resemble real ones. The objective of this study is to investigate how these AI-generated images can be utilized to further the cause of sustainable cuisine. By creating realistic and appealing images of sustainable food practices and products, it is hypothesized that this could influence public perception and behavior towards more environmentally friendly dietary choices. This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how AI, and GANs in particular, can be leveraged in the context of sustainability in the culinary world.

2 Literature review

2.1 Food quality perception

The decision to choose a cuisine is significantly influenced by the perceived quality of food, which includes both its expected taste and health benefits (Varela et al., 2022). Generally, the expected taste of a food item is determined by sensory cues like its look, freshness, and smell (Konuk, 2021). For example, a food item that looks fresh, clean, and smells good is usually expected to taste good. On the other hand, the perceived healthiness is an individual's assessment of the health advantages of a specific food (Liu et al., 2019), influenced by factors like nutritional facts, promotional images, and personal beliefs about health and nutrition (Liu et al., 2019). Previous studies have explored how a food's visual presentation, including aspects like color, arrangement, and related imagery, can greatly affect a consumer's taste expectations and health perceptions (Paakki et al., 2019; Vermeir & Roose, 2020; Spence et al., 2022). A common conclusion from these studies is that when food is visually perceived as both delicious and healthy, the consumer is more likely to have a positive attitude, resulting in a greater intention to purchase.

2.2 Purchase intention to sustainable cuisine

The unique characteristics of climate-conscious foods mean that the motivations of consumers go beyond their personal preferences for food quality. Factors external to the individual, especially those related to environmental awareness, have a significant influence. Research has shown that consumers who are aware of the environmental consequences of food production are more likely to express worries about climate change and its effects on food choices (Gifford & Chen, 2017; Kim & Hall, 2019). A deeper understanding of the environmental implications of their food choices can guide consumers towards options that are more climate-conscious. This shift is further supported by the principle of informed decision-making (Jansen et al., 2023). When consumers fully understand the benefits of climate-conscious foods, not only for their health but also for the environment, they are more likely to select these options. Furthermore, this conscious decision-making can influence others in their social network, leading to a cascading effect of positive change towards sustainability (Hartmann et al., 2021).

While existing research has consistently shown a positive relationship between prior knowledge and purchase intention (Gifford & Chen, 2017; Kim & Hall, 2019), this study suggests that this psychological mechanism might be too simplistic. It argues that the relationship between prior knowledge and purchase intention is likely to be more complex (Jylhä et al., 2023), particularly given that the impact of AI-generated images on consumer perceptions of food quality remains largely unexplored in empirical research (Law et al., 2023).

3 Method

This forthcoming study will employ image-based experimental methodologies to validate the hypotheses. To ensure the robustness and validity of the research, the study will engage in consultations with four seasoned researchers specializing in hospitality and tourism prior to the commencement of the data collection phase. These experts are anticipated to reach a unanimous agreement that the AI-generated images accurately correspond with the captioned types of hand-drawn and realistic styles, as well as the variables under examination, thereby negating the need for any modifications. Subsequently, the study will conduct a pilot test to reinforce the validity and reliability of the research. The pilot tests, which will involve a total of 20 participants, will be administered using Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). MTurk is an online survey platform that is frequently utilized in experimental studies due to its proven track record of delivering reliable data quality (Liu et al., 2019). This rigorous approach is expected to ensure the integrity and accuracy of the study's findings.

This research project will utilize a methodological framework that includes the manipulation of AI-generated images. The aim is to scrutinize the influence of these images on key variables that are fundamental to consumer behavior and perception. The first variable under consideration is quality perception, which in this context refers to the participants' subjective evaluation of the AI-generated images. This evaluation encompasses both the technical aspects of the images, such as resolution and color accuracy, and more abstract elements like creativity and originality. The second variable is attractiveness, which extends beyond mere physical appeal to include the overall aesthetic value of the images. This value is determined by various factors, including composition, color harmony, and emotional impact. The final variable is purchase intention, which denotes the probability that a consumer will buy a product or service. In this study, purchase intention will be gauged in relation to the AI-generated images. The study will specifically investigate whether exposure to these images sways a participant's intention to make a purchase. By examining these variables, the study aims to augment the academic understanding of the influence of AI-generated images on consumer behavior and perception. This could have profound implications for fields such as marketing, advertising, and consumer psychology. The findings of this study are expected to offer valuable insights for both academics and practitioners in these fields. The constructive feedback received from the ICTB 2024 conference is anticipated to further refine the study and the pilot test, thereby enhancing the overall quality and relevance of the research.

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Exploring Tourists' Adoption of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Travel Decision Making Process

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Abstract

This paper investigates the potential of ChatGPT, a generative AI chatbot, in facilitating travel information search. It extends the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by incorporating information quality as an external variable and examines its influence on perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitude, and intention to use ChatGPT. Findings reveal that relevancy and completeness positively affect perceived usefulness, while only relevancy impacts perceived ease of use significantly. Perceived usefulness, in turn, positively influences attitude, which ultimately drives users' intention to use ChatGPT for travel information search. This study sheds light on the importance of information quality in shaping users' attitudes towards AI-based systems and offers insights for travel companies to enhance user experience.

Keywords: ChatGPT, travel information search, TAM, artificial intelligence, information quality

1 Introduction

ChaptGPT (Chat Generative Pre-training Transformer) is a chatbot that is based on generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) which provides information for users through conversational texts (Aljanabi, 2023). In line with the upsurge of interest in using ChatGPT, it is also being utilized in searching for travel-related information. As ChatGPT bears various benefits over traditional means of obtaining information online such as online search engines in terms of its personalization and promptness in being able to offer information, it can be predicted that its popularity will continue (Chi, 2023). Despite its importance, barely any research has been conducted to date on ChatGPT and its usage in the context of obtaining travel information.

Based on the above background, this research intends to understand potential tourists' intention to utilize ChatGPT for travel related information search and what its triggers are. Based on extended version of TAM model, this study added an external variable of information quality to the traditional TAM model. TAM model is one of the most widely utilized model to understand the underlying mechanism behind users' intention to adopt new technological services (Holden & Karsh, 2010). Thus, examination on the influence of information quality on perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use is conducted, followed by the impact of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use on attitude. Last, effect of attitude on intention to use ChatGPT for travel information search is explored.

2 Methods

To collect data, participants were recruited by an online research company in which they were prompted to respond to a survey online for a month in September, 2023. The research participants were prompted to use ChatGPT to search for travel information and to examine the response they gathered from ChatGPT prior to responding to the survey. Main variables of this study that constituted the survey include information quality, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, attitude, and intention to use ChatGPT for travel information search. Specifically, information quality is a multi-dimensional structure that consisted of the dimensions of relevancy, timeliness, and completeness. All the measurement items were adopted from previous studies (Lee, Strong, Kahn, & Wang, 2002; Kim, Lee, Shin, & Yang, 2017; Lin, Juan, & Lin, 2020; Rahman, Lesch, Horrey, & Strawderman, 2017) and were measured on a 5-point likert-type scale. A total of 337 samples were used for data analysis. As for the demographic profile of the sample, 65% were male and 35% were female. Regarding age of the sample, 31% were in their 20s, 38% were in their 30s, 25% were in their 40s, 6% were in their 50s or more. For data analysis, a two-stage analytical procedure for PLS-SEM was conducted in which measurement model was tested prior to examining the structural model.

3 Results and conclusion

In assessing the reliability and validity of the constructs, convergent validity was sufficient and internal consistency for all constructs were high and satisfactory for subsequent analysis. The collinearity of the structural model through variance inflation factor (VIF) was examined. All VIF values were less than the threshold of 5 varying between 1 to 3.048, indicating that the structural model showed no collinearity issue. In testing hypotheses, the proposed structural model was assessed using 5,000 bootstrap resamples. Among three dimensions of relevancy, timeliness, and completeness that were used to measure information quality, only relevancy and completeness were identified to have significant and positive influence on perceived usefulness while only relevancy was found to positively impact perceived ease of use at the significant level. In addition, among perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, only perceived usefulness had significantly positive influence on attitude. Last, attitude had significantly positive impact on users' intention to use ChatGPT.

This research is significant in a sense that this is one of the first attempts in examining the role of ChatGPT in travel information search. While some research has been conducted with application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in hospitality and tourism industry, most of them examined technical function of the chatbot in which the AI system is based on (Pillai & Sivathanu, 2020) and barely any research has been done on examining the function of knowledge generated by the AI system. Moreover, the findings of this research inform travel companies that utilizes system based on AI to pay attention to relevancy and completeness aspect of the information quality and that perceived usefulness of the system plays an important role in shaping attitude of the individuals using the system while perceived ease of use may not be an important factor for individuals in forming their attitude.

Although this research suggests significant implications, limitations exist. While various external variables could be considered in extending the TAM model, this study only examined information quality as an additional variable to the existing TAM model. Future studies could be conducted with constructs that could have impact on the relationship among variables in the TAM model. Moreover, the findings of this research may not be generalizable as the study was conducted with Korea sample only. Thus, future studies should be carried out with diverse cultural populations.

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Assessing the Impact of Technology on Wine Tourist's Satisfaction and Behavioural Intentions

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Abstract

This study aims to understand the impact of technology on wine tourists' satisfaction and behavioural intentions. A questionnaire was created, with items to measure wine tourists' use of technology, satisfaction with the use of technologies and behavioural intentions. The target audience was people who had already visited the Douro Region in Portugal and a total of 207 valid responses were obtained. The results revealed that the use of advanced technologies did not impact satisfaction or behavioural intentions and the use of utilitarian technologies has a significant impact on satisfaction, therefore contributing to a better overall experience. The study's findings contribute to the literature on the use of technology in wine tourism and provide insights for managers in the wine tourism industry.

Keywords: wine tourists, technologies, behavioural intentions, satisfaction, Douro Region
**Corresponding author*

1 Introduction

Little attention has been paid to the use of technology in wine tourism experiences (Garibaldi & Sfodera, 2020). Many researchers have suggested the need for further research on the digital experience of wine tourism, given the scarcity of such studies worldwide (e.g., Garibaldi & Sfodera, 2020; Sigala, 2023; Zamarre et al., 2021). Therefore, this study aims to understand how consumers accept technologies and how companies can incorporate them into their operations. Since technology influences consumer behaviour before, during, and after travel (Dixit et al., 2019), it is necessary to analyze the digital experience linked to wine tourism (Zamarre et al., 2021).

This study contributes to the literature by examining the impact of technology use on wine tourists' satisfaction and behavioural intentions (recommendation and revisit intentions). The results of this study provide managers operating in the wine tourism industry with a better understanding of the impact of technologies.

The region chosen for this study was the Douro Region in Portugal. This region has been considered one of the most important wine-producing regions in Portugal for centuries due to its production of port wine and its significant weight in the total Portuguese wine exports (Correia et al., 2019). Port wine has been sold in the global market for over 250 years, and almost 85% of its production is still exported to more than a hundred countries (Trigo & Silva, 2022).

2 Literature review

The importance of wine tourism has been increasing worldwide, not only because of its ability to meet the growing demands of tourists to experience creative tourism activities but also for its ability to support the sustainable development of the destination (Sigala & Robinson, 2019). Wine tourism can be used to promote rural livelihood and sustainable tourism (Trigo & Silva, 2022).

Information and communication technologies (ICT) are an integral part of tourism and are designed to impact consumer behaviour and transform their experiences (Tussyadiah, 2017). Using digital resources to educate wine tourists brings novelty and authenticity to generate and reinforce positive feelings towards wineries, vineyards, or the destination (Zamarre et al., 2021). Examples of technological advances aimed at innovating the wine industry include blockchains, mobile applications, social networks, virtual crowdfunding, virtual reality, and augmented reality (Sigala, 2023).

Since tourism is an information-intensive product, technology substantially impacts how consumers search for, purchase, consume, and remember their tourism experiences (Gretzel et al., 2006). Digitalization is here to stay, bringing greater societal challenges, particularly in innovation and sustainability.

3 Methodology

A questionnaire was created for this study, with items to measure wine tourists' use of technology, satisfaction with the use of technologies and behavioural intentions. The items used were based on the studies of Jeong and Shin (2020) and Um and Chung (2021) and were measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

The study's target audience was people who had already visited the Douro region. The questionnaire was available online in Portuguese, English and French. Posters with a QR code to the questionnaire were placed at wineries, hotels, railway stations and tourist offices in the Douro region. In addition, the survey was distributed in social media groups related to wine or wine tourism (Facebook and LinkedIn). The questionnaires were administered during the high season months of July to October 2022. A total of 207 valid responses were obtained.

A factor analysis was conducted on the items to measure technology use, and two factors were identified: The use of advanced technologies and the use of utilitarian technologies. The impact of these variables on satisfaction and behavioural intentions was assessed using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS software.

4 Major findings

The research sample comprised 207 participants that had visited the Douro Region at least once, with 53% identifying as female and 46% as male (1% did not answer). Regarding nationality, 69% of the respondents were Portuguese, 11% were from the United States, and the remaining 20% represented 18 other countries, reflecting a broad international spectrum. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 77 years. The age distribution was as follows: 41% were between 29 and 45 years old, 30% were between 46 and 58 years old, 17% were between 18 and 28 years old, and 13% were over 59 years old. The educational levels were notably high, with 83% holding at least a bachelor's degree.

The results revealed that the use of advanced technologies such as augmented reality, chatbots and virtual reality did not impact satisfaction or behavioural intentions. Wine tourists may prioritize traditional and authentic experiences over technologically enhanced ones. The expectation of a rustic, immersive, and personal experience in vineyards and wineries could lead to a preference for minimal technological interference, thereby diminishing the perceived value of advanced technologies in this context.

Utilitarian technologies (e.g., Google translator, Official Websites, and social media) improve the immediate travel experience by providing useful information, language translation, and convenient communication. This enhancement leads to increased satisfaction during the visit as tourists find it easier to navigate, understand, and engage with their surroundings. However, satisfaction with these practical aspects does not necessarily translate to a deeper emotional connection or memorable experience, which are often required to motivate recommendations or return visits.

This study makes several significant theoretical contributions to the existing literature on new technologies and their relationship with satisfaction and intention to repeat and recommend a visit to the Douro.

It shows that wine tourists do not seem to be influenced by more sophisticated and advanced technologies. This is important for wine producers, wine tourism managers, communication and marketing technicians, and destination promoters.

To improve customer relationships and increase sales, wine industry managers should invest in new technologies to attract customers and create more innovative experiences. However, these technologies should be more utilitarian. Additionally, leveraging the power of social media is of utmost importance.

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Large Language Models in Personalized Education of the Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall Red Tourism

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Abstract

Zhang Zi Zhong Museum, a Red culture memorial, is vital for youth education on revolutionary values and cultural heritage preservation. However, deficiencies in guided tours and reliance on traditional displays may limit their effectiveness. This study explores integrating technology to enhance personalized learning experiences in these halls. It combines a literature review with field investigations, focusing on technological applications like LLMs for improved engagement and learning outcomes. Technologies such as personalized content recommendation systems and interactive learning designs can boost user satisfaction. Digital human technology, offering innovative presentation methods, holds promise for attracting and engaging younger audiences in Red culture. Embracing these advancements could modernize memorial halls, better meet educational needs, and preserve revolutionary values for future generations.

Keywords: Red culture, Zhang Zi Zhong memorial hall, Large Language Model (LLM), personalized education

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1 Introduction

Commemorating and educating the public on the history and culture of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japan, commonly known in China as "red culture." It holds profound significance in fostering a collective remembrance of hard-won peace. At the forefront of this endeavor are memorial halls established specifically to safeguard and perpetuate this historical legacy. These institutions serve not merely as repositories of rich historical and cultural knowledge but also as pivotal educational platforms aimed at instilling a sense of national identity, particularly among the younger populace (Li, 2013, p.26).

Among these memorial halls, the Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall (Fig.1) stands as a prominent example, dedicated to honoring the memory of General Zhang Zi Zhong and offering visitors a deep dive into the history of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japan. This memorial hall encapsulates the spirit of resistance and sacrifice characteristic of that era, providing a tangible link to the past for present and future generations.

Fig. 1: Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall (Photographed by the authors, 2024)

Based on empirical observations, the Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall currently confronts operational challenges related to understaffing, particularly evident in insufficient numbers of tour guides to adequately cater to the influx of tourists, notably large groups of young Chinese students. This deficiency in staffing resources poses significant limitations in delivering an optimal visitor experience and educational engagement within the memorial hall setting.

The issue of understaffing impacts various facets of the memorial hall's functionality. It restricts the capacity to provide personalized and informative guided tours, essential for conveying the nuanced historical and cultural significance associated with General Zhang Zi Zhong. Moreover, inadequate staffing impedes the hall's ability to efficiently manage visitor flow, potentially leading to overcrowding during peak times and compromising the quality of educational interactions. Therefore, this study aims to explore how to apply large language models in cultural memorial halls such as the Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall to address these issues effectively.

Amidst the rapid advancements in artificial intelligence, the emergence of large language models like GPT-4 represents a transformative opportunity for cultural education. These models leverage deep learning technology to offer tailored educational materials, real-time Q&A sessions, and adaptive learning pathways that adjust content and difficulty based on individual learning progress and interests (He et al., 2023, p.2; Zhao, Zhu, & Wang, 2023, p.26). Integrating such technologies into the educational framework of memorial halls could significantly enhance efficiency and effectiveness, providing dynamic and interactive learning experiences that resonate with diverse audiences, including young students exploring "red culture."

2 Research objectives

1. Study the Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall and analyze the key knowledge.

2. Explore how large language models can be strategically applied within cultural memorial halls like the Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall.

By investigating aforementioned topics, the study seeks to propose innovative solutions that optimize visitor engagement, enrich educational offerings, and foster deeper connections to historical heritage, ultimately contributing to the broader goals of patriotic education and cultural preservation in contemporary society.

3 Research methodology

In this study, two methods were employed to comprehensively explore the integration of large language models in educational contexts and the historical significance of red culture memorial halls. The literature review method was utilized to gather and analyze existing academic literature, historical archives, official materials from memorial halls, and related publications. This approach focused on understanding the historical background and educational significance of the Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall, alongside exploring the potential applications of large language models within its educational framework. Information regarding General Zhang Zi Zhong and the Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall is sourced from prominent Chinese academic journals and the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI). CNKI is renowned for its comprehensive coverage of scientific research in China (Jiang, 2015). For literature related to large language models, the selection of sources primarily relies on Google Scholar, with a preference for articles published within the last five years in academic journals.

Concurrently, the field research method involved visiting the Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall to directly observe and participate in its educational programs. This firsthand experience allowed researchers to evaluate the effectiveness of current educational strategies and to identify opportunities and challenges for implementing large language models in enhancing visitor engagement and learning outcomes. Together, these methods provided a robust foundation for the study's theoretical framework and practical insights into integrating advanced technologies in educational settings.

4 Research results

Literature review results

Red culture tourism

China is rich in red tourism resources, and many places have fertile soil for red culture. The "National List of Classic Red Tourism Scenic Spots" issued by the National Development and Reform Commission of China includes a total of 300 national classic red tourism scenic spots.

In recent years, China's red tourism has achieved considerable development and reaped fruitful results. The "China Red Tourism Development Report (2023)" shows that the number of visitors to red tourism in China has exceeded 2 billion, and the market size of red tourism is close to one trillion yuan. Along with its growth and expansion, new attractions and highlights continue to emerge in red tourism (Tang, Zhang, & Yang, 2021).

Red culture, originating from China's revolutionary conflicts, represents the cultural and ideological heritage linked to the evolution, progress, and transformation of New China. Scholars delineate two interpretations of "red culture." Broadly, it encompasses the entirety of spiritual and material accomplishments within the socialist movement. In a narrower context, "red" signifies revolution and struggle, with revolutionary culture forming its core (Zhao et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, numerous challenges have emerged that imperil the preservation and continuity of red culture. Factors such as economic development and urbanization pose threats by gradually endangering traditional vehicles of cultural transmission, including historical sites, artifacts, and ideological tenets. Chen and Li highlight the varying perceptions of red culture among contemporary youth, underscoring the imperative to safeguard and propagate its legacy (Chen & Li, 2009, p. 16).

Recent government has bolstered an attempt to restore and safeguard the cultural heritage. Memorial hall is one of the government efforts in preserving the red culture. Zhu and Zong stated that the memorial hall was not only preserve and showcase red cultural heritage but also serve as vibrant venues for patriotic education and the transmission of revolutionary values (Zhu & Zong, 2024, p.269). Through exhibitions, educational programs, and interactive experiences, these halls bring red culture to life, fostering public interest in history and admiration for heroic figures. They are indispensable in perpetuating and promoting red culture.

However comprehensive restoration of the museum should focus on sustainability to ensure it serves future generations responsibly. Wu Linli et al. (2023) found out that several critical deficiencies of current design of Red Culture Exhibition Halls consequently effected the visitors' perception. Wu mentioned the uniformity of display content, ambiguity in spatial layout, and superficiality in thematic expression, which relatively diminished the appeal and educational impact of the exhibition itself (Wu et al., 2023, p.114). Wu Shizhong and colleagues (2023) also mentioned about the presentation and narrative methods of revolutionary cultural relics and believed that the advocating for updates in political and artistic perspectives, a balanced approach to narrative and display increased a deeper exploration of the intrinsic value of cultural relics (Wu & Xi, 2023, p.49).

Moreover, Mao Ruohan and Zhao Guiling (2023) also highlighted the issue of standardization in red culture-themed exhibitions, proposing the adoption of emotional aesthetic design approaches that utilize multi-dimensional deconstruction and spatial narrative techniques to enhance symbolic design methods and thereby improve emotional and value communication within exhibitions (Mao & Zhao, 2023, p.80).

Recognizing the significance of digital technology in present media contexts, Cui Xiaotang and Zhang Bowen (2023) suggested that the integration of digital tools for red culture memorial halls would help to preserve and transmit cultural heritage effectively. Their suggestions included establishing digital resource libraries, employing holographic projection, enhancing interactive experiences, and developing smart visitation systems to meet modern visitor expectations and educational needs (Cui & Zhang, 2023, p.122).

Despite their crucial role in cultural transmission, red culture memorial halls encounter persistent challenges in exhibition design, narrative display, emotional communication, and digital adaptation. In order to create the better dissemination, protection, and inherit of red culture, it is also imperative for the government to integrate high technology for better alignment and balance between the contemporary demands and thereby enhance the educational effectiveness and cultural dissemination of these institutions.

Culture memorial halls for youth education

Red culture education is crucial for younger Chinese today as it fosters a strong sense of national identity, unity, and patriotism. It connects them to their revolutionary history, teaching values of resilience and collective spirit, which are essential for navigating modern challenges and contributing to the nation's future development.

Red culture memorial halls could play extra educational role for youth in the context of revolutionary and patriotism experiences. The halls not only bear the responsibility of commemorating history but also serve as essential media for imparting patriotism and revolutionary traditions to the younger generation, aiding in the transmission of national spirit and historical memory (Zhu & Zong, 2024, p.270).

By exhibiting revolutionary historical relics, images, and documentary materials, and narrating tales of revolution, these memorial halls enable youth to gain a direct understanding of the nation's past and the struggles of revolutionary ancestors. This educational approach not only aids in a profound comprehension of history among youth but also stirs their patriotic sentiments and national spirit.

At Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall, various educational activities were introduced to impress the patriotic feelings and sense of social responsibility for younger generation such as thematic lectures, interactive exhibitions, and reenactments. These activities often touch the hearts of youth, prompting profound contemplation on the meaning of life and social responsibilities, thereby shaping their values and outlook on life in an intangible manner (Fig.2).

Fig. 2: Youth Educational Programs at Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall (Photographed by the authors, 2024)

Personalized education approach in museum

This trend towards personalization reflects a broader trend in education, where institutions aim to address the variability in learning styles and preferences among their audiences. Recent research highlights a growing demand for personalized education in museums, driven by the need to cater to diverse learning styles and preferences. Personalized learning in museums by using advanced technologies such as geofencing and artificial intelligence to tailor content delivery based on visitor profiles and real-time location data (Ivanov, 2023).

The American Alliance of Museums also recognizing that museum visitors have unique learning needs. Museum should adapt the learning technologies that respond to individual progress and preferences, ensuring that each visitor's experience is relevant and engaging (American Alliance of Museuems,2016).

According to Tetzlaff and Brod's research on Developing personalized education: A dynamic framework, personalized education strongly affects learning outcomes. Tailoring educational approaches to individual student needs significantly enhances engagement and academic performance. Their research also suggested adaptive learning technologies and personalized feedback for fostering effective, student-centered education. (Tetzlaff & Brod, 2021, p.863).

In order to promote personalizes education environment, Reber (2018) suggested that personalized education can be achieved by utilizing large language model technology, which generates educational content matched to individual learning needs and interests through intelligent analysis of student inquiries and feedback (Reber & Harackiewicz, 2018:449).

In summary, to emphasizes on individual differences among learners, red culture memorial halls should apply personalized education approach to enhances visitor engagement and learning ability. This approach will increase curiosity and deeper exploration, supporting the unique needs of different visitor groups. the implication of new technologies like AI and adaptive learning approach on red culture contents, memorial hall can effectively stimulate the interest and enthusiasm of young people in learning and promoting the inheritance of red culture among younger generation.

Large Language Models (LLMs) technology for personalized education

With the rise of the concept of personalized education, the demand for personalized education in the museum has also become increasingly prominent. Especially for red culture, personalized education should be applied to meet the needs and interests of visitors.

Large language models (LLMs) is one of the excellent way for personalize education. It offers tailored learning experiences that cater to each learner's unique needs. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in large language model (LLMs), by leveraging large amounts of data, AI-driven LLMs can understand and generate human-like text with remarkable accuracy. This enables them to perform a wide range of tasks, such as answering questions, creating content, translating languages, and even engaging in meaningful conversations.

The use of LLMs in Memorial Hall to analyze individual learning preferences could provide customized content and real-time response. By adapting content to suit the pace and interest of each learner, LLMs enhance understanding and retention of enthusiasm. This personalized approach using LLMs not only boosts the engagement and learning performance but also creates a more inclusive and effective educational environment.

Large language models (LLMs) in personalized education offers significant benefits by tailoring content to individual learning styles and needs. They enhance engagement through adaptive learning experiences and personalized tutoring, fostering deeper understanding and retention. By leveraging LLMs, educators can create more inclusive and effective learning environments, ultimately improving educational outcomes and learner's satisfaction (Han, 2020).

In recent years, Large Language Models (LLMs), such as ChatGPT, have made significant progress and profoundly impacted the transformation and development of artificial intelligence and other fields. With continuous technological advancements, the research and application of LLMs show a trend of diversification.

Regarding the development of LLMs, they have achieved preferable result in model interaction. Li Geng and Wang Zishuo and their colleagues conducted the research on "From ChatGPT to Multimodal Large Models: Current Status and Future," pointed out that although ChatGPT has reached new heights in text understanding and generation, its support for only text modal interaction limits the comprehensive perception of the real world. They suggested that leveraging the cross-modal processing characteristics of the human brain and integrating various sensory information such as vision, language, and hearing are the key to enhancing the model's general perception and interaction capabilities (Li & Wang, 2023, p.734).

Later, Wang, and Li (2023) also conducted the research on the multimodality of large language models (LLMs) by focusing on the ability of LLMs to process and generate responses based on multiple types of data, such as text and images. Their study proposed the mPLUG-Owl model, which incorporates a vision foundation model, a language foundation model, and a visual abstractor module. This approach allows the model to better integrate visual and textual information, resulting in more coherent and contextually relevant outputs. The research highlights that the instruction consists of both uni-modal and multi-modal data significantly improves the model's performance in understanding and generating responses to a wide range of instructions (Wang & Li, 2023, p.14).

Moreover, Wang and Yang's 2024 research on "Creating a New Form of Human-Machine Dialogical Learning—Current Status and Prospects of Large Language Models in Education" revealed the benefits of integrating LLMs into educational practices, emphasizing personalized and interactive learning experiences. They found that LLMs can enhance student engagement by providing real-time feedback and tailored educational content, making learning more adaptive to individual needs. The research also identified challenges such as ensuring data privacy and addressing biases in AI-generated content. Their work suggests that the continuous refinement of LLMs could significantly advance personalized education, fostering more effective and engaging learning environments (Wang & Yang, 2024, p.17).

The use of LLMs in museum

With the rapid development of artificial intelligence technology, Large Language Models (LLMs), as a significant tool, have gradually been applied in cultural memorial halls. Leveraging their powerful natural language processing capabilities, LLMs not only provide more intelligent and personalized services for cultural memorial halls but also greatly enrich the methods of cultural heritage display and inheritance.

The application of LLMs in cultural memorial halls could be used in the following aspects. Firstly, in the digital preservation and presentation of cultural heritage, LLMs can accurately categorize and organize cultural heritage through learning from a vast amount of textual data, offering the public a more convenient and enriched cultural experience.

Secondly, in terms of guided services, LLMs can provide customized guiding content and suggestions based on the personalized needs of visitors, making their visiting experience more in-depth and interesting. Particularly, the Generative Pre-trained Transformer (GPT) series, as indicated by Trichopoulos's research, can serve as a recommendation system to offer personalized services to memorial hall visitors through pre-training and fine-tuning. For instance, by fine-tuning the GPT-4 model, it can become a context-aware recommendation system that adapts its suggestions based on user input and specific contextual factors such as location and visit time (Trichopoulos, Konstantakis, & Alexandridis, 2023).

Thirdly, LLMs can also act as digital storytelling machines, providing interactive guided services and personalized information about art and historical contexts to visitors. The advanced language comprehension abilities of LLMs enable them to offer tailored recommendations based on user preferences and past interactions, thereby enhancing visitor experience and encouraging exploration. Moreover, LLMs play a significant role in cultural exchange and inheritance. Through intelligent translation and interpretation functions, LLMs can break down language barriers, allowing people from different cultural backgrounds to better understand and appreciate cultural heritage. Additionally, LLMs can be integrated with technologies like virtual reality and augmented reality to provide the public with more vivid and intuitive cultural experiences, making the protection and inheritance of cultural heritage more profound (Trichopoulos, 2023, p.1-5).

In present, memorial halls and museums are starting to use Large Language Models (LLMs) to enhance visitor experiences. For example, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has employed AI-driven solutions in several innovative ways to enhance historical preservation and education. One notable use is the implementation of facial recognition technology through a platform called "From Numbers to Names"

(N2N). This tool allows users to upload photos of Holocaust survivors or victims and matches them with faces in a database of 500,000 archived Holocaust photos, potentially identifying previously unknown individuals and reconnecting families with their history (Bandara, 2022).

Additionally, the museum utilizes hologram technology to create interactive 3D interviews with Holocaust survivors. This project, developed in collaboration with the University of Southern California, records survivors with multiple cameras to produce lifelike holograms. These holograms enable future generations to interact with and ask questions to virtual representations of survivors, preserving their testimonies in a highly engaging format (Blakemore, 2015).

These AI applications are crucial in ensuring that the memories and stories of Holocaust survivors remain accessible and impactful for future generations, combining technological innovation with historical education.

In summary, the application of LLMs in cultural memorial halls demonstrates their immense potential and value. As technology continues to advance and application scenarios expand, LLMs will play an increasingly vital role in cultural memorial halls, contributing more to the protection and inheritance of cultural heritage.

Field study results

Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall

The General Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall, located in Yicheng City, Hubei Province, was built in 1991 by the people of Yicheng to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of General Zhang Zi Zhong and the 51st anniversary of his martyrdom.

This hall is a building in the style of the Republic of China with a usable area of 720 square meters. The granite on both sides of the gatehouse is engraved with the elegiac words "Serve the Country with Loyalty" and "Heroes and Martyrs for Thousands of Years" written by Mao Zedong and Jiang Zhongzheng in those years. The hall is mainly red, symbolizing the blood of the martyrs.

The Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall, dedicated to the revered Chinese general and national hero, offers a window into the old traditional ways of appreciating China's rich history and an earnest effort to connect with the past. The Zhang Zi Zhong Museum typically consists of two main floors:

1. Ground floor consists of Entrance Hall which is the main entry featuring introductory displays and a portrait or statue of General Zhang Zi Zhong. Four exhibition rooms portray Zhang Zi Zhong’s early life, military career, and significant battles during the second Sino-Japanese war. It includes various artifacts, photos, documents, and multimedia displays details as mentioned in Table 1.

Table 1: **Content Analysis of The Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall (First Floor) (Data collected and compiled by the author, 2024)**

Hall	Content
Bloodstained Xingdong Hall	The story of the anti-Japanese war on the front battlefield of China. Zhang Zi Zhong determined to sacrifice himself to set an example for all soldiers.
"Last Voice" Radio theater Hall	The scenes of the war during Anti-Japanese War.
Mourning The National Martyrs Hall	The story of Zhang Zi Zhong's bravery and perseverance are a role model for all Chinese soldiers and a hero of China.
General and Yicheng Exhibition Hall	The story of Yicheng is where Zhang Zi Zhong fought and finally died.

2. Second floor consists of four exhibition halls. This floor focuses on Zhang Zi Zhong's legacy and includes tributes, letters, awards, and media representations.

Table 2: Content Analysis of The Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall (Second Floor) (Data collected and compiled by the authors, 2024)

Hall	Content
Throwing Pen and Joining the Army Exhibition Hall.	The biography of Zhang Zi Zhong, who grew up in a time of great national crisis and had great ambitions since childhood, embarked on the road of joining the army to save the country.
Chinese Famous Generals Exhibition Hall	Zhang Zi Zhong's military career from a soldier to a general.
Hebei-Chahar Political Exhibition Hall	Zhang Zi Zhong's experience in politics in Chahar, Tianjin and Beiping.
Hebei-Chahar Political Exhibition Hall	The battlefield of the Anti-Japanese War where Zhang Zi Zhong fought bravely and repeatedly defeated powerful enemies, and became a famous anti-Japanese general.

Contents within the Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall

The Zhang Zi Zhong Museum employs a variety of media types to provide a comprehensive and immersive experience for visitors such as historical artifacts, personal belongings, and interactive displays illustrating General Zhang Zi Zhong military career and leadership during World War II. Photographs captured pivotal moments in his life, while documents provide insights into his strategic acumen and contributions to China's defense. The researcher summarized the types of contents displayed in Memorial Hall as follows;

1. Artifacts and documents

The museum showcases an extensive collection of artifacts and documents that belonged to Anti - Japanese War period. These include military uniforms, medals, weapons, letters, and photographs. These physical artifacts offer tangible connections to the past, allowing visitors to feel a closer link to the historical events and the personal life of the general (Fig3).

Fig. 3: Display of uniform used during Anti-Japanese War at Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall (Photographed by the authors, 2024)

2. Photographic displays

Large photographic displays are strategically placed throughout the museum, illustrating key moments in Zhang Zi Zhong's life and military career. These photos provide visual context and help visitors visualize the historical settings and events. Captions and detailed descriptions accompany the photos, offering deeper insights into the scenes depicted (Fig 4).

Fig. 4: Display of photograph taken during Anti-Japanese War at Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall (Photographed by the authors, 2024)

3. Multimedia presentations

Multimedia presentations are a key feature of the museum. These include video documentaries, animated battle maps, and audio recordings of historical narrations. These multimedia elements help bring history to life, offering dynamic and engaging ways to learn about the general's strategies and the broader historical context (Fig.5).

Fig. 5: Display of documentary Video at Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall (Photographed by the authors, 2024)

4. Diagrams and infographics

The museum uses detailed diagrams and infographics to explain military strategies and the outcomes of significant battles. These visual aids help visitors understand complex historical events and military tactics in a clear and accessible manner (Fig.6).

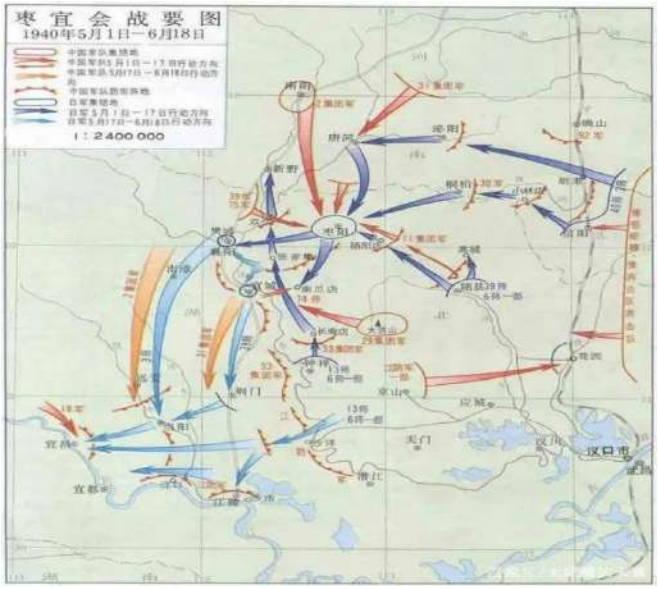

Fig. 6: Display of pictorial route maps of military units during Anti-Japanese War (Photographed by the authors, 2024)

5. Interactive touchscreens

Interactive touchscreen displays provide an interactive element, allowing visitors to explore detailed information about Zhang Zi Zhong's battles, personal letters, and other historical documents (Fig.7).

Fig. 7: Touchscreen machine installed at Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall (Photographed by the authors, 2024)

6. Memorial installations

Dedicated memorial installations, including sculptures and plaques, honor General Zhang Zizhong's contributions and sacrifices. These installations serve as focal points for reflection and remembrance, providing a solemn and respectful space for visitors to pay their respects (Fig.8).

Fig. 8: General Zhang Zi Zhong's sculpture (Photographed by the authors, 2024)

With its extensive collection of artifacts, Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall the researcher believed that it could improve visitor engagement through integrated technology. By incorporating augmented reality and interactive displays, visitors can interact with artifacts digitally, gaining deeper insights into their historical significance. Such advancements would offer a more immersive and educational experience, bridging the gap between past and present.

5 Results and Discussion

A thorough literature review and field research indicate that incorporating large language models (LLMs) into museum could substantially enhance its educational and engagement capabilities. The integration of LLMs has been linked to increased visitor satisfaction and engagement, as these models can tailor information to individual interests and provide immersive, interactive storytelling. Given these findings, the adoption of LLM technology at the Zhang Zi Zhong Museum would modernize its exhibits, broaden its reach, and ensure the accurate and vivid conveyance of Zhang Zi Zhong's legacy to future generations.

In terms of educational activities, the memorial hall can develop a series of projects centered around Digital Humans as part of LLMs. Particularly for the youth, engaging in interactive historical learning not only increases the fun of learning but also enhances interactivity, effectively improving educational outcomes. Additionally, the memorial hall can use Digital Humans as spokespersons for cultural dissemination, promoting red culture on social media and online platforms, which can broaden the audience base of the memorial hall and attract more attention from the younger generation in multiple languages.

The authors believed that using LLMs in many aspects as described in Table 3.

Table 3: Application of Digital Human Technology in Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall, (Compiled by the author, 2024)

Application Methods	Descriptions
Virtual Tour Guide	Provide guided services for visitors, narrating the life story and the history of the Anti-Japanese War of General Zhang Zi Zhong.
Interactive Exhibitions	Utilize Virtual Digital Human technology to design interactive exhibitions, allowing visitors to engage with virtual characters and gain a deeper understanding of the stories behind the exhibits.
Educational Activities	Develop educational activities assisted by Virtual Digital Humans, enabling youth to learn history through participation, enhancing the fun and interactivity of learning.
Cultural Dissemination	Employ Virtual Digital Humans as spokespersons for the memorial hall to disseminate culture on social media and online platforms, attracting a broader audience.
Language Services	Offer Virtual Digital Human services in multiple languages for visitors from different linguistic backgrounds, enhancing the international visitation experience.

Overall, by employing these applications of Virtual Human technology, the Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall can not only enhance the visiting experience but also explore new forms and methods of inheriting red culture to adapt to the needs of the digital age. Undoubtedly, these initiatives can bring broader development prospects to the memorial hall.

6 Conclusion

By integrating literature review, field visits, this study employed qualitative research methods to reveal the multifaceted application potential of LLMs for red culture memorial halls. The study found that application models such as personalized content recommendation, interactive learning experience design, and multimodal information integration could effectively enhance user satisfaction and learning efficiency. In particular, the application of Virtual Digital Human technology provided a novel method of display and education for the memorial hall, capturing the attention of the younger generation and increasing their interest and participation in red culture.

The authors advocate for the integration of LLMs at the Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall, foreseeing significant benefits in personalized education through intelligent interaction and feedback mechanisms. This technological enhancement is expected to enhance the appeal and educational efficacy of red culture, thereby fostering patriotic sentiments and national spirit among young people. They propose several recommendations to further optimize this approach: Firstly, they suggest exploring the integration of LLMs with technologies like Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) to create immersive learning experiences. Secondly, they emphasize the importance of diversifying educational content to cater to the diverse learning needs of young audiences, encompassing historical contexts, heroic narratives, and cultural significance. Thirdly, they advocate for enhancing user engagement by involving them in content creation and implementing feedback mechanisms for continual improvement. Additionally, they propose interdisciplinary collaboration with experts in education, history, and computer science to drive innovation in red culture education. Lastly, they underscore the need for policy support and cooperation from governmental and institutional bodies to facilitate the digital transformation of red culture memorial halls. By implementing these measures, the Zhang Zi Zhong Memorial Hall and similar institutions can better meet the challenges of the digital era while preserving and promoting red culture effectively.

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Session 2: Sustainability: Practices and Policies

Sustainable Environmental Carbon Emissions, Corporate Governance, and Firm Value

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Abstract

This study employed hierarchical regression analysis to investigate the relationship among corporate governance, carbon emissions, and firm value for Taiwanese listed companies from 2016 to 2020. Empirical results reveal that, whether measuring corporate value using Tobin's Q or market value, there is no significant relationship between carbon emissions and carbon intensity with the company's value. Regarding the moderating effects of corporate governance evaluation, empirical findings indicate that when measuring corporate value using Tobin's Q, there is a significantly positive moderating effect of corporate governance evaluation scores on the relationship between carbon emissions and corporate value, as well as between carbon intensity and corporate value. However, when measuring corporate value using market value, there is a significantly positive moderating effect of corporate governance evaluation scores on the relationship between carbon emissions and corporate value, while the moderating effect on the relationship between carbon intensity and corporate value is not statistically significant.

Keywords: sustainable carbon emissions, corporate governance, firm value, hierarchical regression analysis

1 General information

During the COVID-19 pandemic, governments worldwide implemented lockdown policies to prevent the spread of the virus. As a result, global greenhouse gas emissions in 2020 decreased by 7% compared to 2019, marking the largest reduction in recent years. As the pandemic recedes, the International Energy Agency (IEA) notes that clean energy constitutes only 3% of the stimulus measures proposed by countries to recover from the economic downturn caused by the pandemic. Although this represents an increase from July, it has led to a rising trend in global carbon dioxide emissions.

In response to the impacts of global warming, numerous international agreements related to climate change have been established, such as the Kyoto Protocol (1997), the Paris Agreement (2015), and the Glasgow Climate Pact (2021). The formulation of these agreements underscores the international community's commitment to addressing global warming. This highlights that carbon reduction is not only a global consensus but also an urgent issue that governments and businesses worldwide need to actively address.

According to the Energy-related Carbon Dioxide (CO2) Emissions statistics published by the IEA in 2021, Taiwan's total energy-related CO2 emissions in 2019 amounted to 256.0 million metric tons, accounting for 0.76% of the global emissions and ranking 22nd globally. The carbon intensity was 0.23 kilograms per US dollar, placing Taiwan at the 49th position worldwide. In an effort to effectively reduce carbon emissions, Taiwan's Environmental Protection Administration initiated the "Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act" in 1997, which underwent multiple reviews and discussions. It was eventually passed in 2015 and renamed as the "Greenhouse Gas Reduction and Management Act" (now known as the "Climate Change Response Act").

In addition to the Environmental Protection Administration, the Financial Supervisory Commission (FSC) released the "Sustainable Development Pathway for Listed and OTC Companies" in March 2022. This pathway outlines a four-stage plan for conducting carbon emissions inventories and verifications. It is anticipated that all listed and OTC companies will complete greenhouse gas inventories by 2027 and undergo verifications by 2029. This indicates that the Taiwanese government is actively following the global trend of energy conservation and carbon reduction, making concerted efforts to promote energy efficiency and carbon reduction.

In the current landscape where governments worldwide actively advocate for carbon reduction, it becomes essential to clarify the relationship between carbon emissions and company value. The existing literature on the relationship between carbon emissions and company value yields inconsistent results. Chapple, Clarkson, and Gold (2013) found, through empirical evidence, a negative relationship between carbon emissions and company value. Matsumura, Prakash, and Vera-Muñoz (2014), after correcting for self-selection bias, explored the impact of carbon emissions and voluntary disclosure of carbon emission behavior on company value. Their empirical results revealed a negative correlation between carbon emissions and company value, with the market penalizing the carbon emissions of all companies. Companies that do not disclose emission information face additional penalties. Furthermore, Fisher-Vanden and Thorburn (2011) discovered that voluntary reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by companies lead to a decrease in company value. Busch and Hoffmann (2011) also identified a negative relationship between voluntary carbon management and financial performance. Additionally, Chapple, Clarkson, and Gold (2013) investigated the impact of Australia's emissions trading scheme (ETS) on the market value of Australian listed companies using a sample of 58 listed companies with available greenhouse gas emissions data from 2007. The empirical results revealed that companies with the highest carbon intensity experienced a decrease in market value ranging from 7% to 10% relative to other sample companies. This indicates a negative correlation between carbon emissions and company value.

According to Ernst & Young's 2021 "Long-term Value and Corporate Governance Survey," the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened stakeholders' focus on corporations' long-term value and governance capabilities in environmental protection, social responsibility, and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) matters. Mukhtaruddin et al. (2019) have noted that effective corporate governance can assist companies in addressing challenges and risks as a strategy for enhancing company value. Given the global call for carbon reduction, companies are not only required to enhance the quality, consistency, and transparency of disclosing environmental information but also to improve the quality of corporate governance. This improvement in governance can help companies manage risks and challenges, ultimately leading to an increase in company value. Mukhtaruddin, Relasari, and Felmania (2014) conducted a study on the impact of good corporate governance on company value. The results indicated that institutional ownership, managerial ownership, the board of directors, the audit committee, and corporate social responsibility have a positive impact on company value.

In summary, this study outlines the following research objectives: (1) To investigate the relationship between carbon emissions and company value. (2) To examine the moderating effect of corporate governance on the relationship between carbon emissions and company value.

2 Method

2.1 Research hypotheses

H1a: There is a negative correlation between carbon emissions and corporate value.

H1b: There is a negative correlation between carbon emission intensity and corporate value.

H2a: The quality of corporate governance evaluation results moderates the relationship between carbon emissions and corporate value.

H2b: The quality of corporate governance evaluation results moderates the relationship between carbon emission intensity and corporate value.

2.2 Research period, criteria for sample selection and data sources

This study focuses on domestically listed companies as the research subjects. Financial data and carbon emissions data are sourced from the Taiwan Economic Journal (TEJ) database. Corporate governance evaluation data are obtained from the Corporate Governance Evaluation Data Section of the Taiwan Securities and Futures Market Development Foundation, a foundation established under the laws of the Republic of China. The data are compiled from domestic listed companies for the years 2016 to 2020, totaling five years. The final sample size is 2,765 entries.

2.3 Variable measurement

Tobin's Q: (Equity Market Value + Book Value of Liabilities) / Book Value of Assets

Market Value (MV): The company's annual value (outstanding common shares * closing price at year-end) taken in natural logarithm.

Carbon Emissions (CO2): This study adopts the measurement method proposed by Zhang (2016), which involves taking the natural logarithm of the company's annual carbon emissions (in metric tons) to measure the carbon emissions.

Carbon Emission Intensity (CO2S): Carbon intensity refers to the amount of carbon dioxide emissions per unit of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). As the measurement method mentioned earlier primarily focuses on a national scale, this study, which centers on companies, adopts the measurement approach proposed by Chapple, Clarkson, and Gold (2013) and Zhang (2016). Carbon intensity is defined as the company's annual carbon emissions divided by its net operating revenue (in metric tons per thousand dollars).

Corporate Governance Evaluation (CG): Based on the corporate governance evaluation results for each year from 2016 to 2020, companies in the top 5% are assigned a score of 7; those in the 6% to 20% range are assigned a score of 6, those in the 21% to 35% range are assigned a score of 5, those in the 36% to 50% range are assigned a score of 4, those in the 51% to 65% range are assigned a score of 3, those in the 66% to 80% range are assigned a score of 2, and those in the 81% to 100% range are assigned a score of 1.

Company Size (SIZE): Natural logarithm of the company's total assets at the end of the fiscal year

Research and Development Ratio (RD): (Current year R&D expenses / Net operating revenue) × 100%

Debt Ratio (DEBT): End-of-period total liabilities / End-of-period total assets

Years Since Establishment: Fiscal year of the sample company - Year of establishment + 1

Return on Assets (ROA): (Profit before tax, interest, and depreciation / Average total assets) × 100%

Whether to force disclosure (EXPOSE): Set the power generation industry, steel industry, petroleum refining industry, cement industry, semiconductor industry, and thin-film transistor liquid crystal display industry as 1, otherwise as 0

2.4 Empirical model

$$\text{Tobin's Q} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 CO2 + \alpha_2 CO2S + \alpha_3 CG + \alpha_4 CO2 * CG + \alpha 5\ CO2S * CG + \alpha_6 SIZE + \alpha_7 RD + \alpha_8 DEBT + \alpha_9 AGE + \alpha_{10} ROA + \alpha_{11} EXPOSE + \alpha_M \Sigma INDUS + \alpha_X \Sigma YEAR + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

$$MV = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 CO2 + \alpha_2 CO2S + \alpha_3 CG + \alpha_4 CO2 * CG + \alpha 5\ CO2S * CG + \alpha_6 SIZE + \alpha_7 RD + \alpha_8 DEBT + \alpha_9 AGE + \alpha_{10} ROA + \alpha_{11} EXPOSE + \alpha_M \Sigma INDUS + \alpha_X \Sigma YEAR + \varepsilon \quad (2)$$

3 Empirical results and analysis

Panel A in Table 1 presents the empirical results of regression model (1). The results at Hierarchy 2 indicate that the relationship between carbon emissions (CO2) and carbon emission intensity (CO2S) with Tobin's Q is not statistically significant, thus not supporting hypotheses 1a and 1b. On the other hand, the results at Hierarchy 3 show a significant positive correlation between CG*CO2 and CG*CO2S with Tobin's Q. This suggests that corporate governance (CG) moderates the relationship between carbon emissions and firm value, as well as carbon emission intensity and firm value, supporting hypotheses 2a and 2b.

Panel B in Table 1 presents the empirical results of regression model (2). The results at Hierarchy 2 indicate that the relationship between carbon emissions (CO2) and carbon emission intensity (CO2S) with market value (MV) is not statistically significant, thus not supporting hypotheses 1a and 1b. On the other hand, the results at Hierarchy 3 show a significant positive correlation between CG*CO2 and market value (MV), suggesting that corporate governance (CG) moderates the relationship between carbon emissions and firm value. However, the relationship between CG*CO2S and market value (MV) is not statistically significant, supporting hypothesis 2a.

Table 1. Hierarchical regression empirical results

Panel A

(1) 式:Tobin's Q = $\alpha_0 + \alpha_1 CO2 + \alpha_2 CO2S + \alpha_3 CG + \alpha_4 CO2 * CG + \alpha_5 CO2S * CG + \alpha_6 SIZE + \alpha_7 RD + \alpha_8 DEBT + \alpha_9 AGE + \alpha_{10} ROA + \alpha_{11} EXPOSE + \alpha_M \sum INDUS + \alpha_X \sum YEAR + \varepsilon$

Variables	Expected direction	Hierarchy 1			Hierarchy 2			Hierarchy 3		
		Coefficients	*p*	VIF	Coefficients	*p*	VIF	Coefficients	*p*	VIF
Constant	?	1.753	<0.001***		1.684	<0.001***		1.787	<0.001***	
CO2	-				-0.040	0.170	4.643	-0.040	0.180	4.667
CO2S	-				-0.009	0.702	2.737	-0.005	0.812	2.754
CG	+				0.056	<0.001***	1.217	0.062	<0.001***	1.240
*CG*CO2*	+							0.059	0.001**	1.665
*CG*CO2S*	+							0.037	0.037*	1.693
SIZE	+	-0.107	<0.001***	1.480	-0.099	<0.001***	3.039	-0.115	<0.001***	3.161
RD	+	0.302	<0.001***	1.650	0.293	<0.001***	1.771	0.293	<0.001***	1.777
DEBT	+	0.013	0.446	1.493	0.013	0.446	1.505	0.017	0.321	1.512
AGE	+	-0.134	<0.001***	1.633	-0.126	<0.001***	1.680	-0.126	<0.001***	1.681
ROA	?	0.586	<0.001***	1.230	0.581	<0.001***	1.299	0.583	<0.001***	1.303
EXPOSE	?	-0.110	<0.001***	1.770	-0.107	<0.001***	1.799	-0.107	<0.001***	1.799
INDUS	?		YES			YES			YES	
YEAR	?		YES			YES			YES	
Oberservations			2765			2765			2765	
R^2			0.488			0.491			0.493	
Adj.R^2			0.482			0.484			0.486	
F			83.939***			77.349***			73.625***	

Panel B

(2) 式:MV = $\alpha_0 + \alpha_1 CO2 + \alpha_2 CO2S + \alpha_3 CG + \alpha_4 CO2 * CG + \alpha_5 CO2S * CG + \alpha_6 SIZE + \alpha_7 RD + \alpha_8 DEBT + \alpha_9 AGE + \alpha_{10} ROA + \alpha_{11} EXPOSE + \alpha_M \sum INDUS + \alpha_X \sum YEAR + \varepsilon$

Variables	Expected direction	Hierarchy 1			Hierarchy 2			Hierarchy 3		
		Coefficients	p	VIF	Coefficients	p	VIF	Coefficients	p	VIF
Constant	?	1.728	<0.001***		2.014	<0.001***		2.091	<0.001***	
CO2	-				0.023	0.081	4.643	0.024	0.075	4.667
CO2S	-				0.000	0.970	2.737	0.001	0.929	2.754
CG	+				0.024	0.001**	1.217	0.026	<0.001***	1.240
*CG*CO2*	+							0.022	0.007**	1.665
*CG*CO2S*	+							0.015	0.071	1.693
SIZE	+	0.948	<0.001***	1.480	0.928	<0.001***	3.39	0.922	<0.001***	3.161
RD	+	0.128	<0.001***	1.650	0.13	<0.001***	1.771	0.131	<0.001***	1.778
DEBT	+	-0.115	<0.001***	1.493	-0.114	<0.001***	1.504	-0.113	<0.001***	1.511
AGE	+	-0.043	<0.001***	1.634	-0.039	<0.001***	1.681	-0.039	<0.001***	1.682
ROA	?	0.277	<0.001***	1.230	0.271	<0.001***	1.300	0.272	<0.001***	1.303
EXPOSE	?	-0.042	<0.001***	1.769	-0.045	<0.001***	1.799	-0.045	<0.001***	1.799
INDUS	?		YES			YES			YES	
YEAR	?		YES			YES			YES	
Oberservations			2765			2765			2765	
R^2			0.894			0.894			0.895	
Adj.R^2			0.892			0.893			0.893	
F			740.260***			679.336***			643.065***	

4 Conclusion

This study employed hierarchical regression analysis to investigate the relationship among corporate governance, carbon emissions, and firm value for Taiwanese listed companies from 2016 to 2020.

Empirical results reveal that, whether measuring corporate value using Tobin's Q or market value, there is no significant relationship between car-bon emissions and carbon intensity with the company's value. Regarding the moderating effects of corporate governance evaluation, empirical findings indicate that when measuring corporate value using Tobin's Q, there is a significantly positive moderating effect of corporate governance evaluation scores on the relationship between carbon emissions and corporate value, as well as between carbon intensity and corporate value. However, when measuring corporate value using market value, there is a significantly positive moderating effect of corporate governance evaluation scores on the relation-ship between carbon emissions and corporate value, while the moderating effect on the relationship between carbon intensity and corporate value is not statistically significant.

This study makes the following contributions: (1) Unlike previous literature, this study explores the role of comprehensive corporate governance indicators in the relationship between carbon emissions and firm value. Empirical results support the significant moderating effect of corporate governance evaluations on the relationship between corporate carbon emissions and firm value, thereby complementing existing literature. (2) In practical terms, this study encourages domestic listed companies to disclose their carbon emissions to enhance environmental information transparency, thereby obtaining superior governance evaluation results and increasing firm value.

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Environmental Management Practices in Hotels at World Heritage Sites: The Case of Ichan Kala, Khiva, Uzbekistan

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Abstract

Tourism development often poses significant environmental challenges, particularly in culturally and ecologically sensitive areas such as World Heritage Sites (WHS). This study aims to investigate the environmental management practices adopted by hotels in Ichan Kala focusing on their sustainability efforts, and impacts on the local environment, and propose recommendations for sustainable tourism management. The quantitative research method was applied by designing a structured questionnaire that covered aspects such as waste management, energy consumption, water usage, and compliance with environmental regulations. Hotel managers or designated staff members responsible for environmental initiatives of 95 hotels across different categories located in Ichan Kala participated in the survey. Key findings reveal that family guest houses have lower awareness and adoption of sustainability practices compared to hotels, which exhibit higher levels of environmental management. Hotels were more likely to have formal policies and practices in place for waste management and energy use, whereas family guest houses lagged behind.

Keywords: sustainable management, world heritage site, hotel management, sustainable tourism

1 Introduction

Tourism is booming in World Heritage Sites (WHSs), exerting considerable pressure on their communities, cultures, and environment (Landorf, 2009 and Liu et al., 2022). As of 2024, there are over 1,100 World Heritage Sites across the globe, ranging from natural wonders like the Great Barrier Reef to culturally significant places like the Historic Centre of Rome (UNESCO, 2024). Ichan Kala in Khiva, Uzbekistan, is a notable instance of well-preserved Islamic architecture and urban design from the medieval era. The initial Uzbek cultural site was officially included on the World Heritage List during the period when Uzbekistan was a member republic of the Soviet Union. Itchan Kala was among the first Soviet heritage properties inscribed in 1990. Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan became a member of UNESCO as a sovereign nation in 1993.

Uzbekistan has five cities that are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. These cities are: Itchan Kala (inscribed in 1990), the Historic Centre of Bukhara (inscribed in 1993), the Historic Centre of Shakhrisyabz (inscribed in 2000), Samarkand – Crossroad of Cultures (inscribed in 2001), and Western Tien-Shan (inscribed in 2016, along with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) which is a natural site.

2 Literature review

In early 2017, the Uzbekistan government released a Decree outlining the Programme for the Comprehensive Development of the Tourist Potential of Khiva and the Khorezm Region for the period of 2017-2021. The objective of the program was to achieve a twofold increase in the tourist influx to Khiva by the year 2021. The program entails implementing several steps, such as building a railway line and station in the city, expanding the number of hotels and tourist activities, and enhancing the training of tourism personnel. Multiple traditional houses in Ichan Kala have crumbled as a result of extensive termite infestation or have been torn down due to their deteriorated state and safety risks. The old structures have been substituted by new edifices designed for either residential or tourism use. The redeveloped properties in Itchan Kala were designed to adhere to the existing low height of traditional dwellings, often one or two floors. They were constructed using earth as a building material or for finishing, and featured wooden doors and window frames, all in order to seamlessly blend with the historic surroundings. Currently, there are no other ongoing development activities occurring in Ichan Kala.

Based on the data from local tourism department, there are currently 95 hotel facilities functioning in the Ichan Kala tourism region as of 2024. Out of the total of 95 establishments, there are 16 hotels, 1 boutique hotel, 72 family guest houses, and 6 hostels.

One clear advantage of the site's induction into the World Heritage List is an increased awareness of its exceptional values. As a result, upholding the principles for which the location was inscribed is the state party's principal duty (Pedersen, 2002). Furthermore, adhering to sustainable tourism principles should guide the conception and organization of programs (The World Heritage Convention, 2010). According to a study by Byrd, Bosley, and Dronberger (2008), including stakeholders in the community is essential to the sustainable development of tourism, and developing tourism in a sustainable way is practically impossible without their assistance.

The exceptional universal value that qualifies a place for inclusion in the World Heritage List often leads to an increase in visitors, which can boost local economies but also pose serious obstacles to environmental sustainability and the preservation of the site. Jimura's (2019) study investigates the relationship between tourism development and the environment as a result of World Heritage status. According to the research, having WHS status can boost the appeal of the area to tourists, but it also frequently puts more strain on the infrastructure and resources of the area, requiring the implementation of efficient management techniques to lessen adverse consequences. In order to lessen the environmental impact of tourism-related activities, environmental management in the hospitality sector is essential. As the main lodging options, hotels are important players in the adoption of sustainable practices. The use of environmental management systems (EMS) in hotels and their efficacy have been the subject of numerous research. Mensah (2006) investigates the Greater Accra region's hotel industry's environmental management practices. Key measures like waste reduction, energy conservation, and water management are highlighted in the paper, which also notes that hotels that have implemented full EMS have significantly improved their environmental performance. In a similar vein, Bohdanowicz's (2006) study contrasts environmental programs implemented in hotels in Poland and Sweden. The study highlights the significance of adopting sustainable practices and raising awareness of environmental issues. It also shows that there is a positive relationship between the adoption of EMS and better environmental performance in the hospitality industry.

3 Research methodology

This study employs a descriptive survey design to investigate sustainability practices among various types of accommodations, including family guest houses, hotels, hostels, and a boutique hotel, aiming to assess the awareness and implementation of sustainability practices within these establishments. The survey sample consisted of 95 accommodations categorized as follows: Family Guest Houses (72), Hotels (16), Hostels (6), and Boutique Hotel (1), selected based on their proximity to major tourist attractions and their willingness to participate. A structured questionnaire was utilized to collect data on sustainability practices, incorporating closed questions to gather information on practices and challenges related to waste management, energy consumption monitoring, water conservation measures, and environmental regulations compliance. Sample survey questions included:

- "Do you use any waste reduction strategies (e.g., recycling, composting)?"
- "Do you monitor your energy consumption regularly?"
- "How effective are your water-saving measures (e.g., low-flow faucets, dual-flush toilets)?"
- "Are you certified by any environmental management standards?"

Data collection took place over three months from March to May 2024, using electronic and hard copy distribution methods, with follow-up interviews conducted as needed. Quantitative analysis of responses employed descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages to summarize the prevalence of sustainability practices across accommodation types. The use of descriptive statistics was chosen for this study to provide a straightforward and clear overview of the current environmental management practices in Ichan Kala's hotels.

As with any research, this one also has limitations. Primary data collected by the method of surveys can be prone to social desirability bias. Although every effort was made to reduce the effect of this bias, it may not have been eliminated completely. The quantitative research methods do not aim to be representative. This study does not, therefore, claim broad generalizability of its results. Lastly, reporting on a case study of the Khorezm region (Khiva, Ichan Kala), this study's findings are only applicable to the case studied destination which is unique in terms of its history and current state of the environment.

4 Findings

The survey revealed a significant variation in the awareness and implementation of sustainability practices among different types of accommodations. Notably, family guest houses displayed a lower awareness and adoption of these practices compared to other accommodation types.

Among the types of accommodations surveyed, family guest houses exhibited a limited grasp of sustainability practices, with a significant majority lacking knowledge of fundamental measures such as waste segregation and energy conservation. In contrast, hotels demonstrated a higher degree of awareness and commitment, often establishing formal policies for waste management and energy efficiency. Hostels and boutique hotels fell in between, showing moderate levels of familiarity with sustainable practices, occasionally adopting initiatives like installing energy-efficient appliances and water-saving fixtures.

The study focused on several key areas of sustainability: waste management, energy consumption, water usage, and compliance with environmental regulations. The findings in these areas highlighted specific gaps and strengths across the accommodation types.

Based on the findings it can be highlighted that hotels emerge as leaders in formal environmental management practices, showcasing a structured approach to sustainability. In contrast, family guest houses face challenges and would benefit significantly from targeted training and increased resources to enhance their sustainability efforts. However, both sectors encounter significant barriers, including financial constraints and a lack of government support, which hinder broader adoption of sustainable practices across the hospitality industry. Addressing these barriers is crucial for achieving more widespread and effective sustainability initiatives within both hotels and family guest houses alike.

5 Recommendations

In order to enhance awareness and equip establishments with the necessary knowledge and skills for adopting sustainable practices, comprehensive training programs should be developed and implemented. These programs should cover key aspects of sustainability such as waste management, energy conservation, and water usage. Additionally, it is advisable for all types of accommodations to embrace environmental management standards like ISO 14001 and consider a tailored local certification program. Such initiatives not only provide a structured approach and recognition for sustainable efforts but also offer a competitive edge in marketing. Furthermore, lobbying for government incentives such as tax breaks, subsidies, or grants can significantly alleviate financial burdens on accommodations, encouraging investments in sustainable technologies like renewable energy systems and water-saving fixtures. For larger accommodations and hotels, promoting advanced technological integration for monitoring energy and water consumption, as well as optimizing waste management, can provide real-time data to inform resource usage decisions and evaluate sustainability measures effectively. Establishing regular sustainability audits and feedback mechanisms is crucial for maintaining adherence to standards and identifying areas for ongoing improvement, leveraging insights from staff and guests to adapt to evolving sustainability challenges and opportunities.

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The Impact of Strategic Intelligence Dimensions on Environmental Performance in Dhofar Municipality

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the levels of availability of strategic intelligence and the degree of application of environmental performance in the municipality of Dhofar, Sultanate of Oman, as well as the impact of strategic intelligence dimensions (foresight, systems thinking, strategic vision, partnership, motivating employees) on environmental performance. The analytical descriptive methodology was used to test the hypotheses of the study. Electronic questionnaire was used as a tool to collect data from the convenience study sample of 224 municipal employees, and the SPSS statistical analysis program was used to test hypotheses. The results of the study showed high levels of both strategic intelligence and environmental performance in the municipality of Dhofar. The multiple liner regression analysis also showed that all strategic intelligence dimensions positively affect the environmental performance of Dhofar Municipality, except strategic vision does not affect environmental performance of Dhofar Municipality. The study proposed some implications and recommendations based on the study findings.

Keywords: strategic intelligence, environmental performance, Dhofar Municipality

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1 Introduction

Strategic intelligence is a modern concept in management science, involving the collection and analysis of business information, customer concerns, competition behavior and organizational change to generate insights that help making better decisions. When companies use strategic intelligence to assess environmental risks and opportunities, they can identify areas for improvement and develop strategic plans that correspond to their objectives (Barnea, 2017). By implementing sustainable practices, companies not only make profits, but also contribute to the long-term preservation of the environment. This is why investing in smart strategies to improve environmental performance is a smart step for companies that wish to maintain their competitiveness while keeping pace with the global market (Amara, 2018).

Strategic intelligence is also an important tool for companies and organizations that seek to succeed in the long term, as it involves collecting and analysing more information about business, competition, business trends, changes and other factors that may affect business. Using this knowledge, institutions can develop better strategies to solve problems and seize opportunities (Kori, Muathe& Maina, 2020). Strategic intelligence also plays an important role in risk management by detecting threats before they turn into serious problems. In today's rapidly evolving digital environment, leading intelligence firms have an advantage over their counterparts in terms of speed and innovation (Shalaka, 2021).

Environmental performance also indicates the impact of the organization's operations, products and services on the environment, as it must consider improving its environmental performance through the use of effective strategies such as waste reduction, energy provision, water supply, carbon reduction and electricity at home (Al-Ayeb and Baqa, 2012). Modern organizations are developing systems that can measure economic, social and environmental performance to monitor and evaluate their functional performance, including monitoring key measures such as carbon footprints or water use patterns to identify areas for improvement. By prioritizing environmental sustainability and integrating sustainable practices into day-to-day processes, professional organizations can not only reduce their negative impact, but can also improve the representation of those involved through a commitment to sustainability in line with their reputational relationship. Environmental performance is an important factor in the responsibility of the organization (especially the government) or organization that wants to successfully deliver services and products.

Under the conditions of the developing world and high competition, organizations seek to respond to the changing aspect of service, especially in internal and external services, to increase efficiency in the process of evaluating opportunities and upgrading services. This study will therefore help to demonstrate the importance and adoption of strategic intelligence in Dhofar municipality and how it can contribute to the development and improvement of the environmental performance. Despite the interest of recent foreign studies and leading institutions in the topic of strategic intelligence, as one of the most recent and important key entry points that gives the institution the advantage of having useful predictive information, and the fact that it is the mechanism that helps to transform the enterprise from being affected by changes occurring in its external environment to being influential in transforming environmental threats into opportunities so that they can be exploited (Balajoz & Bumisbah, 2015), the awareness of the importance of strategic intelligence remains limited in developing countries, whose institutions are underperforming. Moreover, the vision remains unclear in terms of the impact of strategic intelligence on the overall performance of the organization (Brahimi, 2022). Accordingly, this study tries to answer the following question:

What is the impact of strategic intelligence dimensions on improving environmental performance in Dhofar municipality from the point of view of its staff?

2 Literature review

Although the concept of strategic intelligence began as a "military" strategy, it has been deeply adapted to the business landscape, providing strategists with an intrinsic force to gather, analyze, and disseminate intelligence information and solve related business problems (Silas, 2013). Thus, it aims to reduce levels of uncertainty through opening jobs that can maximize profits. This confirms that strategic intelligence involves strength and competitiveness for the organizations (Morton, 2016). In many scenarios, strategic intelligence is used to create a major business strategy (Heidenrich, 2007) which means it promotes planning, which is also market intelligence because it is a smart, regular, and continuous process from a customer perspective, as this then informs that the concept of strategic intelligence is a priority for value creation for all stakeholders. Furthermore, strategic intelligence is described as a policymaking tool, existing procedures, processes, and participatory decision-making tool (Acheson, 2008). A different way of thinking about strategic intelligence is to consider his absence as a "behavioral failure of the market" (Gavetti, 2012). Pellissier & Kruger (2011), and Mandel & Barnes (2014) defined strategic intelligence as a vital tool for decision-makers at all levels, by providing them with accurate and timely information, where strategic intelligence can help them make better decisions that protect their interests and promote their goals. In addition, some researchers referred to strategic intelligence in additional dimensions, including a leader's vision and an insight into the future in a way that differs from others (Johnson, 2014).

Previous studies have identified the dimensions of strategic intelligence in several dimensions. In this study, the dimensions of (Maccoby, 2011) and (Al-Kadhi & Al-Shabshah 2202) were adopted, which are (foresight, systematic thinking, strategic vision, partnership, motivating employees). The researchers have adopted these dimensions for their inclusiveness of strategic intelligence and also for their applicability to the municipality of Dhofar.

2.1 Foresight:

Foresight is a key element for an organization's success because it involves being proactive and not reacting. Essentially, foresight indicates predictability and preparedness for future events and changes that could affect the organization's operations, as well as its overall direction (Kuosa, 2011). Therefore, having insight helps organizations become more flexible, competitive, and effective in their decision-making processes.

Looking ahead to external factors is also an important aspect of today's institutions. In an increasingly complex and dynamic environment, it is important to anticipate trends, potential market changes, regulatory requirements, technological developments, and other factors that may affect their operations. This requires a deep understanding of the business landscape, strategic thinking ability, creativity, and analytical skills (Abuzaid, 2017, Torres & Pena ,2021).

2.2 Systematic thinking:

Systematic thinking is the ability to systematically and effectively identify different elements, collect, analyze, and use information so that organizations can make sound decisions, solve problems, and achieve their objectives (Al-Nuaimi, 2008). This practice improves an organization's productivity: it can also help it develop its strategies to continue to focus on the task it performs. On the other hand, systematic thinking is a crucial aspect of accomplishing any task. Whether it's solving a complex problem, deciding, or preparing a presentation, structured thinking helps individuals prioritize, critically evaluate, and communicate their ideas effectively. It also involves arranging ideas logically, classifying them into smaller segments, and coherently linking them. Thus it enhances an individual's ability to process information efficiently, analyze complex situations, and come up with sound solutions (Tashtouche & Torjoman, 2018).

In addition, systematic thinking helps individuals continue to focus on their goals, reducing their chances of being distracted by irrelevant information (Maani & Maharaj, 2004). Furthermore, systematic thinking promotes creativity, where individuals can analyze problems from different perspectives, explore new possibilities, and develop innovative solutions.

2.3 Strategic vision:

Vision is to predict the future, as it is a long-term goal that provides guidance and motivation to the organization's members. A well-defined organizational vision can also help the organization focus on its goals, make better decisions, attract and retain talent, motivate staff, innovate, and adapt to change (James & Lahti, 2011).

On the other hand, the vision must be clear, specific, and motivating for all its employees and be confused with the mission and capabilities of the Enterprise in achieving it, as well as its measurability and achievement during a certain period (Foster & Akdere, 2007). Organizational vision also plays an important role in the success of an institution, that is, it serves as a roadmap that guides the organization's decision-making process. In addition, a well-designed vision statement can inspire employees, stakeholders, and customers, thereby strengthening their commitment to the company (Kantabutra, 2020).

2.4 Organizational Partnership:

Organizational Partnership means the ability of an organization to establish strategic alliances with other companies is very important, and entering into joint ventures with these companies yields many benefits: sharing resources, entering new markets, reducing costs, increasing efficiency, innovating and developing new products or services, building relationships with other institutions and gaining a high competitive advantage (Al-Eila, 2017). Organizational partnership is also a collaborative agreement between two or more entities to achieve a common goal such partnerships can be formed between public and private institutions, non-profit organizations, or even government agencies, as the partnership's objective is to share resources, knowledge, skills and experiences to achieve mutually beneficial goals (Brinkerhoff, 2022).

In addition, partnerships have become more important in the modern business world, especially with globalization and growing competition (Street & Cameron, 2007). Organizations have recognized the importance of working together to achieve their goals and remain competitive in their markets. Successful partnerships also require a clear understanding of each organization's goals, as well as the development of effective communication and decision-making strategies, and require a high level of trust, as stakeholders must rely on each other to fulfil their commitments (Markova & Trapeznikov, 2022). On the other hand, there are also some challenges to organizational partnerships, where it can be difficult to manage partnerships, it can take a long time, and partnerships can also be risky, as there is always a possibility that a partnership won't work. Regardless of these challenges, organizational partnerships can be a powerful tool for achieving common goals (Peachey et al., 2018).

2.5 Motivating employees:

Motivation is essential for employees to perform their best, as passionate employees are more productive, creative, and involved in their work than others. Organizations can also motivate staff by providing them with factors that concern them. By understanding what motivates employees, enterprises can create a workplace that helps improve productivity (Manzoor, 2012). Many factors can motivate employees as meaningful work, growth and development opportunities, appreciation and gratitude, and a positive work environment (Dobre, 2013; Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020).

2.6 Environmental performance:

The importance of environmental performance has become increasingly evident in recent years as the world's population continues to grow and resource consumption at an unsustainable rate (Goodland, 1993). Climate change, pollution, deforestation, and water scarcity are just some of the environmental challenges we face. These problems not only threaten the natural environment but also threaten human health and well-being. It has therefore become important that the organization improve its environmental performance by adopting more sustainable practices and reducing its impact on the environment (Abbas, 2023). Environmental performance refers to the impact of an individual, organization, or industry on the environment, measured by a range of indicators such as carbon emissions, water use, waste generation, and land use, environmental performance is often used to assess the effectiveness of environmental policies and regulations (Grabosky & Gant, 2000). Institutions are working to minimize their activities that are as harmful to the environment as possible and contribute to their protection, while concern for the environment has become important at the level of states and governments. Many laws and regulations have been enacted to reduce environmental damage, plant waste, and others (Dkhili & Dhiab, 2019). Environmental effectiveness indicates the ability of policies, programs, and projects to achieve the desired environmental outcomes. The challenge in assessing environmental effectiveness is that environmental outcomes are often long-term, uncertain, and difficult to measure (Hamed et al., 2021). Furthermore, environmental effectiveness is not only a question of reaching a set of environmental objectives but also involves assessing the broader environmental, social, and economic impacts of environmental initiatives. Environmental effectiveness therefore requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account the complex interactions between the various elements of the environment and their relationship to human well-being (Al-Azazi and Ayada, 2022).

Environmental performance assessment is an important tool used to assess an organization's environmental impact and to comply with environmental regulations and standards (Thoresen, 1999; Goodall, 1995). The results of these assessments help identify areas for improvement and inform decision-makers about environmental policies and practices (Kiker et al., 2005).

Environmental performance assessments provide an important means for enterprises to assess and improve their environmental sustainability and are increasingly used as a benchmark for good environmental stewardship (Melnyk, Sroufe, & Calantone, 2003). Previous studies have indicated that strategic intelligence can have a positive impact on overall performance (Kori et al., 2020). Hadi & Salim study (2023) also emphasized a statistically significant role of strategic intelligence on an outstanding performance in general, and a statistically significant relationship between the dimensions of strategic intelligence (Foresight, motivation, Vision, Systems Thinking, partnership) and outstanding performance. The results of the study (Kori et al., 2020) also indicated that strategic intelligence has a statistical importance to the performance of Kenya's commercial banks.

There are also several reasons why strategic intelligence can improve environmental performance. First, strategic intelligence can help organizations identify and understand environmental risks (Huff, 1979). This can help organizations develop strategies to mitigate these risks. Second, strategic intelligence can help organizations identify new opportunities to improve their environmental performance. For example, the environment is a key factor in shaping organizational performance, and strategic intelligence can help organizations understand the ever-changing environment (Brahimi, 2022). Understanding this relationship is also critical for managers in anticipating the market, competitors' movements, and other external factors that are likely to affect an organization's performance. In addition, strategic intelligence is responsible for providing timely business intelligence and predicting external factors, while the environment provides data (Ahmad and Abdul Kadhim, 2021). A good understanding of the environment and the current market situation enables enterprises to leverage their strengths, reduce risks, and take advantage of new opportunities. On the other hand, strategic intelligence can help organizations communicate their environmental performance to stakeholders. This helps to build trust among stakeholders, thus increasing support for environmental organizations (Hussien, 2023).

Based on the above literature, researchers can develop the following hypothesis:

H1. Foresight impacts environmental performance in Dhofar Municipality.

H2. Systematic thinking impacts environmental performance in Dhofar Municipality.

H3. Strategic vision impacts environmental performance in Dhofar Municipality.

H4. Partnership impacts environmental performance in Dhofar Municipality.

H5. Motivating employees impacts environmental performance in Dhofar Municipality.

3 Methodology and analysis

This study used the analytical descriptive method, where the descriptive method was used to characterize the level of strategic intelligence and environmental performance in the Dhofar Mmunicipality, where strategic intelligence was described in this study through five dimensions: foresight, systems thinking, strategic vision, partnership, and motivating employees based on the scale used in Alqadi and Albashabsha study (2022) where each dimension of strategic intelligence encompassed 5 items, the total number of strategic intelligence was 25 items, while the environmental performance variable consisted of nineteen items was measured according to Resen & AbdulRazzaq scale (2022).

The study population consists of 1,300 employees in the municipality of Dhofar, where the questionnaire was distributed electronically through an electronic link for easy data collection. A convenience sample of Dhofar municipality employees was selected, with the number of responses reached 224 responses valid for analysis. The study employed Likert scale 5 points, with response options ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"), for all variables.

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the study sample, the sample profile consists of (66% males n=148), 70% of the sample are young and their ages less than 40 years. Regarding the educational level of the sample 39% are holding diploma degree or less, while 36% have bachelor degree and 25% are postgraduate degree holder which means they have a sufficient amount of knowledge to do their jobs. Majority of the sample 68% are seniors with long experience more than 10 years, so they have a good level of loyalty to Dhofar municipality.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics

Characteristic	**Categories**	**Number**	**Percent**
Gender	Male	148	66
	Female	76	34
Age	30 and less	50	22.5
	31-40	84	37.5
	41 and above	90	40
Educational Level	Diploma or less	87	39
	Bachelor	81	36
	Postgraduate	56	25
Job Experience	Less than 5 years	47	21
	5-10 years	24	11
	11 or more years	153	68
Total		**224**	**100**

All the variables in this study are available at a high level, Cronbach's Alpha test indicates high and acceptable values above 0.6 confirming the validity and stability of the study tool.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

Variables	**No of items**	**St.D**	**Mean**	**Cronbach's Alpha**
Foresight	5	0.817	3.96	0.860
Systematic thinking	5	0.860	3.82	0.893
Strategic vision	5	0.860	3.86	0.933
Partnership	5	0.937	3.83	0.919
Motivating employees	5	0.780	3.94	0.860
Environmental performance	13	0.831	3.99	0.942

The results of Table 3 show the impact of strategic intelligence dimensions on environmental performance in the municipality of Dhofar, where four dimensions, namely foresight, systematic thinking, motivation, and partnership, had a statistically significant positive effect at the level (0.05 < α), so the first, second, fourth and fifth hypotheses can be validated. The third hypothesis related to strategic vision has no impact on environmental performance but this effect is not significant based on the level of significance as it was (0.097 > α).

On the other hand, based on the results of Table 3, the value of the R^2 regression coefficient was (0.625) indicating that the dimensions of strategic intelligence represented 62.5% of the factors affecting environmental performance in the municipality of Dhofar as well as other factors representing the remaining proportion. The calculated F value was (72.766) at a degree of morale equal to (p < 0.000) which is greater than the tabular F value. Based on these findings, four hypotheses can be accepted: H1,2,4, and 5; while H3 was not approved.

Table 3: Hypothesis test

Variables	Coefficients B	T value	Sig	R^2	F	Sig
Foresight	11.681	4.804	0.000	0.625	72.766	0.000
Systematic thinking	0.129	2.659	0.019			
Strategic vision	0.314	3.427	0.001			
Partnership	-0.003	-0.027	0.097			
Motivating employees	0.247	2.825	0.005			
	0.195	2.899	0.004			

4 Discussion

This study aimed to identify the levels of availability of strategic intelligence and the degree of application of environmental performance in the municipality of Dhofar, Sultanate of Oman, as well as the impact of strategic intelligence dimensions (foresight, systems thinking, strategic vision, partnership, motivating employees) on improving environmental performance from the employees' perspective.

The results of the descriptive analysis of strategic intelligence in the five dimensions of stewardship, structured thinking, strategic vision, motivation, and partnership showed a high level in the municipality of Dhofar based on the views of the sample selected for this study. These results were identical and reinforced by previous findings such as Resen & AbdulRazzaq (2022). These results explain the Dhofar Municipality's adoption of strategic intelligence approaches.

The results of the descriptive analysis of environmental performance also showed a high level of environmental performance in the municipality of Dhofar. This result is also consistent with previous research findings such as Brahimi Study (2022). These results underscore the interest of Dhofar Municipality in environmental aspects and its constant endeavor to improve its services to citizens and to work to resolve environmental problems on an ongoing basis. The municipality periodically supervises operations related to the environment and creates appropriate teams to solve some problems that may cause harm to citizens such as fighting harmful insects, lifting unauthorized garbage places, and following up its operations in improving the public image and natural appearance of the governorate.

The results showed the validity of the first hypothesis, which states that there is an impact of foresight on environmental performance in the municipality of Dhofar. These findings are consistent with previous studies that have emphasized the positive role of foresight in business continuity management at Amman Greater Municipality (Al-Najjar & Al-Hariza, 2020). Based on these findings, the importance of foresight is highlighted in the strategic planning of an organization where foresight is a critical element of a successful institution, allowing it to anticipate and prepare for future challenges and opportunities. By identifying emerging trends, understanding market dynamics, and predicting potential disruptions that could affect the organization's operations (Alshaya, Al Hatab, and Abdul Hamid, 2019). foresight also includes assessing technological advances, demographic shifts and organizational changes. In addition, organizations can identify areas of potential growth or vulnerability through the use of a proactive approach scenario planning, and strategic thinking processes.

The results of the test confirmed the second hypothesis, which states that there is a positive impact of systematic thinking on environmental performance in the municipality of Dhofar. Institutions need to instill a culture of systematic thinking to work and compete effectively in today's fast-paced business environment. This also entails dividing complex problems into manageable parts, identifying relevant data, and systematically analyzing them to draw accurate conclusions (Kraus et al., 2020).

The results of the study showed a positive impact of the partnership in improving environmental performance in the municipality of Dhofar. The results of this hypothesis aligned with the findings of previous studies that emphasized the positive role of the partnership in improving the organization's performance (Park & Park, 2013). Partnership within the organization refers to a collaborative approach where individuals or teams work together to achieve a common goal while drawing on each other's strengths and experience (Kraus et al., 2020). In the professional context, partnership plays an important role in promoting innovation, efficiency, and overall organizational success. It also promotes effective communication, confidence-building and mutual accountability among team members, leading to greater synergy and productivity (Anwar et al., 2020).

Finally, the results showed the validity of the fifth hypothesis, which confirm how motivating employees improves environmental performance in Dhofar municipality. This result is identical to the results of previous studies (Jabbar & Abid, 2014). This can also be achieved by setting clear goals, providing feedback and recognition of achievements, providing opportunities for growth and development, and creating a positive working culture that values transparency, trust, and equity (Levine et al., 2017).

5 Implications

The current study has many practical implications based on its findings, particularly

municipalities in Oman, aiming to enhance the strategic intelligence practices and improve the environmental performance:

First, promote the adoption of strategic intelligence as an important part of various administrative activities in the municipality so that the dimensions of strategic intelligence are focused and measured periodically, which raises the municipality's overall performance and environmental performance in particular in the long term.

Second, focusing on environmental performance as a fundamental criterion for measuring the municipality's performance, as the importance of the municipality and its achievements are largely related to its environmental performance and the municipality must therefore establish different criteria for measuring its environmental performance and work towards improvement.

Third, Improving the municipality's strategic vision by embracing all actors in its environmental activities as well as involving the employees in the design and identification of plans and strategies in line with the Oman Vision 2040, which has focused its priorities on the development and protection of environmental resources in the Sultanate of Oman.

Fourth, establishing external partnerships with the community and governmental and non-governmental institutions that are active in the field of the environment, such as the Omani Environmental Protection Association, about environmental protection as well as attention to local culture in the development and implementation of projects in different regions of the Sultanate of Oman.

6 Conclusion

The study aimed to explore the impact of strategic intelligence facets (foresight, systematic thinking, strategic vision, partnership, motivating employees) on the environmental performance in Dhofar municipality in Oman. The findings confirmed the positive impact of all strategic intelligence facets except vision on the environmental performance in Dhofar municipality.

The study implications highlighted the importance of increasing the caring of decision makers about the strategic intelligence practices, specially the partnership with more parties working within the Omani society to improve the municipality's environmental performance.

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Activation of Tourism Companies for Sustainable Development: A Typology of Motives and Approaches

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Abstract

The conceptual paper examines various approaches to motivating and activating tourism businesses using the example of the pilot destinations of the Swiss Tourism Sustainability Program. Based on the experiences of the pilot destinations, a categorization of different motives of tourism companies to act sustainably is made and corresponding approaches to mobilize service providers are presented. The following groups can be differentiated: motivated by conviction, motivated by direct economic benefits, motivated by indirect benefits, motivated by regulations. Accordingly, various approaches are required to mobilize tourism service providers, ranging from information and communication, technical support and marketing campaigns to regulatory incentives.

Keywords: sustainability, destinations, motivation, activation, motives, tourism businesses

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1 Introduction

The promotion of sustainable tourism is increasingly becoming a priority for governments and destination management organizations. A key challenge in its implementation is the activation and motivation of tourism businesses. There are various reasons why tourism businesses are reluctant to take action. These include a lack of expertise, a lack of resources in day-to-day business or simply the judgement that the benefits are not clear enough or not great enough. Other barriers regarding sustainable development faced by suppliers are a lack of financial support, insufficient government policies and regulations, and inadequate infrastructure Liu & Kou (2024).

Implementing sustainable tourism is not just about stakeholders taking on specific roles, but rather a process of engagement guided by identifying stakeholders and understanding their roles, interests and motivations (Roxas, Rivera & Gutierrez, 2020). Motivations are a central factor for action. Font, Garay & Jones (2016) differentiate between business driven, legitimization driven firms and lifestyle and value driven firms.

In order to understand and influence the actions of tourism companies, it is important to know the motivations and be able to adapt planned measures to them. Accordingly, categorizing the motivations for sustainable tourism can help to develop tailor-made approaches that promise maximum success in the activation of tourism businesses.

One way of measuring the sustainability commitment of tourism companies is to participate in certifications or sustainability programs. Based on the experiences of the Swiss sustainability program for tourism destinations, this conceptual paper attempts to categorize the motivations of companies and derive possible approaches for activating and motivating tourism companies.

2 Swisstainable - The sustainability program of Swiss tourism

The Swiss tourism sustainability program "Swisstainable" is an initiative designed to make Swiss tourism more sustainable. It is not a certification, but a program that recognizes existing sustainability certifications and labels. In addition to a program for tourism companies, there is also a destination approach. The requirements for tourism destinations include anchoring sustainability in the destination strategy, appointing a sustainability officer, setting up a coordination center, a sustainability analysis and an action plan (Weber et al. 2023).

To participate in the program, a destination must have a certain percentage of hotels and other tourism businesses participating in the program for businesses. This is the most difficult requirement for most destination management organizations (DMO), as they are naturally dependent on the service providers. Accordingly, activating and motivating the service providers is of central importance.

The Swisstainable program for destinations started in 2022 with five pilot destinations and was officially launched in spring 2023. Some destinations were contacted during the development phase for validation purposes and then served as pilot destinations. The different situations regarding the sustainable development of the destination played a role in the selection. In addition, both urban and rural destinations should be represented. The Institute of Tourism and Mobility of Lucerne University of Applied

Sciences and Arts provided scientific support during the pilot phase of the program. During the development phase, a regular exchange took place with the DMO managers, which enabled the destinations to learn from each other. The exchange not only included insights and improvements for the program, but also enabled the derivation of various promising approaches for motivating and activating tourism companies.

3 Findings from the pilot phase

The experience of the pilot destinations has shown that achieving the required number of hotels and other tourism-related businesses participating in the Swisstainable program is the greatest challenge for all destinations.

Destinations that have been involved in the topic for some time and whose service providers have already been sensitized accordingly have an advantage. This shows that the process requires patience, and that development work is important. In almost all destinations, there were already tourism companies that are very committed or even already have sustainability certification. These businesses hardly needed any persuasion on the part of the DMO. Their motivation is usually intrinsic and based on the fact that they want to contribute to the sustainable development of the destination.

However, in order to attract more businesses, the destinations had to put in considerably more effort. Their offers ranged from regular communication and information to the organization of joint workshops and exchanges of experience to company visits, during which possible participation and any need for support were discussed 1:1 with the managers. The approaches pursued by the DMOs to increase the spread of Swisstainable Businesses in the destinations included early communication to create awareness and arouse interest, creating benefits in terms of image and marketing, personal contact with the businesses, specific assistance (e.g. support with program registration), the provision of trainings for businesses as well as general support. One destination (Surselva) worked together with a university, whose students supported the businesses in completing the sustainability check and deriving measures as required. Other destinations (Lucerne) offer an incentive by covering the fees for program participation for their service providers.

By spring 2024, five destinations already meet the requirements and participate in the Swisstainable program, with only one (Lower Engadine) reaching the highest level III. More than 20 other destinations have already registered and are in the process of fulfilling the requirements.

It has been shown that there is no one-size-fits-all solution and that ultimately a combination of different approaches to mobilizing service providers is probably the most promising. However, the representatives of the DMOs agree that direct contact with the service providers is one of the key success factors and that 1:1 support is often necessary, which of course involves a great deal of effort.

Many tourism companies appreciated the support they received from the DMO. It is important to keep the processes as simple as possible. Furthermore, the support must not lead to the business being relieved of all the work and no longer having to work on improving sustainability itself.

Another important finding from the pilot phase is that the motives for participating in the program vary from one tourism business to another and that the motivational approaches need to be adapted accordingly.

4 Typologization of the motives

Based on the initial experience of implementing the Swisstainable program and the analysis of the destinations' approaches, the following categorization of tourism companies can be outlined in terms of their motivations (cf. Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Categorization of different motives for acting sustainably by tourism businesses

The smallest group is the group of intrinsically motivated companies that are primarily committed to sustainable development out of conviction and ethical considerations. The commitment of these companies is usually strongly linked to the personality of the manager. This is consistent with the findings of Lin, Yu & Chang (2018), whose study results indicate that managers' attitudes towards benefits to society and corporate interests are the most important predictors of business operations in sustainability practices. This is also confirmed by the results from a study by Cunha, Kastenholz & Carneiro (2020) showing that entrepreneurs who are driven more by lifestyle motives have an awareness of sustainability that is reflected in successful sustainability management. These companies are usually the beacons that can set an example for other companies. It is therefore important to integrate them well and to showcase their commitment.

Another group of companies is particularly receptive to economic arguments (cf. Font et al., 2016). The prospect of being able to directly save resources and therefore money through optimization measures can be a strong driver. Here, the DMO can primarily act as an intermediary, for example to establish contact with an energy consultant.

It takes significantly more persuasion to create and communicate indirect or long-term benefits for the tourism businesses. These include, for example, advantages in marketing, advantages on the labor market or the fist mover advantage that arises from the anticipation of future legal requirements.

Finally, there is a large group of companies that can only be activated when they are strongly incentivized or even forced by regulations. While the DMO's room for maneuver is limited and it has leverage primarily through marketing and support measures, governmental authorities can create further incentives or regulations. One example could be the restriction of access to subsidies for certified businesses.

5 Conclusion

In reality, the motives and groups are mixed, and so are the appropriate approaches. Ideally, the whole cascade of different approaches is used, ranging from information and communication, technical support and marketing campaigns to regulatory incentives. While information and support are particularly important for groups 1 and 2, approaches such as providing visibility through marketing campaigns can motivate more companies. Group 4 is the hardest to activate, as regulations are usually not within the DMO's scope of action.

It has been shown that tourism service providers participate in the sustainability program for different reasons. Experience to date suggests that tourism service providers need to be approached differently depending on their motivation.

In future, it will be necessary to examine and empirically test how large the groups of motives are and whether there are other relevant distinguishing features. It will also be necessary to investigate which approaches or combinations of measures are actually most effective in activating and motivating tourism businesses to act sustainably.

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Session 3: Destination Branding and Communication

A New Era for Sport and Place Branding - When Sportainment Becomes a Strategic Leverage for Soft Power

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Abstract

A deep transformation is currently underway in the world of sport: sportainment. Sportainment relates to the phenomenon associated with the metamorphosis of sport and the reconfiguration of its boundaries. The world of sport and entertainment is now a hybrid combination of the virtual and physical in how an organization can deliver its brand promise and a value-added brand experience.

In this context, countries are moving towards the use of sportainment: sport, entertainment, and soft power are intertwined within a place branding strategy, whose three pillars are: i) the economic development of the community (i.e., greater standard and quality of life, following investments in sport and peripheral projects); ii) social cohesion (i.e., pride and sense of belonging) and horizontal social capital (i.e., lasting benefits for a large number of citizens); as well as iii) national and international promotion of the country (i.e., countries compete to position themselves as sportainment hubs).

Keywords: sportainment, creative destruction; brand experience, place branding, soft power, sustainability

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1 Introduction & Context

The purpose of this conceptual paper is twofold and is marked by two questions. The first is how does the heightened synergy between sport and entertainment manifest in sportainment? The second relates to how does sportainment become a leverage for a nation's place branding strategy and the development of its soft power?

Borrowing from Schumpeter's (1942) creative destruction theory enables us to understand the reshaping of the sport industry's boundaries into sportainment by using a holistic perspective. In this context, innovative, forward-thinking nations have the opportunity to elaborate their place branding strategy via the lever of sportainment.

2 Methods

This paper is the continuation of the lead author's research program and the result of a conceptual research. It is based on an extensive literature review that focused on the rise and consolidation of the sportainment ecosystem (Agha & Dixon, 2021; Buser *et al*., 2022; Van Laetham, 2011). Even though keyword searches on the concept of sportainment yields articles published from 2010 onwards when the term really started being used, the impelling theoretical force of this manuscript is Schumpeter's (1942) notion of creative destruction.

3 Sportainment

"Sportainment", or the merger of sport and entertainment activities (Richelieu & Webb, 2022), is becoming increasingly prominent within sport and entertainment. Indeed, sport, music, performing and visual arts, tourism, esports, social media, TV, streaming, betting, cryptographic assets, and other forms of entertainment are merging. These activities and related stakeholders are contributing to the advent of sportainment (Van Laethem, 2011).

In this vein, the world of sport and entertainment is now a hybrid combination of the virtual and physical in how an organization can deliver its brand promise and a value-added brand experience through spectacle and technology (Agha & Dixon, 2021; van Loggerenberg *et al*., 2021). Branded entertainment through sport is a strategic lever of differentiation for organizations and institutions (cities and countries alike) in convincing individuals to consume their respective brand. However, sportainment does not and should not replace the essence, or core, of the sport brand, namely the sport product.

Theoretically, sportainment relates to the phenomenon associated with the metamorphosis of sport and the reconfiguration of its boundaries (a mega-trend). Practically, it is a strategic set of tools that can prove effective for managers evolving in this ecosystem (Richelieu, 2021). In the spirit of Schumpeter's ''creative destruction'' (1942, 1994), innovation is becoming the main driver to survive, thrive and grow in the society of the spectacle (Debord, 1967, 2020), the age of entertainment (Gabriel, 2012), and the era of desire and enjoyment (Derrida, 1967, 1976). This disrupts the industry, in this instance sport, and is supposed to bring it to a whole new level (Schumpter, 1942, 1994), with an overhaul of its boundaries, its modus operandi, and the very definition of what sport is (Richelieu & Webb, 2022).

4 Place branding

Countries are moving towards the use of sportainment with a soft power edge: sport, entertainment, and soft power are intertwined within a place branding strategy (Richelieu, 2018). Examples of countries that combine a place branding strategy through sportainment, to different degrees of intensity, include Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and China which constitute our convenience sample for the purposes of this presentation.

Qatar and Saudi Arabia are in competition between themselves to hold the title of sport, entertainment, cultural and touristic hub in the region and globally (Brannagan & Giulianotti, 2018). They pursue a "diplomacy branding" strategy (Richelieu *et al*., 2022) whose assertiveness is enabled by the resources both nations can extract from fossil fuel revenues, precisely to reduce their dependency on this type of energy. In searching to nurture their soft power, they tend to raise questions among international observers about their motives, notwithstanding the human and environmental costs of their sport initiatives and events, as well as the socio-economic legacy and sustainability of their endeavours: such as the 2022 Football World Cup staged in Qatar, and the 2029 Winter Asian Games in Saudi Arabia to be held near the newly built futuristic city of Neom.

As far as it is concerned, Singapore is borrowing an "economic legacy" strategy' (Richelieu *et al*., 2022). The benefits of sport and sporting events, accompanied by a positive socio-economic legacy and horizontal social capital (lasting benefits for citizens), are prevalent. Meanwhile, as the economic and political stature of Singapore continues to grow, the "Lion City" has been capitalizing on sport to unite its population and establish the foundations that can position the nation as a dynamic sport, entertainment, cultural and touristic destination. Consequently, Singapore managed to build a positive brand image and a compelling soft power.

Another example is provided by China, which espoused a low-key approach, before it hosted the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics (Giulianotti, 2015). While not completely disregarding sportainment but rather by toning it down, the Middle Kingdom articulated its place branding strategy around the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Launched in 2013, the BRI aimed at connecting China to over one hundred countries via land, sea and technology, at a cost that is estimated to have surpassed one trillion US$ in investments (Wei, 2022).

The BRI is complemented by erecting infrastructures for events and the practice of sport. For instance, China intends to have 300 million new enthusiasts of winter sports in the coming years (Chen & Chalip, 2022; Fang *et. al., 2021*), and aspires to organize the World Cup of football by 2050 (Ma & Kurscheidt, 2020; Tan *et al*., 2016). Moreover, Chengdu and Shanghai are establishing themselves as gaming and sci-fi hubs. This is part of leveraging culture, gaming, entertainment and sport to develop and project a positive image of the Middle Kingdom, while feeding China's soft power by using playful activities and platforms that are capable of appealing to an international audience (Yue *et al*., 2020).

5 Sportainment - Strategic leverage for place branding

The countries analyzed previously aim to employ a place branding strategy to assert their global influence, or soft power. As such, countries are moving towards the use of sportainment with a soft (or sport) power edge. That is, sport, entertainment and soft power are woven within a place branding strategy, whose three pillars are: i) the economic development of the community (i.e., greater standard and quality of life, following investments in sport and peripheral projects, such as transportation, housing and public services); ii) social cohesion (i.e., pride and sense of belonging) and horizontal social capital (i.e., lasting benefits for a large number of citizens); and iii) national and international promotion of the country (i.e., enactment of a new geopolitical world order, as countries compete to position themselves as sportainment hubs in an increasingly volatile world) (Abdi *et al*., 2019; Richelieu, 2018).

Admittedly, the cases previously discussed are heterogenous and do not necessarily showcase all of the above mentioned three pillars. Nevertheless, sportainment can help nations achieve their soft power goals (Chen *et al*., 2022): sport becomes even more appealing when combined with entertainment, as consumers are looking for spectacle, entertainment, desire and enjoyment (Debord, 2020; Gabriel, 2012; Derrida, 1967). Furthermore, sportainment could be borrowed to divert people from the deep-rooted motivations nations might have. In doing so, sportainment can help make the place branding strategy of nations and their outcomes (e.g., soft power) more legitimate (Dubinsky, 2023).

6 Conclusions and future research

A deep transformation is currently underway in the world of sport (Agha & Dixon, 2021; Buser *et al*, 2022; Richelieu, 2021). This presentation underlined that sportainment has been magnified by the society of the spectacle (Debord, 1967), the notion of life as entertainment (Gabriel, 2012) and the era of desire and enjoyment (Derrida, 1967). Moreover, sportainment should genuinely enhance and promote sport; not replace it to the point that the sport product is being diluted, the brand image is damaged, and the brand is being cannibalized. Creative destruction should lead managers to stage a value-added brand experience (Richelieu & Webb, 2022).

Similar remarks could be made about place branding through sport initiatives being driven by countries, be they classified as emerging or developed nations. What kind of socio-economic legacy is possible and, by extension, how can sustainability be achieved when tens or even hundreds of billions of dollars are invested in the organization of short-lived sporting events? Even more so since the anticipated benefits of these events seldom materialize (Richelieu *et al*., 2022). Thus, how could sportainment be leveraged for place branding to help make the latter more sustainable, at a time of major challenges and concerns for climate change, public resources allocation, sound governance, etc.? The cases of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and China demonstrate that nations can follow different ways, as long as the place branding strategy is nurtured by a vision for the country's positioning and the well-being of its citizens.

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Local Wisdom-Based Tourism Communication Model in West Aceh, Indonesia

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Abstract
The development of a local wisdom-based tourism communication model can help optimize the local branding of tourist destinations in West Aceh. Through this approach, it becomes a medium for preserving local culture while effectively promoting regional tourism potential. This research focuses on analyzing the local wisdom-based tourism communication model in West Aceh, which is an innovative approach and has not been widely explored in previous studies. The novelty lies in the integration between the study of local wisdom and the analysis of communication models in specific tourist destinations in West Aceh. The research findings identified three tourist destinations that still preserve local wisdom in West Aceh, namely the tsunami monument building, Kopiah Teuku Umar, and Kopi Khop. The tourism communication model applied involves four main elements: local government, traditional and religious leaders, local communities, and tourists. The dominant communication model used is the multi-step communication model.

Keywords: tourism communication model, local wisdom, tourist destination branding

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1 Introduction

Tourism destinations by utilizing local wisdom become their own attraction for tourists, local wisdom packaged with a tourism communication model can be the formation of local branding of a destination site (Nugraha et al, 2017). Local branding is formed by displaying the characteristics of the tourist area and will become the identity of the area. In line with what was conveyed by Wibowo (2015) Local wisdom is a distinctive cultural identity of a region, this tour offers its own authenticity and uniqueness, and tourists can experience local culture and local traditions. In addition, there is the value of sustainability, where the local culture that continues to be introduced will have an impact on a sustainable lifestyle.

Indonesia is a country rich with a diversity of customs, cultures, and traditions. In addition to local wisdom, Indonesia is also blessed with diverse tourist areas. Towards the end of Indonesia, namely Aceh, which has the title "Sharia City" making Aceh synonymous with all things Islamic so that Aceh is proclaimed to be a World Islamic Tourism leading Islamic tourist destination or halal tourism in Indonesia for the world, in recent years Aceh has consistently recorded its position as a top Muslim-friendly tourism destination at the Indonesia Muslim Travel Index (IMTI) 2023.

Currently, one of the marketing trends in tourism development that is currently being carried out by the world including Indonesia is through the discourse of halal tourism (Awalia, 2017). West Aceh is one of the districts in Aceh that has great potential to develop halal tourism, halal tourism in this region seems to have become part of the local wisdom. This can be seen from the culture and social values that exist in West Aceh based on Islam. The development of halal tourism is not done by only improving facilities, but nowadays there is a growing trend of halal tourism that integrates halal tourism with other tourism activities. Currently, there is a growing trend of halal tourism that combines elements of local wisdom as an added value of the tourism itself (Darussalam et al, 2021).

Seeing this, West Aceh has tourism potential and distinctive local wisdom. This area has a high potential to attract tourists as evidenced by the existence of 26 cultural heritage and 35 tourist attractions and as evidenced by the number of tourists (souls) who visit every year reaching 142,169 people (BPS Aceh Barat, 2024). This helps regional income, Ernawati (2022) stated that the tourism sector in West Aceh contributed to regional income.

Local wisdom-based tourism has now become a commodity of tourism promotion that is often the driving force of tourist destinations, as a tourist attraction. Local wisdom, if packaged well in tourism communication, can be an element of local branding or a distinctive identity of a region. Tourism communication can be described as the exchange of messages and meanings carried out by tourism management agencies, investors, and tourism awareness groups in marketing destinations to tourists. There are seven components that can explain tourism communication: communication, tourists, marketing, accessibility, investors, destinations, and Human Resources (HR) institutions (Bungin, 2015).

The amount of tourism potential in West Aceh based on local wisdom can be further enhanced by a qualified tourism communication model. The tourism communication model describes the exchange of information between tourists and the tourism industry, where the industry provides products and services to meet the needs of tourists, and feedback from tourists allows the industry to adjust and improve its services (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2012). Humans and nature cannot be separated, the sustainability of tourism is supported by human capacity and qualified resources, as well as humans utilizing and developing tourism can help improve the economy. Findings (Butler & Rogerson, 2016) reveal that tourism development provides a variety of economic impacts and positive social benefits for local residents.

The exposure of tourism in West Aceh District is also inseparable from the news in the mass media, both in the form of special tourism coverage and incidental. Through the dissemination of this information, this can be a basic capital in developing tourism potential in West Aceh based on culinary wealth, natural beauty, cultural uniqueness, and local wisdom. In line with the findings of Fauziah (2019) social media can also be used as an effective tool to increase local wisdom, the messages conveyed can reach many people and tend to be faster than other media.

Local wisdom is becoming a new medium in attracting tourist benefits, local wisdom if packaged in tourism communication can be an element of the formation of local branding of a place. The characteristics and identity offered by each local wisdom provide an experience with local nuances to tourists. West Aceh with its rich tourism potential and variety of local wisdom, has a great opportunity to improve the quality and quantity of tourism in the area. However, West Aceh for some people may now still be less known due to the lack of local branding. This can be seen from the abandonment of several tourist attractions. Therefore, this study aims to determine the local wisdom-based tourism communication model in West Aceh.

2 Literature review

Tourism Communication Model

The communication model provides a simple description of what is required for communication by eliminating unimportant details (Sereno & Mortensen, 2018). Tourism communication can be considered as part of mass communication because it has characteristics that meet the characteristics of mass communication, which involves the process of delivering tourism-related information, messages, or content from sources such as tourism operators, governments, or influencers to a wide, heterogeneous, and geographically dispersed audience, using mass media such as the internet, television, radio, and print media, is one-way from communicator to communicant, and feedback from communicants tends to be delayed and indirect, where communicators in tourism communication are generally organizations or institutions, not individuals (Ardianto et al., 2017).

There are several types of communication models (Bungin, 2013), namely:

(a) One-Step Communication Model, the one-stage communication model assumes that messages are conveyed directly through the media aimed at communicants without going through other people (opinion leaders). However, in this model, the message cannot be conveyed to all communicants and the effects will be different for each individual. This model assumes that communicants are passive and the media does not have great power. Aspects of display, reception, and selective holding will affect the message so that the message received will be diverse. (b) The Two-Step Communication Model, model is a model proposed by Lazarsfeld and his friends in the 1940s with the book People Choice and Personal Influence. This model assumes that ideas from the mass media are received by people who have opinion leaders. Then the opinion leader passes it on to the public. This communication model is active and pays attention to the role of mass media and interpersonal communication in the message delivery process. (c) Multi-Step Communication Model, this multi-step model is a form of combination between the two models previously described. This model assumes that the spread of messages occurs sequentially. The exact number of stages in delivering a message depends on the intent and purpose of the messenger himself. (d) Web Communication Model, this model explains the communication process that occurs between customers and customers (C2C) or customers and leaders/opinion formers. C2C is people-to-people, where this communication occurs between one person to another. Characteristics of the web communication model: disseminating information in the network very quickly, information is difficult to control communicants, information is stored, and information is open to many people.

Local Wisdom

Local wisdom as part of local cultural identity has been understood through historical, anthropological, and archaeological approaches, particularly through the study of local wisdom in Indonesia. These practices are often described as the ability to defend a culture from outside influences. The ability to accept and integrate elements from other cultures is a form of self-preservation and provides direction for cultural development. This suggests that phenomenologically, local wisdom should be viewed as an orientation, perception, pattern, framework, and lifestyle. In Indonesian philosophy, local wisdom refers to the philosophy that lives in the hearts of the people, the wise way of life, and the right way of life, expressed through traditional rituals (Pesurnay, 2018).

This local wisdom is the result of centuries of spiritual refinement in the relationships between people of the same culture. It encompasses concepts about God, people's relationship with God, as well as relationships with nature and themselves. Unique human wisdom emerges from people's interactions with their environment. Local wisdom is a relational bond formed from the interaction between humans and the world in which they live. All manifestations of human life are forms of wisdom that are the result of the relationship between humans and their environment. These relationships are based on an awareness of something bigger and higher than us, something essential (Pesurnay, 2018).

Halal Tourism

Halal tourism is generally defined as tourism products and services designed to meet the needs of Muslim travelers related to food and worship. The story (Sriviboone & Komolsevin, 2018) defines halal tourism as a tourism management activity that follows the rules of Islam and answers the needs of Muslim tourists or Muslims covering hotel services, restaurants, entertainment, recreation, and transportation according to the rules based on the Qur'an and Hadith.

Halal tourism refers to the provision of tourism products and services that meet the needs of Muslim tourists to facilitate worship and other Mohsin et al. (2016) define halal tourism requirements in accordance with Islamic teachings. Therefore, as a type of tourism that embraces Islamic values, and in this regard a comparison can be made with the growth of Islamic banking practices where both allow members of the religion to successfully be part of the contemporary world consistent with the means, values, and practices that are in accordance with sharia law.

Bon and Hussain (2010) proposed that halal tourism is a subtype of religious tourism. It is tourism undertaken by followers of Islam; these followers live their lives according to Sharia law. Following sharia law is the way to become Halal. "Halal" is an Arabic word that means "known" to Muslims and therefore relates to approved and permitted forms of behavior. As such, Halal tourism essentially pertains to Muslim-oriented tourism, designed to cater to the considerations and needs of Muslims, where the travelers adhere to Sharia law as facilitated by the tourism provider.

In general, food and beverages in Indonesia are halal certified by MUI which is marked by the official halal logo on food and beverage packaging, and are inspected by the Food and Drug Administration (BPOM) so that the food and beverages available in Indonesia are guaranteed halal for Muslim tourists. Meanwhile, non-Muslim tourists can be sure that these foods and drinks do not contain substances harmful to the body, so they are suitable for consumption (Jaelani, 2017).

3 Methods

This research uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. According to Nazir (2005), the descriptive method is a method of examining the status of a group of people, an object, a set of conditions, a system of thought, or a class of events in the present. The purpose of descriptive research is to find a clear and complete description of social phenomena, which in this study is a local wisdom-based communication model in West Aceh.

Data collection techniques were carried out in two ways, namely, first direct field observation, with a structured observation framework. There are specific criteria or checklists regarding the aspects that must be observed so that they are consistent and more measurable. The criteria include relevance to local wisdom, popularity, and influence, and representation of diverse cultural aspects. From these criteria, three tourist destinations clearly reflect the local wisdom of West Aceh, namely the Tsunami Monument in Aceh, the Kopiah Monument in Aceh, and Kopi Khop. Researchers put themselves in an ethical position by placing themselves as observers from outside the culture or community under study.

Second, secondary data is also used in data collection in this study, namely through data obtained or collected by researchers from various existing sources. Secondary data or second-hand data is data obtained through other parties, not directly obtained by researchers from their research subjects (Sugiyono, 2012). This secondary data is generated from literature studies by examining theories relevant to research problems, such as journals, books, literature, and websites related to research topics. In addition, data from tourist destinations such as information about location, profile, history, vision, and mission, as well as documentation about local wisdom and tourist destinations in West Aceh were also obtained directly.

4 Result and Discussion

Local Wisdom of Tourism in West Aceh

West Aceh District has boundaries to the north of Aceh Jaya and Central Aceh Districts, to the south of the Indonesian Ocean and Nagan Raya District, to the east of Central Aceh and Nagan Raya Districts, and to the west of the Indonesian Ocean and Aceh Jaya District. West Aceh Regency has a land area of 2,927.95

kilometers, an ocean of 12 miles covering 957.38 kilometers, and a coastline of 54.84 kilometers. From these data, it can be concluded that Meulaboh West Aceh Regency has the potential for beautiful coastal tourism, which should be utilized by the surrounding community as a livelihood and income for village funds so as to minimize poverty and unemployment in the surrounding community.

Based on the results of direct field observations and literature studies that have been carried out, it is known that each region in West Aceh has its own tourism potential and local wisdom values that attract tourists. For example, the Tsunami Monument Building is located in Pasir Village. West Aceh became an area that was greatly affected by the 2004 Aceh Tsunami, the tragedy became a dark story for the people of Aceh. However, it has become an identity and a tourist attraction in West Aceh called the Tsunami Monument Building. There are two small monuments that stand in a row, with one monument in the form of a four-square bollard as high as 7 meters on the front there is a picture of a tsunami wave that lists 603 names of victims of villagers. There is a tsunami poem entitled "Tsunami Pasir Lhok Aron" by the late poet Isnu Kembara, which conveys a deep meaning about the damage and suffering of the community due to the earthquake and tsunami that hit.

The development of tsunami monument building tourism will not run without the support of other parties, such as the families of tsunami victims, the government of the tourism awareness community, and the Cultural Heritage Preservation Center (BPCB). So cross-sector communication helps in developing and improving historical tourism. The monument was built as a symbol that represents sadness but also as a history that continues to be remembered. Roland Barthes in semiotic theory explains that symbols and signs give meaning to an object. In this case, a monument was built to communicate to local people, tourists, and also people outside Aceh who visit. By simply looking at this monument and reading, two-way communication has occurred as a giver and receiver of information.

Tourism in West Aceh reflects the strong influence of Islam in the area. This can be seen from various aspects, such as the inclusion of the names of tsunami victims on tourist buildings, which shows the tradition of sending prayers for the deceased as a form of obedience to Islamic teachings. In addition, the use of small skull caps on the fences near the monument also symbolizes the presence of Islam as part of the local wisdom attached to the buildings in this region. Islam has become a solid identity and foundation in the lives of the people of West Aceh and has not been eroded despite major natural disasters such as the tsunami. In other words, tourism in West Aceh illustrates how Islam has become an inseparable part of the culture and social life of the local community, where Islamic traditions and symbols are present in every line of their lives (Firmansyah, 2022).

Fig. 1: Tsunami Monument Building Tourism

Source: AJNN/Aidil Firmansyah

Further local wisdom in West Aceh is found in Suak Ribee Village, namely the Teuku Umar Kupiah Monument. This monument was established to commemorate the services of Teuku Umar, a national hero from Aceh. The Teuku Umar Kupiah monument has become one of the icons and important landmarks in West Aceh Regency, as well as a place for locals and tourists to capture moments. On the walls of the monument is written the history of Teuku Umar's heroism against the Dutch, carved in golden ink. In the center of the monument is a Kupiah Meukutop (Acehnese skullcap). This historical building was built near the beach because Aceh is geographically surrounded by many seas, as local wisdom wants to show beautiful beaches, historical buildings are also an icon that wants to show to the world, the history of an Acehnese hero whose services are highly respected until his story is inscribed with gold ink. This greatness is symbolically depicted in buildings with Islamic nuances as a form of communication from the people of Aceh to tourists.

Fig. 2: Teuku Umar Kupiah Monument

Source: Google maps/Bagoes Hardy

Viewed from the tourism communication model, the local wisdom of the Teuku Umar Kupiah monument. As communicators, local governments and tourist attraction managers convey messages in the form of historical information, attraction promotion, and education about Acehnese culture through various media such as websites, brochures, and information boards. Communicants in this model are domestic and foreign tourists who visit the monument. Feedback from visitors, such as reviews and suggestions, can be used for evaluation and destination development in order to increase awareness, interest, and tourist visits to the Teuku Umar Kupiah Monument in the future.

The next local wisdom in West Aceh is Kopi khop (inverted coffee) typical of West Aceh Regency, which won 3rd place at the 2021 *Anugerah Pesona Indonesia* (API) peak night in the traditional beverage category organized by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia. Khop coffee is planned to become a cultural heritage. Khop coffee is processed from original coffee owned by local coffee planters, promoting shop coffee can help the local community's income. In addition to local cultural tourism that stands out in Aceh, culinary tourism is also a special attraction, because each region has special foods that are not owned elsewhere. Aceh introduces a unique coffee called kopi khop, which is served with an inverted glass covered by a small plate. To enjoy this coffee, you can use a pipette or sip little by little through the cover plate. There is an interesting history of why this coffee is drunk upside down. In the past, fishermen often brought coffee to accompany them at sea but in order to prevent the coffee from getting cold, spilled, and dirty from dust, the concept of covering the coffee with a plate and drinking it upside down became a solution. There is also a health side that is believed, by drinking upside down the acid levels in coffee become low so it is good for health (Dwi, 2022).

Fig. 3: Kopi Khop Aceh

Source: Getty Images/iStockphoto/Riza Azhari

Tourism Communication Model in West Aceh

Based on direct observations and literature studies conducted by researchers, it appears that the local wisdom-based tourism communication model in West Aceh utilizes local cultural elements, involves traditional and religious leaders, applies the *gotong royong* system, actively involves the local community, and focuses on promoting the potential and wealth of local wisdom, such as cultural festivals, handicraft exhibitions, and culinary specialties, with the use of digital media and modern communication technology, all aimed at preserving local culture and traditions while improving community welfare through sustainable tourism development.

Traditional and religious leaders as opinion leaders play a role in conveying messages related to cultural values and local traditions to the community, which are then internalized and represented by local communities or tourism awareness groups through their involvement as tourism service providers. These messages are then conveyed to tourists through direct interaction, cultural activities, and local wisdom-based promotions, resulting in an exchange of information and a deep understanding of the cultural identity of the people of West Aceh. In addition, the local government also plays an active role in supporting and facilitating the development of local wisdom-based tourism through policies, funding, and guidance for communities and tourism businesses. The realization of West Aceh as a tourist area is inseparable from good cooperation between stakeholders in the tourism sector (Hambali, 2022). As well as the attitude and commitment of the community, community, government, and stakeholders to jointly preserve and develop the tourist area.

Based on the results of field observations and literature studies, the tourism communication model in West Aceh, namely the multi-step communication model, is in accordance with the concept stated by Bungin (2013) regarding effective communication models in the dissemination of a message consisting of a one-step communication model, a multi-step communication model, and a web communication model. The tourism communication model in West Aceh, obtained based on the results of research, is more inclined to the implementation of a multi-step communication model. This multi-step communication model involves more interested parties in delivering messages about activities in the tourism sector in the form of counseling, socialization, mentoring, and coaching to people who are aware of the tourism potential in their area.

In addition to the multi-step communication model, another interesting thing is that the tourism communication model in West Aceh is based on Islam. This is in accordance with Aceh Qanun Number 8 of 2013 concerning Tourism, the implementation of Aceh tourism is based on faith and Islam known as halal tourism. District/city governments are authorized to regulate the organization and management of tourism in their respective regions including West Aceh district.

West Aceh has a majority Muslim population of 203.33 thousand people or more than 90% of the population (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Based on the potential as well as opportunities for the high number of Muslim communities in West Aceh, of course, it is very supportive of the development of halal tourism. Research conducted by Maulida et al., (2023) on how the implementation of halal tourism policies in West Aceh, shows that the implementation of halal tourism policies has been running optimally enough as seen from the attitude of the government in striving for halal tourism practices. This can be seen from the provision of halal tourism facilities and infrastructure and the sanctions given to violators (Disposition).

Local Branding and tourist destinations with local wisdom that exist in every tourist destination in West Aceh have developed well as a tourist area based on local wisdom cultural wealth and beautiful nature. This is relevant to Anholt's statement about the creation of branding, namely the importance of branding to build public trust, branding applies in a large order such as a country to the smallest order such as personal branding to create identical and distinctive local branding. However, branding is considered a short-term solution without continuous execution. Branding is needed to create a face to be introduced in the wider community and followed by cooperative steps afterward (Anholt, 2009).

To maintain the natural aspects of cultural values in tourist attraction areas in West Aceh, illustrated through the following tourism communication model:

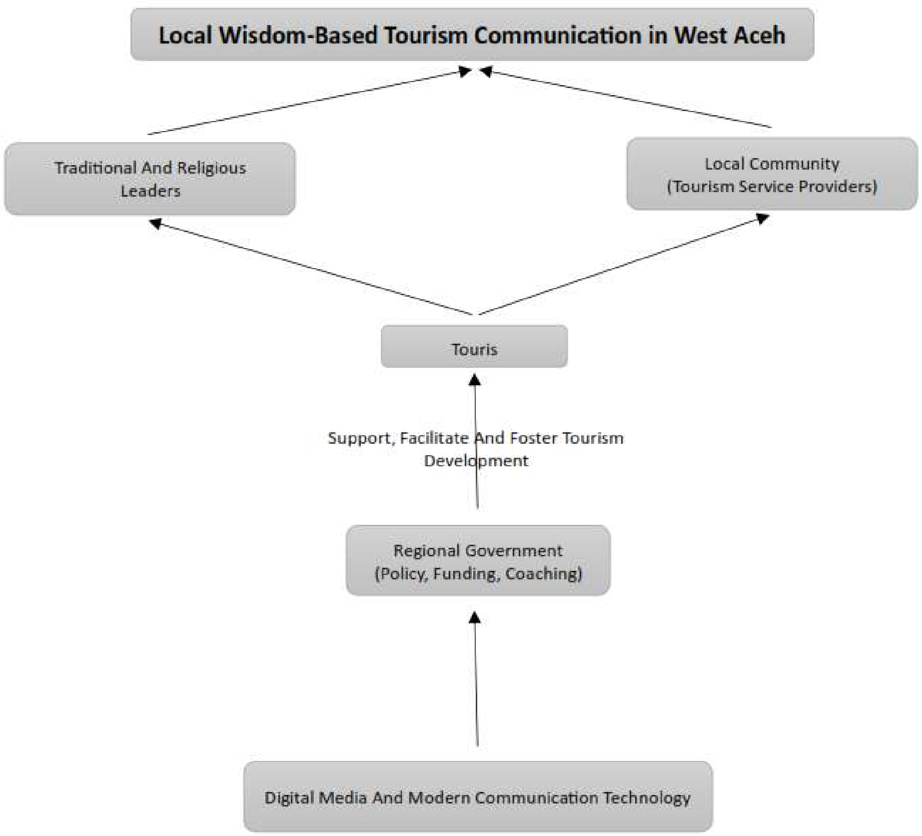

Fig. 4: Local Wisdom-Based Tourism Communication Model in West Aceh

Source: Processed by Researchers (2024)

The chart illustrates a local wisdom-based tourism communication model in West Aceh that adopts a multi-step approach. Traditional and religious leaders act as opinion leaders who convey messages about cultural values and local traditions to the community. Local communities then internalize these messages and play an active role as tourism service providers, delivering these messages to tourists through direct interaction and cultural activities. Local governments support this process through policies, funding, and coaching, while digital media and modern communication technologies are utilized to expand the reach of promotions. This ensures an effective and in-depth exchange of information about the cultural identity of the people of West Aceh to tourists while supporting local wisdom-based sustainable tourism.

Knowing the multi-step local wisdom-based tourism communication model can provide significant benefits in tourism development in various regions. The multi-step communication model contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage by involving traditional and religious opinion leaders in effectively conveying messages about cultural values and local traditions to the public. The active participation of local communities as tourism service providers enables them to demonstrate and transmit cultural aspects directly to tourists. In addition, two-way communication between the community, government, and tourists encourages continuous dialogue and feedback, so that cultural preservation can be well maintained and input received can improve the quality of tourist destinations.

Furthermore, the multi-step communication model supports sustainable tourism development. Local government support through policies, funding, and coaching plays an important role in ensuring the sustainability of local wisdom-based tourism programs. The utilization of digital media and modern communication technology for promotional activities can expand reach and increase inclusion in tourism. The involvement of various stakeholders, ranging from traditional leaders, local communities, and governments, to tourists, contributes to the realization of integrated and equitable tourism. Thus, the multi-step communication model can be a strategic tool in developing sustainable and local wisdom-based tourism.

The multi-step communication model is carried out by combining several communication models as an acceleration in introducing and perfecting existing local wisdom in tourist areas (Wahyuni et al., 2023). This communication occurs in a multi-directional manner, allowing continuous feedback and dialogue between traditional leaders, communities, government, and tourists, thus ensuring cultural preservation as well as sustainable and inclusive tourism development. This model is in accordance with the concept of multi-step communication described by Bungin (2013), which emphasizes the importance of involving various parties in the dissemination of messages to achieve effective and comprehensive communication.

5 Conclusions

The local wisdom-based tourism communication model in West Aceh involves four main elements: local government, traditional and religious leaders, local communities, and tourists. This model can be seen as a multi-step communication model, where local government and traditional/religious leaders act as opinion leaders who convey messages related to local cultural values and traditions. These messages are then disseminated through local communities as opinion followers or secondary communicators, which are then conveyed to tourists as the final message recipients.

The multi-step local wisdom-based tourism communication model provides significant benefits in preserving culture and improving the quality of tourist destinations. The involvement of traditional opinion leaders and active participation of local communities support sustainable two-way communication between the community, government, and tourists. Government support and the utilization of modern technology expand the reach and create integrated and sustainable tourism. With a multi-step communication approach, messages about local wisdom can be spread more effectively and help preserve local culture and traditions.

Future research is expected to examine local wisdom by using interview data collection so that the data obtained is more in-depth. Researchers also recommend looking at other aspects such as economic, social, and cultural impacts. Then based on the existing problems, some recommendations for local wisdom-based tourism communication models in West Aceh to build a more emotional and touching narrative to attract more foreign tourists to recognize tourist destinations in West Aceh, for example through social media. Next, efforts need to be made to prevent the fading of the cultural values of local communities that are eroded by modernization. This can be done by preserving the value of local cultural values that exist in the community, and the need for the preparation of the RIPPDA Regional Regulation as a reference for tourism development in each region.

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Family-Friendly Destination Positioning: The Case of Šalek Valley in Slovenia

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Abstract

Family tourism, a major segment of the tourism industry, enhances family cohesion, quality of life, fosters community and inclusivity and contribute to sustainable tourism. This paper presents a combined strategic framework for destination branding and applies it to a case of Šalek Valley – a tourist destination in Slovenia. It presents the process of rebranding and repositioning of the destination towards family-friendly destination, including analysis of the current position, designing destination brand essence, action plan to implement the new destination brand and destination brand monitoring plan. Despite challenges like limited resources and a mismatch with the national strategy, inclusive efforts aim to make Šalek Valley Slovenia's most family-friendly destination, focusing on active family tourism, festival tourism, and thermal tourism. Systematic evaluation of the progress and outcomes of proposed strategy requires regular monitoring of brand perception and visitor satisfaction, which requires the development of suitable brand metrics and KPI's.

Keywords: family-friendly, destination branding, positioning strategy, brand identity

1 Introduction

Family tourism is one of the most important sectors of the tourism industry, accounting for about 30% of the leisure travel market (Schanzel & Yeoman, 2015). Besides direct economic effects, family tourism has significant effects on family cohesion and improves families' quality of life. By creating a welcoming environment for families, destinations can foster a sense of community and inclusivity, making visitors feel at home. This is why creating family-friendly tourism facilitates a sustainable tourism model that benefits both the local economy and the visitor experience. Family tourism flourishes and assures these effects predominantly in properly managed, and promoted family-friendly destinations. Here, family tourism meets destination branding and planning, where there seems to be limited knowledge available on how to develop and implement an effective family-friendly positioning strategy. For this purpose, this paper presents an "action-research" case study of a Slovenian destination – Šalek Valley – on the process of rebranding and repositioning as a family-friendly destination. The case study highlights the process of building brand identity and the steps taken to reposition itself. The process was inclusive and involved the local destination management and marketing organization (DMMO), tourism suppliers, local population, and consultants (the authors of this paper).

2 Strategic framework for destination branding

In order to develop a coherent and successful destination brand, comprehensive, pyramid, and process-oriented strategic frameworks available for DMMO managers were considered, with the model proposed by Morgan and Pritchard (2002) deemed most suitable and followed. This framework incorporates various cognitive, experiential, and emotional attributes to explain and guide brand development. At the core (top) is the brand 'essence,' which builds on different brand attributes and benefits. These are organized in a logical order of levels, where each level defines some key elements. These levels, however, need to be operationalized in substantive terms, where key decisions need to be taken regarding key positioning dimensions, such as quality and pricing. While it is important to decide on the prioritization and aimed "level" of general destination attributes such as physical, natural, cultural, hospitality, safety, entertainment, and value-for-money attributes, it is also crucial to identify unique, idiosyncratic, and peculiar attributes that contribute to brand authenticity, credibility, and originality (Jimenez-Barretto, et al., 2020).

3 Case study: implementing family-friendly positioning strategy

The destination under investigation is the Šalek Valley in Slovenia, located in north-western Slovenia and covering two municipalities, Velenje and Šoštanj. In 2023, it contributed to 1 percent of tourist arrivals and 1 percent of tourist stays and is therefore small and not well-known destination in Slovenia (SORS, 2024). The destination is known for its coal mining industry and has initiated a transition to a more sustainable industry, where tourism has also been recognized as an industry that could support the just and sustainable transition (Ministry of Economy, Innovation and Technology, 2022). In Šalek Valley, there are three lakes that resulted from the mined-out underground areas, hills and forests, valleys and rivers, and several festivals organized by DMMO or local organizations. The most famous festival in the valley is Pipi Longstocking (named after the fictional character in Astrid Lindgren's book) which attracts thousands of families and school kids. The destination was known as a coal mining destination and was struggling with positioning and offering a unique value proposition to attract tourists, especially domestic ones. The process of rebranding and repositioning was very inclusive and involved the local destination management and marketing organization (DMMO), tourism suppliers, local population, and consultants (the authors of this paper). Different methods were used to support the process: desk research, a survey among the local population (370 answers collected in 2021), 23 in-depth interviews with key tourism suppliers and stakeholders, and four workshops including representatives of different stakeholders (DMMO, tourism suppliers, local associations, municipalities, interested locals). The rebranding process followed encompassed following steps;

i) Analysis of the current position Analysis was done using a survey among the local population about the perceived image, desk research, and in-depth interviews. The destination was mainly perceived as a mining town, an industrial town, and a lakeside town, with locals generally believing that the quality of life is high as the destination has three lakes, many castles, a developed sports infrastructure, green spaces, and a rural surrounding offering hiking, cycling, and other outdoor activities. Semiotic analysis of symbols, artifacts (e.g., the tallest statue of former Yugoslav president Tito), and the public image of Velenje (which was built as an "ideal socialist town") revealed two main highlights: industrial roots and socialist nostalgia (solidarity and community), which are joined by newer ones – youth, modernity, and innovation. Accordingly, the destination's current image should be steered in a completely new direction. Based on a survey, the local population is extremely supportive of tourism (98% and 90% of locals agree with the development of tourism in Velenje and Šoštanj, respectively).

ii) Designing the destination brand essence The development of the destination's brand image was based on i) the need to move away from the current image, ii) the identification of the destination's hidden potential (high quality of life, green spaces, festivals), and iii) the unique positioning compared to other destinations. Based on the desk research on the positioning of other destinations in Slovenia that have similar characteristics (like lakes, castles, possibilities for outdoor activities), none of the destinations explicitly position themselves as a family-friendly destination. As Šalek Valley is also known for a family festival, Pipi Longstocking, has infrastructure that allows high quality of life and many outdoor possibilities for an active family break, as well as a friendly and hospitable local population. Based on these findings, unique brand positioning was envisioned as a 'inimitable' combination of tangible and intangible destination characteristics (resources). These are "hilly-lakeside" landscape (with friendly tourist farms), "community ethos" (and freely accessible infrastructure), numerous "kids/youth events and activities", "wellness relaxation" (in nearby thermal bath) and "industrial heritage" (and historical villas and castles). Accordingly, the proposed destination brand essence was: Šalek Valley is the most family-friendly destination in Slovenia. To realize this promise, three leading tourism products were identified: active family tourism, festival tourism, and thermal tourism, with two supporting products – cultural tourism and gastronomy.

iii) Action plan to implement the new destination brand In order to realize the vision, a number of quantitative and qualitative objectives were set. These include becoming the first choice for families looking for an active break in nature and hosting recognized events for families. To achieve these objectives, a series of horizontal and vertical (in terms of developing leading and supporting products) specific action plans have been adopted, including: cycling and walking trails, events for families (including sporting events), new playgrounds, guidelines for the development and certification of family-friendly accommodations, and investment support for family-friendly accommodation.

iv) Destination brand monitoring plan DMMO needs to develop a communication plan to address the stakeholders and communicate the new brand identity and strategic positioning to the target audiences. One of the outlets for communication should be the destination's web page and social media channels, where the family-friendly destination receives special attention. The DMMO has not implemented such steps so far, neither measured perception of the destination image among domestic and foreign visitors. Accordingly, destination brand monitoring plan has been proposed and is being developed to evaluate brand perceptions (e.g. awareness, image, consideration and intentions).

4 Conclusion

Rebranding and repositioning need to be an inclusive process with the support of the stakeholders that needs to "live up to the brand promise." Therefore, the brand identity needs to be clear and consistent and communicated with the stakeholders and the target audiences. DMMO needs to strengthen the communication of the brand identity and measure and evaluate the perceived brand identity and positioning. While there is wide agreement and acceptance of these goals and imperatives among DMMO and key destination stakeholders, some challenges are also evident in their implementation. One of them is the lack of resources (including money and people). The municipalities of Velenje and Šoštanj are relatively small, predominantly industry-oriented, and fragmented in terms of promotion and cooperation with other destinations in the region. Šalek Valley is, in addition, not internationally recognized and not (yet) part of main tourist routes (there is no highway and tourist flows do not pass through this destination). Another potential challenge is a mismatch with the national tourist strategy, which aims to position Slovenia as a "boutique" (hi-end/hi-quality) country, while the identity of Velenje and Šoštanj is closer to a more affordable, value-for-money brand promise. Eventually, rebranding is a long and complex process where there is currently a lack of systematic monitoring of how potential visitors actually perceive this destination brand, which is why regular measurement of brand awareness, image, spending, satisfaction, and (re)visit intentions among actual visitors is one of the key priorities to support the systematic and effective pursuit of the proposed brand strategy.

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Sustainability Communication of a Marketing Hotel Cooperation - The Case of Private Selection Hotels & Tours (PSH&T)

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Abstract
The marketing consortium Private Selection Hotels & Tours (PSH&T) is in a sustainability transformation process with all its 46 member hotels. An issue represents the "what" and "how" of sustainability communication. This contribution shows practical insights from a systematic website content analysis of the sustainability communication of all member hotels. The communication was assessed based on seven thematic focus areas of the project. The results were mixed, with some hotels already proactively communicating about their sustainability initiatives, while others are barely addressing them.

Keywords: sustainability, communication, website, content analysis

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1 Introduction

As part of an Innotour financed project, the sustainability transformation of Private Selection Hotels & Tours (PSH&T) as a group and the individual member hotels is being pursued. This involves initiating the systematic sustainable development of the member hotels through the conceptualisation and planning of concrete sustainability measures and sustainability certificates to the development and marketing of sustainable offers. When implementing the various sustainability measures, the focus is on four topics: CO2 neutrality, the use of regional and seasonal products, sustainable hospitality and awareness-raising among guests as well as increasing employee attractiveness. As far as the current implementation of sustainability measures is concerned, the PSH&T is a group highly heterogenous. Some are already well advanced and committed to sustainability and have acquired credentials such as independent third-party certifications. Others are still at the very beginning and have so far not yet invested a lot of time or effort in sustainable development. As the marketing consortium wants to support the sustainability transformation of its members in order to better utilize this aspect as a common positioning in the future. To achieve this, those who have not yet contributed much to their sustainability need to be brought on board. The aim of the project is for members to benefit from each other's experiences. A special sustainability working group has been formed for this purpose, which organizes regular exchanges of experience.

Besides the operational implementation of sustainability measures, sustainability communication has been identified as an issue that many hoteliers raised concerns and uncertainties on what and how much should be communicated towards the guests and also other stakeholders. Uncertainty about what is relevant for guests and the fear of greenwashing or making negative headlines are often cited as obstacles to sustainability communication. Thus, a systematic analysis of their website has been proposed to gain a better understanding of what and how the member hotels communicate about their sustainability initiatives. The aim was to do get a better understanding of the status quo of the members sustainability communication and draw conclusions on where improvements can be made.

2 Literature review

Sustainability communication informs guest about the sustainability of their products and services. They aim to show how sustainable practices are met and ideally encourage pro-sustainable consumption decisions. Communication about sustainability within the tourism industry can be an important component to help close the attitude-behaviour gap (Tölkes, 2018). Many tourism businesses already use their website but also other means of communication to inform about their sustainability initiatives and persuade guests to make more sustainable choices. However, Villarino and Font (2015) addressed that these sustainability messages often lack persuasiveness to really change consumer behaviour.

As the number of known and even sanctioned greenwashing cases is growing, so is public scepticism on the sustainability claims by companies. This has led to a deliberate under communication of sustainability measures from companies in fear of attracting criticism or negative media publicity. Font et al. (2017) analysed the gap in communication of sustainability practices reported in audits and those communicated on the website. On average, only about 30% of the sustainability practices were communicated. From a transparency and credibility perspective, both the phenomenon of understating but also overstating sustainability practices is an issue to be addressed.

3 Methodology

A systematic content analysis of the sustainability communication of all 46 member hotels of the PSH&T was conducted. The main aim was to deliver an external and systematic analysis of the current online sustainability communication. This allows the hotels to reflect on what they currently communicate versus what they actually do. Potential under- or overcommunication can therefore better be identified and addressed. The analysis took place from mid November 2022 until beginning of January 2023 on the live websites, which was considered a short enough period to not be subjected to major changes in the sustainability communication. Seven analysis categories that are relevant for the underlying thematic focus of the sustainability transformation project as well as the positioning of the group were defined as overall coding system. Based on this coding system the websites content was manually scanned for relevant information. Four researchers were coding the content and cross-coder comparisons were done to ensure a certain level of objectivity. Coding issues were discussed in the team until a common interpretation was reached.

Table 1: Overview of coding system used for the systematic website analysis

	Analysis category	Argumentation for relevance
1	Commitment / vision / goals	Builds a basis for the sustainability strategy, also a prerequisite for all hotels participating in the Swisstainable programme
2	Certifications / programmes	Prerequisite for all hotels participating in the Swisstainable programme level II and III
3	Regional products	Thematic focus areas of the sustainability transformation project
4	Climate & resource efficiency	Thematic focus areas of the sustainability transformation project
5	Employee attractiveness	Thematic focus areas of the sustainability transformation project
6	Guest information & hospitality	Thematic focus areas of the sustainability transformation project
7	Experience of sustainability	Thematic focus areas of the sustainability transformation project

For each category the “what” and “how” of the communication was analysed. The “what” was merely listed to have an overview of the communicated measures. The “how” was assessed from 1 to 5 using the four assessment criteria (1) detail of information, (2) measurability / impact, (3) liability / objective setting, and (4) communication style. (see table 2 for details). An overall rating from 1 to 5 for all seven categories was attributed to each hotel to be able to make cross-comparisons.

Table 2: Overview of assessment criteria

Assessment Criteria	1	2	3	4	5
Detail of information	no comments on sustainability measures available	little detailed, partly incomplete descriptions	sufficiently detailed description, reader can get a rough picture of the measures	detailed description, reader can get a good picture of the measures, explained in an understandable and comprehensible way	very detailed description, in case of interest there are possibilities for further additional information (e.g. reports)
Measurability / impact	no information on the measurability of the measures	little concrete information on the measurability and impact of the measures, generally relevant factors	some indicators are shown, impact is described qualitatively	measurable indicators are shown, impact is shown quantitatively	measurable indicators are shown and put into relation, indicators are very sound and credible (e.g. Science Based Targets Initiative SBTi)
Liability / objective setting	no liabilities or objectives	general, vague, poorly differentiated objectives	roughly defined liabilities and objectives	clearly defined liabilities and objectives	challenging and transparent liabilities & objectives with regular update on current status / SMART formulated
Communication style	unconvincing, not appealing visual presentation	stylistic devices are rarely used, the communication does not catch up with the guests much, the presentation is not consistently clear	stylistic devices are used to some extent, communication is partly supported by emotions and/or rational arguments, the presentation is not consistently clear	stylistic devices are used well and purposefully, communication is emotional and partly underpinned with rational arguments, clear presentation	stylistic devices are used in a very appealing and convincing way, the communication is emotional and underpinned with rational arguments at the important points, very clear presentation

We are aware of the limitations to this study design. However, the exploratory nature of the study was in favour of keeping the analysis simple to provide a first understanding of the online sustainability communication of the member hotels.

4 Results and discussion

The level of sustainability communication was heterogenous among the member hotels. For example, 17 out of 46 hotels have already designed a detailed subpage on sustainability where relevant information is gathered. However, the structure and content varied. Furthermore, it was interesting to see that 23 hotels have not yet publicly communicated a commitment to sustainability, eventhough 27 of the 46 are at least on level I (committed) in the Swisstainable Programme (the sustainable programme of Switzerland Tourism).

Communication on the subject of hospitality, regional products & experience of sustainability were rated with the highest points. Especially the aspect of hospitality and regionality is not surprising, as a key positioning of the PSH&T is the focus on personal hospitality with privately managed hotels that focus on regional products and services. However, the analysis also highlighted some potential for improvements in the area of climate communication as well as the communication of already existing labels and programmes.

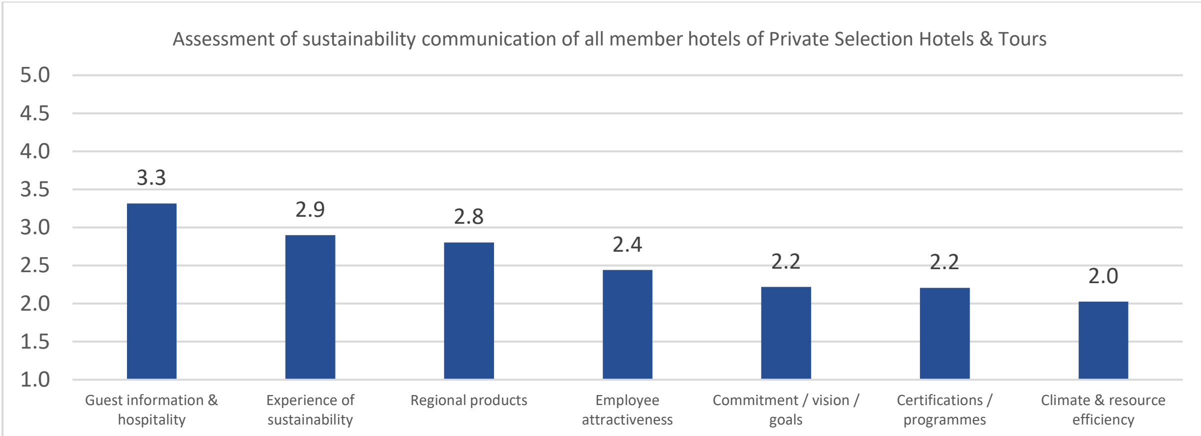

Fig. 1: Overview of the sustainability communication assessment

The analysis showed that the level of sustainability communication is rather heterogeneous among the member hotels. Out of the 35 points that could have been reached the assessment ranged from 8 to 32 points, illustrating the heterogeneity within the group. For each hotel, a spider diagram was created to show its own performance against the group benchmark. Three different patterns could be identified: (1) leading hotels that showed high rankings among all categories, (2) hotels with partial strengths in some categories, and (3) hotels that lagged the group benchmark in all categories.

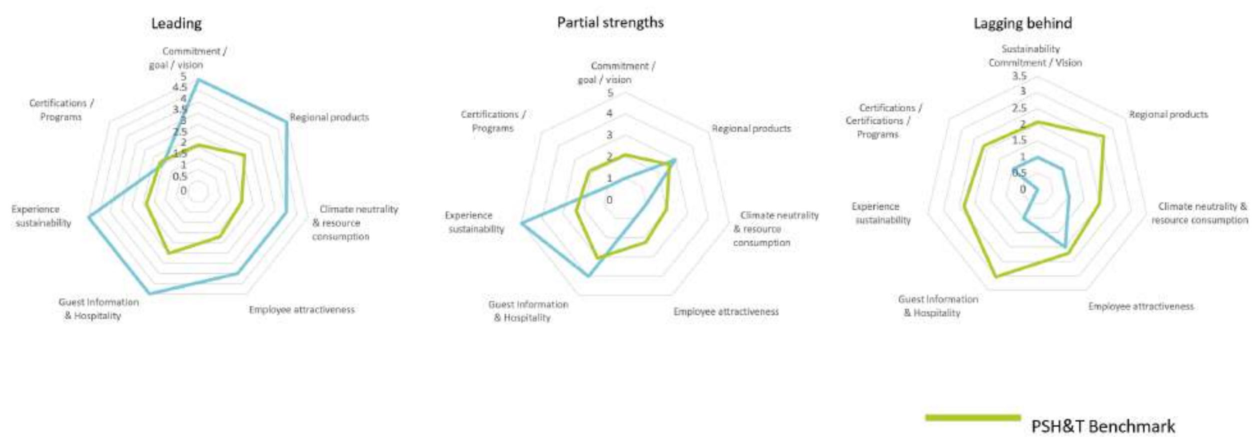

Fig. 2: Exemplary spider diagrams for the three identified patterns of sustainability communication

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Session 4: Emerging Trends and Challenges in Tourism Development

Sustaining Cross-Cultural Pro-Environmental Tourism in Island Destinations

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Abstract

Changing consumption patterns and trends towards authentic travel experiences including the appeal of indigenous food and culture that support the local economy has continued to evolve. This study examines the consumption patterns of climate-smart and indigenous foods specific to a region. In the context of the Hawaiian Islands, Japanese tourists, the largest international travel market segment to the islands were analysed. Hawaii is well positioned for potential cross-cultural appeal as it relates to sustainable agricultural techniques that may help to diversify product offerings while sustaining the islands limited resources and unique cultural appeal.

Keywords: locally grown food, willingness to pay, island destination, sustainability

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Hawaii exists as a distinct tourism destination in the U.S. that has evolved as a mass tourism destination since becoming a state in 1959 that is popular among U.S. residents along with an influx of predominantly international visitors from Japan. Traditional marketing among the islands has thrived on a sun, sand, and sea approach and while still successful, the changing nature of the traveler is demanding a more enriching and unique experience. Amid increasing global competition, along with a variety of other factors including changing consumer behavior, new marketing and branding approaches are needed to sustain growth and visitor appeal. Furthermore, to sustain tourism in the long term not only a high-quality visitor experience is strategically important but there exists a need to help improve the livelihoods of its residents (Hawaii Tourism Authority, 2023). Being a remote island destination, Hawaii, imports a wide majority of food and food related products. Opportunities may exist to promote and market locally grown products.

A range of studies have examined willingness to pay for local food beyond typical travel expenditure along with the appeal of experiencing indigenous culture (Agrusa et al., 2021; Andrade et al., 2021; Brown, 2003; Carpio & Isengildina-Massa, 2009; Giraud, Bond, & Bond, 2005; Linnes et al., 2022; Loureiro & Hine, 2002; Yang & Leung, 2020). Pro-environmental behavior may be supported through practices that support not only an awareness such as information sharing and messaging but also through personal responsibility connected to both tourists and residents (Miller, et al. 2010; Moisander, 2007).

Data was gathered from a sample size of 804 participants who visited Hawaii as tourists. The survey questionnaire was originally developed in English and translated into Japanese using the double translation method. Data was examined using ANOVA and t-tests to gauge Japanese tourists' image and branding perceptions, and willingness to pay for locally grown food among selected demographic variables. The majority of Japanese tourists not surprisingly reported sightseeing, shopping, and beaches as the top images or characteristics that come to mind when visiting Hawaii as a vacation destination. Among the respondents, 28% indicated Hawaiian culture as important with 21% preferring locally grown food while indigenous foods were reported at 6% along with certified organic food at 4% to a lesser extent when thinking of Hawaii as a tourism destination.

Significant differences (p (0.016 <0.05) SE 0.02804) among genders existed in terms of climate-smart food choices with 61% reporting a willingness to pay 5-10% more and particularly among female travellers. The importance of climate-smart farming practices revealed significant differences (p (0.001 < 0.05) SE 0.18570) along with the importance of consuming indigenous Hawaiian foods (p (0.001 < 0.05) SE 0.18570) among the 18-24 age group and the importance of Hawaiian culture. Furthermore, among the 18-24 age group significant differences (p (0.001 < 0.05), SE 0.18570) existed in regard to sustainable food choice information to inform purchasing decisions along with the reporting of quality certification (p (0.001 < 0.05) SE 0.18092) and labelling of products produced in Hawaii (p (0.001 < 0.05) SE 0.18000) along with health and nutritional information (p (0.001 < 0.05) SE 0.17521), and eco-friendly packaging (p (0.009 < 0.05) SE 0.18333). Finally, there was there was a significant difference (p (0.008 < 0.05) SE 0.18598) between Japanese tourists who considered price to be the most important consideration. A summary of significant findings among age is listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Significant Findings Among Age

Climate-smart farming practices (p (0.001 < 0.05) SE 0.18570)
Importance of indigenous Hawaiian foods (p (0.001 < 0.05) SE 0.18570)
Quality certification (p (0.001 < 0.05) SE 0.18092)
Labelling (p (0.001 < 0.05) SE 0.18000)
Health and nutritional information (p (0.001 < 0.05) SE 0.17521)
Eco-friendly packaging (p (0.009 < 0.05) SE 0.18333)
Price (p (0.008 < 0.05) SE 0.18598)

Although Japanese tourists to Hawaii value authenticity, price is an important consideration. The younger age groups 18-24 value indigenous and climate-smart food products, while the 60+ age group were more inclined to pay the premium prices beyond their typical travel expenditure. The branding appeal appears to be linked to a variety of practical aspects, culture, and environmental considerations. Collaborative and innovative strategies linked to Hawaiian culture among a variety of dimensions may help to enrich the story of the islands that may appeal to more diverse visitor interests and emerging markets while supporting residents and indigenous cultures. While limited to the Hawaiian Islands, other traditionally dominated sun, sand, and sea destinations may consider the results by promoting circular economic strategies, niche marketing, and cross-cultural consumer appeal. Broader trends in tourism and consumption practices are increasingly emerging in a more personalized context across demographics, behavior, and tourism environment as revealed in the context of the findings for island destinations.

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Cultural Anthropology and Sustainable Development: The Role of Cultural Tourism in Minority Cultural Heritage Preservation

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Abstract
This study explores the role of cultural tourism in the preservation of minority cultural heritage, focusing on the Ancient Qiang City in China. This research investigates the impact of immersive theatre tourism on the Qiang community, analyzing its contributions to cultural preservation, economic benefits, and sustainable development through the lens of cultural space and cultural capital theories. Data was gathered from Qiang performers, tourists, and local residents by semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The findings emphasize the importance of community engagement in transmitting intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and highlight the potential of cultural tourism to enhance cultural identity, foster economic development, and promote sustainable heritage preservation. This study offers theoretical insights into the revitalization of ICH through tourism, showcasing immersive theatre tourism as a practical approach for safeguarding minority cultures while driving sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: minority culture, cultural tourism, cultural anthropology, intangible cultural heritage

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The cultural heritage of ethnic regions is the sum of material and spiritual wealth created by local residents through their daily lives and productive activities over a long historical process, characterized by ethnic uniqueness and historical-cultural value. The development of tourism in these regions can significantly impact the lifestyles and production methods of local residents (Carnegie & Mccabe, 2008). However, tourism also brings a series of issues, such as the infringement of indigenous rights, the crisis in cultural heritage, and obstacles to economic development. Therefore, the development of tourism in ethnic regions must be harmonized with the protection of cultural heritage. It is essential to maintain local cultural characteristics and ensure the preservation of cultural heritage and the rights of indigenous people during tourism development.

Anthropology encompasses a broad range of research topics, including various aspects of human life such as the study of human behaviour, social structures and organizational methods, cultural traditions and customs, as well as observations of how people live and behave in specific environments. The development of tourism in ethnic regions can bring economic benefits to local residents, but it may also pose certain impacts on local cultures. Consequently, maintaining cultural diversity while promoting economic development in ethnic regions during the tourism expansion has emerged as a new subject of inquiry. Through the lens of Cultural anthropology, the objectives of this study are (1) to understand the cultural narrative strategies and perceptions of minority communities towards cultural tourism, (2) to analyze the impact of cultural theatre tourism on the preservation of minority cultural heritage, and (3) to identify challenges and opportunities associated with cultural tourism for minority heritage preservation. Empirical research on visitors and performers to the Ancient Qiang City of China has been carried out. The Ancient Qiang City of China in Fengyi Town, Maoxian County, Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, China. It achieves the integration and sharing between scenic areas and communities in terms of geographical relationships and the distribution of resource rights. All the performers are from the nearby Qiang people, and they present the traditional culture and living customs of the Qiang people to tourists through their daily life activities and traditional rituals.

This study employs the theoretical perspectives of cultural space and cultural capital to guide the interpretation and analysis of data, and through an anthropological lens, explores the impact of cultural theatre tourism on minority heritage preservation and the tourism sustainable development in ethnic regions. Bourdieu (1986) delved deeply into the crucial concept of cultural capital, asserting that culture possesses value and can be converted into economic value. Subsequently, Australian economist Throsby (1999) elaborated on the specific forms of "cultural capital," categorizing it into tangible and intangible types. Intangible cultural capital encompasses beliefs, traditions, customs, etc., which, despite possessing cultural value, cannot be directly traded and thus lack economic value. Folk cultural heritage or intangible cultural heritage (ICH) can, to some extent, be regarded as "non-material cultural capital."

Besides, cultural space was primarily applied in ICH and folklore research, with less application in the tourism sector. Cultural tourism encompasses both cultural activities and those within the realm of tourism spaces (Richards, 2018). In the era of consumerism, the integration of culture and tourism can enhance the cultural connotations of tourism spaces, realize the cultural value of tourism, and form a third space in tourism that leads the trends of the times. Cultural spaces are closely linked with folk cultural activities, constituting a multidimensional complex.

This study analyses the role of cultural tourism in minority cultural heritage preservation, focusing on the cultural diversity, economic development, challenges, and opportunities of cultural tourism. This research consisted of a qualitative case study design and thematic analysis. From a cultural anthropological perspective, methods such as participant observation and semi-structured interviews can be employed to gain a profound understanding of the current state of the Qiang culture and its transformation in the context of tourism development.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Qiang performers, tourists, government employees, and local Qiang residents, for a total of 12 respondents by random selection. The data was collected from the following 6 aspects: 1) personal information, 2) perceptions of cultural theatre tourism, 3) economic and social impacts, 4) Challenges and opportunities, 5) sustainable development, and 6) cultural identity and Authenticity. For instance, how do you feel cultural tourism has impacted your community’s cultural heritage? Has cultural tourism provided economic benefits to your community? Please provide examples. etc. Based on interviews and participant observation, data was collected from tourist destinations, and an inductive analysis was conducted on the interview materials of destination staff and tourists. The study systematically outlines the regional cultural background, cultural heritage status, and tourism sustainable development methods of the Qiang ethnic region.

The study holds important theoretical and practical implications for the research on cultural heritage destinations and the sustainable development of cultural heritage tourism. For the theoretical findings, this article offers a unique perspective on understanding ICH, particularly through community engagement and cultural identity to foster sustainable cultural development. Firstly, the findings illustrated Community Engagement can be a theoretical pillar to support the view of communities as active agents in heritage transmission. Second, exploring the cultural practices and social structures of communities, allows researchers, tourists and local residents to comprehend the relationship between tourists and their destinations, and the ethnic and cultural identity of host communities. Therefore, anthropological insights can provide deeper insights into effective conservation strategies (Naguib, 2013). Besides, the theoretical model also recognizes that economic incentives can drive sustainable cultural development.

Besides, the practical findings indicate that the application of well-designed immersive theatre tourism allows visitors to engage with ICH making its "revitalization" possible, by connecting ICH more deeply with cultural narratives, enhancing the appreciation and understanding of minority cultural heritage. Second, the inheritance and protection of minority ICH are reconstructed and reborn within the theatre space of cultural heritage tourism, effectively integrating tangible and intangible elements of cultural heritage destinations (Pistola et. al., 2021; Su et. al., 2020). This approach not only enhances the destination's image but also highlights the significance of protecting and promoting minority cultures. Third, community engagement is crucial for the preservation of ICH. Communities not only carry but also pass on their heritages (Salazar, 2017). Immersive theatre tourism provides economic benefits to local communities. For instance, community involvement can enhance members' sense of identity and belonging towards ICH. Meanwhile, participation in the immersive theatre performance also improves local residents' income. Thereby motivating their proactive protection and transmission of these legacies.

The results of this study can be used as a foundation for supporting minority cultural heritage preservation and cultural tourism sustainable development. By emphasizing the significance of community engagement and cultural identity, offers a unique perspective and approach to the safeguarding and sustainable development of ICH. Moreover, the research approach can be adapted to suit local cultural and tourism development by taking into account various factors, such as the social environment and ethnic customs of different minority groups.

Fig. 1: The Ancient Qiang City of China

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Ethical Challenges and Sustainable Practices in Orphanage Tourism: Reframing the Discourse

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Abstract

The rise of orphanage tourism has sparked significant debate due to concerns over the potential exploitation and harm to vulnerable children. This paper critically examines the complex ethical challenges surrounding orphanage tourism by synthesising recent literature. The tension between well-intentioned volunteer motivations and systemic factors enabling child commodification and trafficking is central to the discourse. Altruistic drivers are contrasted with the developmental impacts of temporary child attachments. Critical perspectives highlight the commercialisation of orphanages, substandard conditions, trafficking links, and modern slavery. International reports and regulations safeguarding children's rights are analysed, with viewpoints ranging from contextualising local practices to prioritising family-based care over institutionalisation. Emerging themes include the strategically mobilising effect of orphanages, clientelism facilitating child recruitment, and conceptual frameworks on actor networks and power dynamics. Recommendations promote legal protections, family-based alternatives, awareness-raising, local capacity building, ethical volunteerism, and further research aligning with child rights and sustainable development principles.

Keywords: child well-being, ethical tourism, orphanage tourism, SDGs, sustainable practices, volunteer tourism

1 Introduction

The rise of orphanage tourism as a subset of volunteer tourism has sparked significant debate and concerns among researchers, organisations, and policymakers. While often driven by altruistic intentions, the practice of visiting and volunteering in orphanages has come under scrutiny for its potential negative impacts on child well-being, development, and rights. This paper examines the complex dynamics surrounding orphanage tourism, drawing upon recent literature (2010-2024) to highlight key issues, perspectives, and recommendations for fostering sustainable and responsible practices in this domain. The interconnections between these themes are displayed in a conceptual model, illustrating the multifaceted nature of the challenges and opportunities associated with orphanage tourism. Central to the discourse on orphanage tourism is the tension between the well-meaning motivations of volunteers and the systemic issues that perpetuate the commodification and exploitation of vulnerable children. Scholars have explored the altruistic intentions that drive volunteer engagement (Conran, 2011; Wearing & McGehee, 2013) while also cautioning against the potential harm associated with temporary emotional attachments formed between volunteers and children in residential care (Richter & Norman, 2010). The commercialisation of orphanages, where children become commodities to attract funding and donations, has been critiqued by researchers like Guiney (2018), Reas (2015) and Westerlaken (2021), underscoring the ethical complexities of this phenomenon.

Reports from international organisations, such as the United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty (Nowak, 2019) and the Lancet Commission (van IJzendoorn et al., 2020), have shed light on the detrimental conditions in many institutional care settings, characterised by neglect, abuse, and human rights violations. The links between institutional care, child trafficking, and exploitation have also been highlighted in various reports (de Boer-Buquicchio, 2016; United States Department of State, 2018), further emphasising the urgent need for action. Amidst these concerns, some scholars have advocated for a more nuanced approach, considering local contexts, practices, and beliefs (Carpenter, 2015). Others have emphasised the importance of fostering balanced ecosystems and hospitable mindsets among stakeholders to navigate power imbalances and promote sustainable practices (Everingham & Motta, 2020).

This paper aims to provide an inclusive overview of the current state of knowledge on orphanage tourism, synthesising key findings, discussing implications, and offering recommendations for future research and practice. By contrasting and connecting various perspectives, the paper seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on addressing the underlying issues of exploitation, trafficking, and the commodification of vulnerable children in the context of orphanage tourism.

2 Literature review

This literature review synthesises key themes, trends, and gaps in the existing research, providing a foundation for developing recommendations and strategies that align with the principles of regenerative tourism and the SDGs.

2.1 Motivations and experiences of orphanage volunteers

Several studies have explored the motivations driving individuals to engage in orphanage tourism. Conran (2011) and Wearing and McGehee (2013) emphasise the desire for personal growth, cross-cultural exchange, and transformative experiences as key factors. Proyrungroj's (2014) study in Thailand identified the desire to help tsunami-affected children, personal development, social connections, cultural immersion, and friendship as primary motivations. These findings highlight the altruistic intentions of many volunteers, often evoked by natural disasters and media coverage. However, as Richter and Norman (2010) show, the emotional connections formed between volunteers and children in residential care facilities can lead to attachment disorders and developmental issues due to the temporary nature of these relationships. Westerlaken (2021; 2023) acknowledges the mutual satisfaction of volunteers and directors while also recognising the potential for child commodification and exploitation, calling for ongoing scrutiny, ethical standards, and collaboration to ensure that volunteerism remains a positive force for change.

2.2 Systemic issues and the commodification of children

Scholars like Guiney (2018) and Reas (2015) have directly challenged the notion of orphanage tourism as an ethical endeavour, critiquing the commercialisation of orphanages, where children become commodities to attract volunteers, donations, and revenue. The 2019 United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty (Nowak, 2019) and the 2020 Lancet Commission report (van IJzendoorn et al., 2020) paint a grim picture of the conditions in institutional care settings, characterised by violence, sexual abuse, neglect, and human rights violations. These reports highlight the profit motives and commodification of child care that often underlie the proliferation of orphanages. The links between institutional care and trafficking have also come under scrutiny. The Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (de Boer-Buquicchio, 2016) and the United States Trafficking in Persons Report 2018 shed light on the recruitment of children into orphanages for the purpose of exploitation, including orphanage tourism. Nhep (2024) proposes a conceptual model for identifying clientelist relationships in orphanages, arguing that they may facilitate children's recruitment and transfer into unregulated orphanages.

2.3 Balancing local contexts and global responses

Duursma et al. (2023) and Everingham and Motta (2020) emphasise the importance of fostering a balanced ecosystem and a hospitable mindset among volunteers, organisations, and local communities. They highlight the need for mutual understanding, respect for local contexts, and clear delineation of roles and responsibilities to mitigate power imbalances and promote sustainable practices. Westerlaken (2023) underscores the importance of receiving organisations that understand the local context in facilitating more equal relationships between volunteers and host communities in residential care settings. Using actor-network theory, Tomazos and Murdy (2023) demonstrate how orphanage volunteer tourism in Cambodia relied on a delicately balanced network of actors and relationships, significantly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. They question the narrative that all orphanage children are necessarily victims of exploitation, as the studied orphanage offered needed support in the absence of a safety net, presenting a more nuanced view of orphanages and orphanage tourism.

2.4 Global responses and regulatory measures

The growing recognition of the intersections between orphanage tourism, child trafficking, and modern slavery is exemplified by the 2019 United Nations General Assembly Resolution on the Rights of the Child (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2020), which acknowledges the harms associated with orphanage tourism and volunteering, urging member states to take preventive measures. Several countries, including Australia, the UK, and the Netherlands, have taken steps to regulate and discourage orphanage tourism practices. Australia has introduced regulatory measures for charities with overseas activities, categorising residential care for children and overseas volunteering as high-risk activities subject to stringent safeguarding requirements (van Doore, 2020; van Doore, 2022; ReThink Orphanages Australia & ACFID, 2019). The Netherlands has witnessed an 'informalisation trend' in international volunteering, with volunteer travel opportunities increasingly offered by nonspecialist, development-oriented providers relative to specialised tourism-oriented providers (Kinsbergen et al., 2021). This trend has been catalysed by public criticism of orphanage tourism, with small-scale private development initiatives continuing operations while tourism providers adapt their offerings.

2.5 Orphanage tourism and the SDGs

While often driven by altruistic intentions, orphanage tourism has been linked to the exploitation and trafficking of children (van Doore, 2022). This practice falls predominantly under SDGs 8 (decent work and economic growth) and 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions) (Westerlaken, 2021; van Doore & Nhep, 2023). The demand for orphanage tourism experiences can fuel this practice, encouraging orphanages to prioritise funding by maintaining children in poor conditions to elicit more donations (Guiney & Mostafanezhad, 2015). Orphanage tourism and funding can undermine the efforts of national authorities to reform their care systems and redirect resources towards family-based services (van Doore & Nhep, 2023).

The intersection between orphanage tourism and the SDGs is complex. While volunteer tourism is often seen as a potential contributor to the SDGs, particularly in terms of quality education (Goal 4) and decent work and economic growth (Goal 8) (Dolezal & Miezelyte, 2020), the reality is often quite different. It can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and power imbalances between the Global North and South, reinforcing neo-colonial narratives of the "white saviour" (Bandyopadhyay, 2019, p. 2). To address both the in-country and external factors that drive and enable orphanage trafficking, governments of host and sending countries must work together under the framework of international cooperation (van Doore & Nhep, 2023). This collaboration is essential for implementing practical measures to combat orphanage trafficking and ensure the protection of children's rights in line with the SDGs. Sending countries should establish extra-territorial jurisdiction for offences related to child trafficking and exploitation, regulate the activities of organisations involved in orphanage tourism, and raise awareness about the harms associated with this practice (van Doore & Nhep, 2023). Host countries should strengthen their alternative care systems, improve cooperation between child protection and law enforcement sectors, and develop policies to eliminate unskilled volunteering in residential care facilities (van Doore & Nhep, 2023).

Ultimately, addressing orphanage trafficking and aligning orphanage tourism with the SDGs requires a fundamental shift in the way we understand and approach development, volunteerism, and child protection. It calls for a move away from the commodification and exploitation of children towards a more rights-based, community-driven approach that prioritises the best interests of the child and supports family-based care (Cheney & Ucembe, 2019). Only by working together across sectors and borders can we hope to create a world where every child has the opportunity to grow up in a safe, nurturing environment free from exploitation and harm.

2.6 Conclusion

The literature on orphanage tourism reveals a complex interplay of factors, including the motivations and experiences of volunteers, systemic issues and the commodification of children, the need to balance local contexts and global responses, and the intersection with the SDGs. While some researchers argue for a more nuanced understanding of orphanage tourism, considering local practices and the potential for mutual benefits, the overwhelming evidence points to the urgent need for a fundamental shift in approach. The exploitation, trafficking, and commodification of vulnerable children, often driven by the demand for orphanage tourism experiences and the financial incentives they provide, cannot be ignored. Addressing these issues requires a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach that prioritises the rights and well-being of children, supports family-based care, and empowers local communities to drive their own development agenda.

Central to this shift is the need for greater international cooperation and coordination between host and sending countries. Governments must work together to establish and enforce robust regulatory frameworks, including extra-territorial jurisdiction for child trafficking and exploitation offences, stringent safeguarding requirements for charities and volunteer-sending organisations, and policies to eliminate unskilled volunteering in residential care facilities. Ultimately, aligning orphanage tourism with the SDGs requires fundamentally reimagining how we approach development, volunteerism, and child protection. It calls for a move away from neo-colonial narratives of the "white saviour" and the commodification of children towards a rights-based, community-driven approach that centres the voices and agency of those most affected.

By critically examining the complex dynamics at play and working collaboratively across sectors and borders, we can build a future in which every child has the opportunity to grow up in a safe, nurturing environment, surrounded by the love and support of family and community. The literature on orphanage tourism serves as a clarion call for action, urging us to confront uncomfortable truths, challenge entrenched power imbalances, and forge a new path forward grounded in the principles of regenerative tourism and sustainable development.

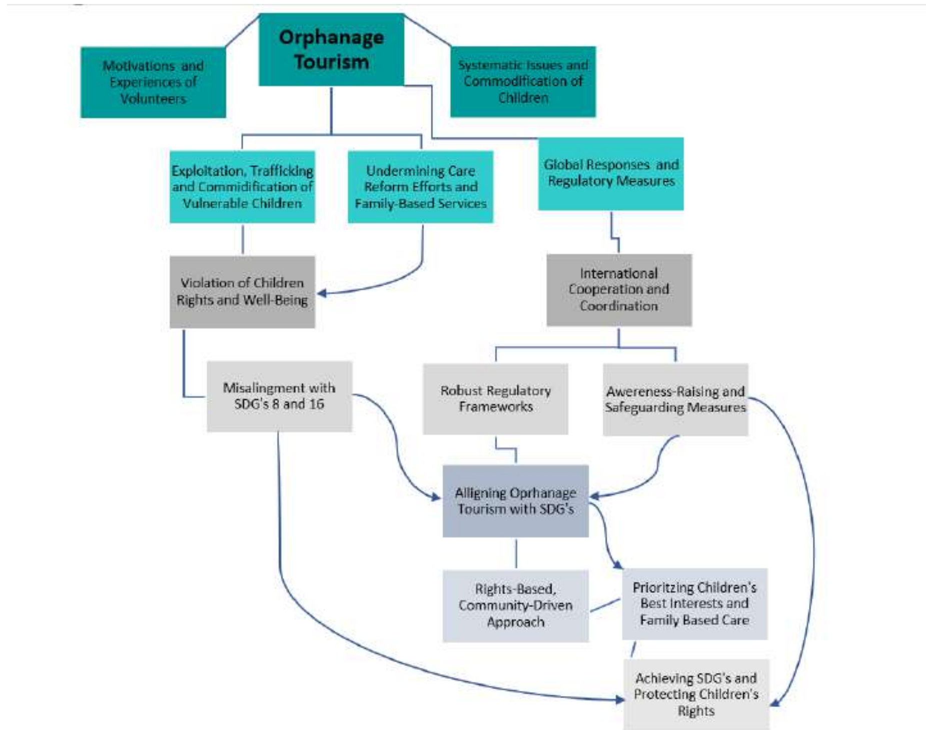

Fig. 1 Conceptual model

3 Methodology

To conduct this critical review of the literature on orphanage tourism, a systematic search was performed in major academic databases. The search strings combined relevant keywords like "orphanage tourism", "volunteer tourism", "child welfare", "child rights", "volunteerism", "institutionalisation", and "deinstitutionalisation".

The initial search results were then filtered based on the following inclusion criteria:

- Published between 2010-2024 to focus on recent and relevant literature
- Available in English full-text
- Addressed ethical challenges, sustainable practices, or impacts related to orphanage tourism
- Empirical studies, theoretical/conceptual papers, literature reviews from peer-reviewed journals
- Reports from reputable international organisations/NGOs on related topics

Sources were excluded if they did not substantively cover orphanage tourism and/or were not research-based (e.g. news articles, opinion pieces). The final literature review encompassed 31 sources that met the inclusion criteria, comprising 1 book, 1 book chapter, 22 journal articles, 5 reports, and 2 online papers from United Nations bodies. The selected sources underwent a full-text review and thematic analysis using an inductive, data-driven approach. This involved an iterative process of coding literature, identifying patterns, and deriving themes in a bottom-up manner without relying on pre-existing categories.

The initial coding passed identified relevant excerpts and concepts related to orphanage tourism's ethical issues, impacts, motivations, local contexts, and policy/practice implications. These codes were then collated into potential themes through further review and analysis.

The themes were refined through multiple rounds of review to ensure their internal coherence and accurate representation of the full dataset. Candidate themes were evaluated based on their meaningful patterns across literature sources. Those lacking substantive evidence were discarded or merged with other themes.

The final five themes encapsulated in the literature review are (1) motivations and experiences of orphanage volunteers, (2) systemic issues and the commodification of children, (3) balancing local contexts and global responses, (4) global responses and regulatory measures, and (5) orphanage tourism and the SDGs. This methodology enabled a rigorous synthesis of key issues, perspectives, and evidence concerning the ethical challenges and sustainable practices surrounding orphanage tourism based on recent interdisciplinary scholarship.

4 Findings and discussion

The conceptual model developed from the literature review on orphanage tourism provides a framework for understanding the complex dynamics of this phenomenon and its intersection with the SDGs. This section aims to synthesise the key findings and discuss their implications for policy, practice, and future research by examining the influences, consequences, interventions, and alignment with SDGs.

4.1 Influences on orphanage tourism

The literature reveals two primary influences on orphanage tourism: the motivations and experiences of volunteers and the systemic issues and commodification of children. Volunteers are often driven by altruistic intentions, seeking personal growth, cross-cultural exchange, and the desire to make a positive impact (Conran, 2011; Wearing & McGehee, 2013). However, these motivations are shaped by the strategic mobilisation of effect by orphanage leaders, framing volunteers as subjects in need of redemption through encounters with orphans (Freidus & Caro, 2021; Tomazos & Murdy, 2023). This emotional appeal, coupled with the commodification of children in orphanages (Guiney, 2018; Reas, 2015), perpetuates the demand for orphanage tourism experiences.

4.2 Consequences of orphanage tourism

The consequences of orphanage tourism are far-reaching and detrimental to the well-being and rights of children. The literature highlights the exploitation, trafficking, and commodification of vulnerable children as a direct result of the demand for orphanage tourism experiences (Westerlaken, 2021; van Doore, 2022). Moreover, orphanage tourism undermines care reform efforts and family-based services, as the financial incentives provided by volunteers and donors prop up the institutional care system (van Doore & Nhep, 2023). These consequences lead to the violation of children's rights and well-being, ultimately misaligning with SDGs 8 and 16, which aim to promote decent work and economic growth, and peace, justice, and strong institutions, respectively.

4.3 Interventions to address orphanage tourism

The literature emphasises the need for global responses and regulatory measures to address the challenges associated with orphanage tourism. This includes international cooperation and coordination between host and sending countries, establishing robust regulatory frameworks, and implementing awareness-raising and safeguarding measures (van Doore & Nhep, 2023). Sending countries must establish extra-territorial jurisdiction for child trafficking and exploitation offences, regulate the activities of organisations involved in orphanage tourism, and raise awareness about the harms associated with this practice. Host countries, in turn, must strengthen their alternative care systems, improve cooperation between child protection and law enforcement sectors, and develop policies to eliminate unskilled volunteering in residential care facilities.

4.4 Aligning orphanage tourism with the SDGs

Aligning orphanage tourism with the SDGs requires a fundamental shift in approach, moving away from the commodification and exploitation of children towards a rights-based, community-driven model that prioritises the best interests of the child and supports family-based care (Cheney & Ucembe, 2019). This shift demands a critical examination of the neo-colonial narratives that underpin orphanage tourism, such as the "white saviour" complex, and a commitment to centring the voices and agency of those most affected by this practice. By working collaboratively across sectors and borders, stakeholders can develop and implement strategies that promote the well-being and rights of children in line with the principles of regenerative tourism and sustainable development.

4.5 Implications for policy, practice, and future research

The findings of this literature review have significant implications for policy, practice, and future research. Policymakers must prioritise developing and implementing regulatory measures that discourage orphanage tourism and prioritise child rights and well-being. This may include stricter safeguarding requirements for charities engaged in residential care and overseas volunteering and public awareness campaigns that highlight the harms associated with orphanage tourism (van Doore, 2020; ReThink Orphanages Australia & ACFID, 2019).

In practice, more significant investment is needed in family reunification and community-based care programs that provide alternatives to institutionalisation. These programs should be developed in collaboration with local communities and stakeholders, considering the specific cultural, social, and economic contexts in which they operate. Moreover, organisations involved in orphanage tourism must prioritise child well-being over volunteer satisfaction and critically reflect on their practices and impact. Future research should focus on the long-term impacts of orphanage tourism on child development and well-being and the effectiveness of various interventions and alternative care models. Longitudinal studies that follow children from institutionalisation to adulthood could provide valuable insights into the long-term consequences of orphanage tourism and inform the development of evidence-based policies and practices. Additionally, research on the role of affect and emotion in shaping volunteer experiences and the potential for clientelist relationships in facilitating child institutionalisation and trafficking is needed to deepen our understanding of these complex dynamics.

4.6 Conclusion

The synthesis of the literature on orphanage tourism, guided by the conceptual model, reveals the intricate interplay of influences, consequences, interventions, and alignment with the SDGs. By examining these themes, this section provides a more nuanced and analytical discussion of the findings and their implications for policy, practice, and future research. As we work towards the development of recommendations and strategies that align with the principles of regenerative tourism and the SDGs, we must prioritise child rights, family reunification, and community-based care while also recognising the complexities and challenges of addressing orphanage tourism in diverse contexts.

5 Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussion, several recommendations can be made to address the challenges associated with orphanage tourism and promote sustainable, responsible practices:

- Strengthen legal and regulatory frameworks: Governments should introduce and enforce stringent regulations for charities and organisations involved in residential care and overseas volunteering, ensuring compliance with child protection standards and safeguarding measures. This recommendation aligns with the findings of van Doore (2020) and, ReThink Orphanages Australia and ACFID (2019), which highlight the importance of regulatory measures in discouraging orphanage tourism and protecting children's rights.

- Promote family-based care: Policymakers, NGOs, and international organisations should prioritise investments in family-based care alternatives, such as family strengthening, kinship care, and foster care, to prevent unnecessary child institutionalisation and support family reunification efforts. This recommendation is supported by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on the Rights of the Child (2019), which emphasises the importance of family-based care and deinstitutionalisation efforts.

- Raise awareness and educate stakeholders: Governments, NGOs, and the tourism industry should collaborate to raise awareness about the potential harms of orphanage tourism and educate volunteers, donors, and the public about responsible engagement and alternatives to orphanage volunteering. This recommendation is consistent with the findings of Guiney (2018) and Reas (2015), which underscore the need for greater awareness and education to combat the commodification of children in orphanages.

- Foster local leadership and capacity building: International organisations and NGOs should prioritise the development of local leadership, capacity building, and community-driven initiatives to promote sustainable, locally-led solutions to child protection and care. This recommendation aligns with the insights of Westerlaken (2023) and Tomazos and Murdy (2023), which emphasise the importance of understanding local contexts and fostering equal relationships between volunteers and host communities.

- Encourage ethical and responsible volunteerism: Volunteer-sending organisations should adopt and adhere to ethical guidelines, ensuring that volunteer placements prioritise child well-being, respect local contexts, and avoid perpetuating power imbalances or dependency. This recommendation is supported by the findings of Duursma et al. (2023) and Everingham and Motta (2020), which highlight the need for a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities and the promotion of sustainable practices in volunteer engagement.

- Support research and monitoring: Governments, academic institutions, and NGOs should invest in research and monitoring efforts to better understand the long-term impacts of orphanage tourism, evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, and inform evidence-based policymaking and practice. This recommendation addresses the gaps in the literature review and underscores the need for empirical research to guide decision-making and resource allocation in line with the SDGs.

These recommendations provide a comprehensive framework for addressing the challenges associated with orphanage tourism and promoting responsible practices that prioritise child rights and well-being. By implementing these recommendations through cross-sector collaboration and international cooperation, stakeholders can work towards aligning their efforts with the principles of regenerative tourism and the SDGs, fostering a more equitable and positive impact on children, families, and communities affected by orphanage tourism.

6 Conclusion

Orphanage tourism, despite often being driven by noble intentions, is a complex phenomenon that demands careful navigation and a holistic approach to address the underlying issues of child exploitation, trafficking, and commodification. This paper has synthesised key themes, trends, and perspectives from the literature, revealing the multifaceted nature of orphanage tourism and its intersection with the SDGs

The findings underscore the urgent need for a fundamental shift towards sustainable and responsible practices that prioritise child well-being, family reunification, and community-based care. By contrasting and connecting various perspectives, this paper contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with orphanage tourism, emphasising the importance of balancing local contexts with global responses and aligning efforts with the principles of regenerative tourism.

The recommendations put forth, grounded in the literature and supported by existing studies, provide a roadmap for stakeholders to collaboratively address the complexities of orphanage tourism. These recommendations include strengthening legal frameworks, promoting family-based care, raising awareness, fostering local leadership, encouraging ethical volunteerism, and supporting research and monitoring. Moving forward, ongoing critical reflection, dialogue, and action are necessary to ensure that children's best interests remain at the forefront of all decisions and interventions.

Central to this endeavour is the need for greater international cooperation and coordination between host and sending countries, as well as cross-sector collaboration among governments, NGOs, academic institutions, and the tourism industry. By working together to dismantle the structures that perpetuate the exploitation and commodification of vulnerable children, we can pave the way for a future where every child has the opportunity to thrive in a safe, nurturing, and family-based environment.

As the discourse on orphanage tourism continues to evolve, it is crucial to align efforts with the SDGs and the principles of regenerative tourism. This alignment requires a critical examination of the neo-colonial narratives that underpin orphanage tourism and a commitment to centring the voices and agency of those most affected by this practice. By doing so, we can work towards building a more equitable and just world where the rights and well-being of children are upheld, and the transformative potential of tourism is harnessed for positive social change.

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Cannabis Tourism and the Uncertain Policy: Pattaya, Thailand

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Abstract

Thailand has recently legalized cannabis. However, the policy changing momentously has an impact on farmers, communities and industries. Furthermore, cannabis tourism is not considered as an institutional form of tourism, nor is it regarded as marginal tourism. It overlooks normal forms of tourism, social stigmas, local awareness and related crimes. This transformative tourism business provides economic opportunities as well as social challenges. Therefore, the researchers adopt Butler's tourism area life cycle model, Policyscape, and the analytic lens of 'stakeholder mapping' as base frameworks, in order to pursue the following research objectives: 1) to identify the stakeholders involved in the cannabis tourism in Pattaya, Thailand; 2) to explore the types of impacts that stakeholders get from the cannabis tourism; and 3) to investigate how the stakeholders manage their operations when cannabis tourism occurred. The chosen study setting is Pattaya, where observation and in-depth, one-on-one interviews with semi-structured questions are conducted.

Keywords: cannabis tourism, Butler's tourism area life cycle model, policy intervention, policyscape, legalization

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1 Introduction

Thailand has legalized cannabis (aka: marijuana, and in Thai called 'Kan Cha') in June 2022 with a main reason that the weed can be used in medical treatment. The cannabis needs to have less that 0.2 percent THC, referred to as industrial hemp. In fact, medical cannabis with no THC restrictions and prescription by a medical practitioner was made legal in 2018. In January 2019, the government allowed cannabis cultivation, free from Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations (Chambers, 2024). After the cannabis market became legal, the shop can be found along the streets in tourist destinations, such as Bangkok, Pattaya, Chiang Mai, Samui, Krabi and Phuket. Thus, the cannabis market is getting large and expanding to other economic activities in the cannabis products' supply chain (Clarke & Richmond, 2023; Lertrujiwanich, Bisonyabut, & Tantisan, 2024).

Besides in June 2022, cannabis, kratom, proactive mushrooms and hemp which had been classified as narcotics under the Category 5 of the Narcotics Act of Thailand (currently, Narcotics Code) was officially removed. The cannabis, after being reclassified, would be another cash crop for the country's economic stimulation after the Covid-19 pandemic. However, due to the political will, there has been no clear regulation and regulatory impact assessment to carefully limit the cannabis usages, despite the government's emphasis on medical purposes only.

From the economic point of views, the cannabis industry has contributed greatly to Thai economy. It was projected that 10,000 cannabis shops will be worth up to 1.2 billion US dollar by 2025. (Reuters, 2024). Therefore, cannabis tourism has developed automatically in tourist destinations (Veilleux, 2024). A report showed that in 2023, more than 11 million Thai people were able to use the Cannabis products after legalized, of which, the cannabis usage for medicine was 1.1 million people, while 9.9 million people use for recreation. (Policy Watch Thai PBS, 2024). The Policy Watch Thai PBS (2024) also showed that the number of mental health patients had increased from 306 patients in 2021 to 934 patients in 2023 after legalized cannabis. Among 934 mental health patients were from cannabis addicted, of about 13.08 percent after Heroin and Amphetamine, respectively.

There are also penalties, derived afterward, namely be fined of about 60,000 baht for recreational use while those selling cannabis for such use may face jail terms of up to a year or be fined of up to 100,000 baht, or both (Reuters, 2024). The draft Bill will be passed in the Parliament hopefully before the end of 2024 (Wipatayotin, 2024). This means home-grown cannabis will be regulated and require permission and cannabis shops that operate illegally will either be closed down or required to register officially with local administration agencies. The Bill will be clearly allowed cannabis usages for medical not for recreational purposes and patients must have doctor's notes for treatment. Latest Thailand's Narcotics Control Board has won a majority vote to have cannabis and hemp reclassified as narcotics (Wipatayotin, 2024). However, the cannabis situation is still uncertain. The policy changing momentously has an impact on farmers, communities and industries.

2 Theoretical frameworks

Butler's model and Policy intervention

Butler's tourism area life cycle model (1980) proposed that the life cycle of a tourist area could be divided into a number of stages; that are exploration, involvement, development, consolidation and stagnation (Butler, 1980). The model gave greatly benefits to many scholars researching about tourism destinations. However, the model has been challenged by the Covid-19 pandemic. Many destinations had suffered due to lockdown policies, which greatly affected recreational activities. Tourism authorities of those destinations tried to find resilience methods to bounce the business back from the crisis.

One of the economic stimulating policies of Thailand was to legalize cannabis in June 2022 as an economic crop. Later, cannabis tourism could be developed automatically without clear designate plans nor policies. Cannabis is considered one of the revenue generators, attracting visitors to the country and contributing to tourist destinations in Thailand

As seen, the policy has impacted all communities in positive and negative ways. For instance, people can home-grown cannabis after they register the cultivation with provincial administrative organizations. Some of them sell its flowers and its parts. Dispensaries can be opened in the communities. Considering tourism businesses, cannabis has been utilized as a recreation gimmick for tourism. Coffee shops, restaurants, spa, and massages in beach destinations also display posters or artworks of cannabis products. The policy that was introduced without Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) before stage of policy implementation gave several concerns. Therefore, the study attempts to find the impacts of cannabis policy in a tourist destination, and a proposed 'cannabis tourism'.

Cannabis Tourism

Cannabis tourism is an emerging transformative tourism with facilitated by legalities. There has been cannabis tourism operated in many regions throughout the world, namely Jamaica in the Caribbean, the Netherlands in Europe, USA and Canada in North America, and Uruguay in South America, and Australia. Thailand, the first country in Asia, legalized cannabis. Cannabis tourism is also a new, unique, and sensitive idea to government and local communities. Cannabis was once in the list of narcotics controls, thus, people who possesses or smokes would get to jail. Besides, cannabis discourse was constructed in relation to the gateway drug theory, which then became the drug addiction (Sirita, 2022). On the other hand, Cannabis has a positive impact on alleviating medical conditions and symptoms with the chemical compound in cannabis, such as Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and Cannabidiol (CBD). Both of them have been used widely with doctor's prescription to relieve asthma symptoms, glaucoma symptoms, and insomnia by THC and alleviate anxiety, depression and cancer by CBD. As for economic perspective, the government can gain tax revenues and other economic opportunities similar to alcohol and tobacco. (Osborne & Fogel, 2017).

As previously mentioned, cannabis tourism is considered not constructed as institutional form of tourism, nor marginal tourism. It overlooks normal forms of tourism, social stigmas, local awareness and related crimes. This transformative tourism business provides economic opportunities as well as social challenges.

Analytical Lens

In this research, apart from the use of Butler's model applied as a conceptual framework to describe how policy intervention can occur in each phase to influence the development trajectory, these following concepts are also adopted. The 'policyscape' was utilized so as to provide a comprehensive understanding of cannabis legalization as a dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon (Mettler, 2016). This policyscape refers to the broader context and encompasses the entire policy process, including the actors, institutions, and factors that influence policy-making, as well as the outcomes and impacts of policies. The term 'policyscape' of Mettler (2014) was launched to describe, 'a political landscape densely cluttered with a vast array of policies of all varieties that were established at earlier points in time' (Fernandez & Hu, 2021). According to Mettler (2014), the policy becomes ineffective because circumstances change, problems evolve, or issues intensify (Mettler, 2014).

The researchers will then utilize the analytic lens of 'stakeholder mapping' since the cannabis tourism issue goes beyond the government to consider the relationships between civil society and the state. The issue involves in the security issue, tourism business, health, and ethics. Thus, the stakeholders in this policy should be clarified from upstream to downstream in the Butler's life cycle model. Stakeholder theory suggests that if we adopt as a unit of analysis, the relationships (unilateral, bilateral or even multiparty) between a business and the groups and individuals who can affect or are affected by it, then we have a better chance to deal effectively with the problems (Parmar, Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, & Purnell, 2010). In this study, the researchers employ the study of Reed et.al (2009) which defined stakeholder mapping as a process that (1) defines aspects of social phenomenon affected by the policy, (2) identifies individuals, groups and organizations, affected by the policy, and (3) prioritizes these individuals and groups for involvement (Reed et al., 2009). The study aims to purse these following objectives:

1 To identify the stakeholders, involved in the cannabis tourism in Pattaya, Thailand

2 To explore the types of impacts that stakeholders get from the cannabis tourism

3 To investigate how the stakeholders manage their operations when cannabis tourism occurred

3 Methods

A qualitative research allows the understanding of comprehensive and in-depth insights into the situations, as well as explore experiences and adaptive management of stakeholders. In light of data collection methods, observation and in-depth, one-on-one interviews conducted with semi-structured questions, are adopted. The samplings are recruited from the results of stakeholder mapping. As for the research site, Pattaya, a famous beach destination is targeted because the city attracts a great number of tourists, coming from many places of the world. There are many kinds of leisure activities and recreational services. Observing streets in Pattaya city, dispensaries or cannabis coffee shops can be found in every corner. Moreover, Pattaya is self-governing, which makes Pattaya's management more flexible and decisive.

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Session 5: Gastronomy and Community-Based Tourism

Authentic Plates, Authentic Places: Gastronomy and Rural Homestay Tourism in the Indian Himalayan Region

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Abstract

This study explores strategies to integrate gastronomy into rural homestay tourism, highlighting local cuisine's role in reflecting cultural heritage and destination identity. Focusing on the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR), the research underscores local food as central to cultural exchanges in homestays, enhancing tourism experiences, fostering community resilience, and promoting authenticity. Through a qualitative approach, it explores how rural homestay tourism in the IHR can transform into a sustainable and high-value sector. The initial findings emphasize host-guest interactions, community empowerment, cultural preservation, and visitor satisfaction. Unlike hotels, homestays offer deep engagement with local heritage and cuisine, boosting experiential tourism and customer advocacy. The study reveals that homely food in homestays enhances the customer satisfaction due to positive gastronomic experiences, with village women playing a pivotal role in food production and preparation. This research advances gastronomic tourism in the IHR, positioning rural homestays as unique culinary destinations.

Keywords: gastronomic tourism, community participation, homestay model, rural tourism, gender and tourism

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1 The Context of the study

Rural homestays facilitate intense visitor-host interactions (Walter et al., 2018) and are characterized by features such as intangibility, variability, and inseparability (Sun and Ghiselli, 2010). Unlike hotels, homestays offer a deep engagement with local heritage, culture, and cuisine, enhancing experiential tourism and leading to customer advocacy (Wahid et al., 2017). According to Ma et al. (2022), Tourist Experience (TE) is crucial for the success of rural homestays in the new era of consumption. Major constructs of TE in rural homestay tourism include demographic features, local food experience (Jamaludin et al., 2012; Mnguni & Giampiccoli, 2019), authenticity perception, innovation, and emotional brand attachment (Janjua et al., 2023). Within this framework, the destination foodscape includes diverse culinary experiences ranging from formal restaurant settings to informal dining with local residents (Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016). Thus, good food emerges as a significant factor in rural homestay tourism (Okumus, 2021; Sthapit et al., 2023). Richards (2015) links authenticity to local food culture, suggesting that the genuine culinary experience is best enjoyed within its place of origin. Dłużewska et al. (2020) stress the importance of respecting local culinary heritage in shaping food culture. Factors such as appreciation of local cuisine, interest in culinary heritage, and pursuit of authentic food experiences significantly influence travel choices and destination loyalty (Pu et al., 2024; Suntikul et al., 2020). Understanding tourists' food attitudes is crucial in food tourism to predict travel behavior and shape effective marketing strategies.

The emergence of homestays as alternative accommodations in remote rural areas has fostered and advanced rural tourism and eco-tourism in the IHR (Bhalla et al., 2016). Studies have explored homestays' role in fostering livelihoods, contributing to socioeconomic development, conducting SWOT analyses, and assessing their potential in the tourism industry (Dey et al., 2020; Janjua et al., 2023). In the rural mountainous regions explored in this study, characterized by difficult terrains and limited options for accommodations, homestays are important for both the hosts and the guests. The homestay owners or hosts see homestays as a viable option for income generation other than their conventional livelihood options. On the other hand, low price homestays are popular among tourists for their pricing while high end homestays are preferred by tourists for their exclusive locations and services. The IHR boasts a variety of traditional recipes influenced by region-specific agro-climatic conditions and socio-economic circumstances. Popular local food items in Uttarakhand include phanu, tons, paleo, kappa, and bal mit (Ahlawat, 2019), while Himachal Pradesh features siddu, kadhi, bhaturu, and madra (Sharma et al., 2022). Local food and beverage cultures are integral to the rural tourism experience in the IHR. However, despite the significance of gastronomy in homestay tourism, there is limited literature on the role of food in making homestays a distinct accommodation option in India. Few scholars have identified local gastronomy as a potential marketing tool for homestays and community-based tourism in the IHR (Banerjee, 2015; Dutta, 2018; Walia and Kukreti, 2023).

Hence, this study seeks to address two research questions: a) How do local culinary experiences and the perception of authenticity influence tourist satisfaction and loyalty in rural homestay accommodations within the IHR? b) In what ways can local gastronomy be leveraged as a marketing tool to enhance the appeal and distinctiveness of rural homestays in the IHR? The paper seeks to contribute to tourism theory and managerial knowledge using empirical findings by exploring the potential of gastronomic tourism in rural settings. The research underscores the unique elements and practices of service quality and its relevance for viability and sustainability of rural homestays.

2 Methodology

This study delves into the concept of gastronomic tourism marketing for homestays in the IHR. It employs a interpretivist research approach with an inductive research strategy to explore the potential of gastronomy in rural homestay tourism. The study focused on two rural homestay dominant states of North India, namely Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. Through two rounds of fieldwork, primary data was collected through semi-structured questionnaires from homestay providers and tourists, selected using purposive and snowball sampling (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). For the primary data collection, the research team visited rural districts of Kullu and Mandi in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarkashi in Uttarakhand. The field visit occurred in the months of September, 2023, and January, 2024 respectively. The research team carried a set of questionnaires, a written form of consent letter, and an interview protocol to the field. To understand the operations and technicalities of the homestays, the research team preferred accommodation in the homestays during the visit. The team members was advised to conduct semi-structured and unstructured interviews. The researchers had to bear in mind that the interview structure is kept flexible so that key issues are not identified before the interview, instead, they are allowed to emerge through the discussion. In terms of engaging the respondents, the researchers was asked to maintain a clear and free conversation so that if there are key points that need to be discussed, these should flow from the discussion rather than be forced on the interviewee. The researchers presented semi-structured interview protocols to the hosts and guests at select homestays. Additionally, the researcher personally engaged in field observation by impersonating tourists (guests) experiencing service quality at homestays and collecting data on the same through informal interactions. A total of 80 interviews were conducted by the research team, out of which, 64 have been recorded and used for data interpretation along with the researchers' observations and social interaction with different stakeholders in the field. Table 1 shows the participant profile of the respondents of the study.

Table 1: Participant Profiles

No. of participants (hosts)
Male - 21
Female - 15
Total - 36
Location of homestays
Himachal Pradesh- 25
Uttarakhand- 11
No. of participants (guests)
Male - 16
Female -12
Total - 28
Location of homestays
Himachal Pradesh- 20
Uttarakhand- 8

3 Preliminary findings and implications

This working paper is the part of an ongoing study which is currently in the stage of data analysis to find the unique variables and dimensions of service quality in rural homestay tourism in IHR. The preliminary findings indicate that homely food in homestays significantly enhances the gastronomic experience vis-à-vis experience, supporting the arguments presented in hotel studies. Another important finding is that host-guest interaction around food emerges as an essential intangible component of service quality in these rural homestays. Our field study shows that food is served to guests with stories that immerse the dishes in rich cultural notions. By intertwining food with narrative, rural homestays offer a unique culinary journey that celebrates and preserves the cultural heritage of the community. Field observations also reveal that village women are deeply involved in local food production, from sowing to cooking. Hosts prioritize the use of fresh, locally sourced ingredients in their meals, providing guests with nutritious and wholesome food options that support their health and wellbeing. A focus on nutrition not only enhances the dining experience but also supports guests' overall health and vitality, leading to greater satisfaction and well-being.

This research contributes to advancing gastronomic tourism within rural homestays in the IHR, highlighting the need for authentically marketing rural homestays as culinary destinations. It is an initial attempt at exploring the integral link between gastronomy and rural homestays in India. It underscores the importance of host attributes and guest perception towards the gastronomic potential of IHR. It has both theoretical and practical implications for rural homestays in India. From a practical perspective, the study offers a novel service quality framework that rural homestay owners can leverage for managing, positioning, and marketing their services. This nuanced understanding enriches theories on experience attributes and service quality in the context of alternative accommodations and the sharing economy, particularly in rural settings. The insights can inform policy interventions and capacity-building programs, advocating for a bottom-up approach that values host attributes and knowledge. This approach can help in designing more effective training programs aimed at improving service delivery in rural homestays, ultimately leading to better guest satisfaction and increased advocacy for rural tourism.

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Rural Tourism from the Perspective of a Community-Based Tourism Approach: New Opportunities or Challenges

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Abstract

Rural areas are currently experiencing a complexity of problems in the form of economic uncertainty. The tourism sector then becomes a new force to create income diversification for rural communities. In the concept of Community Based Tourism/ CBT, the involvement of local communities must be done inclusively to create a more equitable and holistic development. In this research, the author analyzes the development of tourism villages in Indonesia, namely Muncar Moncer Tourism Village, and Pulutan Valley Tourism Village to further examine the practice of CBT. The results showed that the efforts to develop tourism villages were able to provide new opportunities for village communities in the form of positive economic and social aspects. However, there are various challenges that become inhibiting factors such as poor tourism management, low involvement of local communities, poor promotion, and infrastructure that often make tourist villages vacant and unable to continue their tourism activities

Keywords: rural tourism, Tourism Village, CBT
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1 Introduction

The development of the tourism sector is currently one of the national priority programs because it has become the backbone of the economy in Indonesia. In developing countries, the tourism sector is a potential way to increase economic growth and alleviate poverty (Henseler et al., 2022). The tourism sector has a very close relationship with the three things namely economic growth, employment, and income. So far, the tourism sector has been proven to have a positive impact on a country's economy through foreign exchange income, foreign exchange earnings due to consumption by tourists, employment for the community, and in some tourism sector developments followed by empowerment programs for the community (Arida, 2012). The government through the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy seeks to optimize the potential of the tourism sector which has been a strength for tourism in Indonesia.

In line with the pillars of tourism development, the government supports the development of tourism villages to improve the welfare and economic growth of local communities. A tourist village is a rural area that has special characteristics such as the existence of traditions and culture that are still relatively original to become a tourist destination (Zakaria & Suprihardjo, 2014). There are 2 main concepts that become the main components in a tourist village, namely: First, accommodation which consists of a portion of the residence of the local residents of the fund or unit that develops over the residence of the residents. Second, attractions that include the entire daily life of local residents including the physical setting of the village location allow for integration with tourists as active participants (Noegroho & Chusmeru, 2010). In addition, there are several supporting factors for a tourist village area such as the existence of special foods, agricultural systems, and social systems that are still unique and authentic.

The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy's efforts to develop and give appreciation to communities that play a role as drivers of the tourism sector are manifested in the *Anugerah Desa Wisata Indonesia* (ADWI) program with the theme *Indonesia Bangkit*. This step is a point of encouragement for local governments and communities to continue to excel, promote local potential options, and foster harmonization between local governments, village governments, and tourism activists. Currently, according to data from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, there are 3,419 tourism villages in Indonesia that are categorized as pilot, developing, advanced, and independent.

Some tourist villages have now been able to become an attraction for tourists, but not a few of the tourist villages are experiencing obstacles in their development. This is due to several things such as limited accessibility and infrastructure, lack of human resource readiness and mastering knowledge and skills in the field of tourism, lack of stakeholder commitment, lack of awareness to protect the environment, and limited systems, networks, and marketing strategies for tourism products (Arismayanti et al., 2019). The existence of a tourist village is a form of natural tourism that reveals rural life both socially, culturally, and artistically, and the heritage of the local community. This form of tourism if managed properly will have a direct impact on the local economy, in addition to the development of tourism villages are expected to be able to eliminate the level of poverty that exists in the village, inhibit the flow of urbanization, create new jobs, and reduce the unemployment rate which has been a rural problem in Indonesia. Gadad and Kameshetty (2014) and (Arismayanti et al., 2019) state that the development of tourist villages will increase artists and craftsmen in rural areas, as well as create a love for traditional professions that are cultivated by rural communities which are the main attractions such as farmers, fishermen, and weavers. Tourism development through the development of tourist villages is carried out through efforts to accelerate village development in an integrated manner. This is useful for encouraging the pace of social, cultural, and economic transformation of the village (Limanseto, 2021).

Two cases of tourism village development in Indonesia include the development of Muncar Moncer Tourism Village located in Muncar Village, Temanggung Regency, Central Java. This village is interesting to study because of the involvement of various actors, including the local community who then formed the Muncar Moncer tourism awareness community. There is a role of the private sector from PT Astra International Tbk which aids through local champions. The role of the government is also involved through the participation of the Tourism and Culture Office of Temanggung Regency, as well as the village government. The existence of tourism villages has received a positive response from the local community and village government because it is considered beneficial in terms of residents' income. This is related to the problems of poverty, employment, and labor (Muncar Village Government, 2020) which are still a problem for the people in Muncar Village. The second is the practice of developing the Pulutan Village Valley Tourism located in Gunungkidul Regency, Yogyakarta. In the process of development, this village experienced various challenges, so it had experienced a vacuum for several years in operation. It is then interesting to later analyze how Pulutan Village Valley Tourism can overcome the various challenges that exist.

This research aims to explain the practice of Community Based Tourism in the development of tourism villages. The researcher also analyzes the opportunities and challenges of CBT practices by providing examples of tourism development in Muncar and Pulutan Villages. This explanation is important considering that CBT is an inclusive and equitable tourism development method. Based on the above background, the author then raises research questions about how the concept of community-based tourism in the development of tourist villages, whether it will provide many opportunities for local communities, or even local communities will face various challenges due to the limited resources they have.

2 Literature Review

Community-Based Tourism

The concept of community-based tourism has been introduced for more than three decades as a means of development where the social, economic, and environmental needs of local communities can be met through tourism. According to Goodwin & Santilli (2009), community-based tourism (CBT) is a tourism model that is owned and or managed by the community and aims to provide benefits to the community at large. This tourism model is based on a participatory approach that emerged due to the failure of the "top-down" approach that has been widely practiced by organizations. Community-based tourism (CBT) has important roles including alleviating poverty, empowering local communities, enhancing cooperation between stakeholders, protecting the natural environment, and helping economic difficulties (Dodds et al., 2018). CBT is the right choice to stimulate rural economic development because of the benefits that will be felt by local communities.

In the implementation of CBT, local communities must be active participants in both the planning and creation of tourism products, as well as direct beneficiaries to create a more equitable and holistic development. According to research from Rainforest Alliance, 60% of community-based tourism (CBT) projects in developing countries involve some form of community involvement in decision-making, although there are still 40% that do not involve the community in decision-making (Mitchell & Muckosy, 2015). CBT also supports the goal of sustainable development, which is an effort to create justice both socially, and ecologically, and have economic viability for the long term. In addition, CBT has a mutually beneficial relationship between the community and the tourists who come, where in this concept tourists are not a priority but are part of the system (Dodds et al., 2018). There are six key elements used to measure the successful implementation of community-based tourism including: Participatory planning and capacity building; Collaboration and partnerships to facilitate linkages to markets; Local management and community empowerment; Oriented to environmental values and community development; Assistance from enablers (government, funding agencies, and the private sector); and Focus on generating income for local communities in the long term (Dodds et al., 2018).

According to Dodds et al (2018), there are several barriers to the implementation of CBT including: (1) Financial Feasibility, in the form of lack of funding and financial skills. Funding done by CBT often uses their own funds which are inadequate. So, they resort to alternatives such as taking out loans but without proper business and marketing plans. In addition, there is a lack of expertise or understanding of how loans or financing work so the loan repayment process is not well managed; (2) Marketing, in the form of a lack of capacity for direct marketing to foreign visitors. This is because the communities within the CBT do not have extensive market linkages as they do not have the necessary skills and capacity to reach the right target market; (3) Product Development, in the form of products that are not market ready. Some of the problems that arise include products are not designed based on market demand, products are not developed through collaboration with external parties so they cannot assist in providing skills and market access, many CBTs are started without any research; (4) Capacity Building, in the form of lack of access to markets. This can be caused by the remote location, lack of recognition, and lack of integration. Therefore, it is necessary to create a marketing network either through advertising or promotion; and (5) Land Management or Governance, in the form of lack of local community empowerment. CBT aims to monitor and control the negative impacts of natural resources. So, it is necessary to empower the community in decision-making and in the management of local tourism businesses.

Village Tourism

A tourist village is a rural area that still has authenticity in terms of socio-culture, customs, traditional architecture, daily life, and village spatial structure presented in the form of integration of tourism components (Zakaria & Suprihardjo, 2014). Then Zebua (2016) states that a tourist village is a rural area that has physical uniqueness and the attractiveness of the socio-cultural life of the local community. Village tourism is an alternative to tourism that can be developed in this era that focuses on social, ecological, and community-based aspects. Village tourism emphasizes integration between attractions, accommodation, and supporting facilities that are presented in a structure of community life that is integrated with the prevailing procedures and traditions. Rural areas are managed and packaged naturally and attractively with the development of tourism support facilities through planned management concepts. Rural attractions can encourage tourist visits to the village, as well as foster economic tourism activities that can improve the welfare and empowerment of local communities (Arismayanti et al., 2019).

The development of tourist villages requires a study so that the impact of the development of tourism activities in rural areas can be controlled, among others, through carrying capacity, development on a limited scale, sustainability, and economic benefits both directly and indirectly for rural communities. Mbaiwa (2011) and Zhang (2012) in Utami et al., (2019) state that the development of tourism villages will provide several benefits including improving the collective economy for rural communities, beautifying the atmosphere and rural environment, strengthening the construction of rural civilization, increasing income for the community, changing livelihood activities and community lifestyles, creating a harmonious society, and reducing the gap between cities and villages.

3 Methods

In this study, researchers used a qualitative approach with a case study method. According to David Williams (1995) in (Moleong, 2019) qualitative research is research by collecting data in a natural setting, with natural methods, and conducted by people or researchers who are naturally interested. This definition illustrates that qualitative research prioritizes natural settings, and natural methods, and is conducted by people who have natural concerns. Then the researcher chose to use the case study method because the researcher wanted to carefully investigate the community-based tourism model in the development of the Muncar Moncer Tourism Village and Pulutan Village Valley Tourism. Researchers collect complete information using various data collection procedures based on a predetermined time (John W. Creswell, 2009).

The data collection process was carried out using three methods, namely: (1) open observation where in this position the presence of researchers in carrying out their duties in the midst of the activities of the interviewees is openly known, (2) in-depth interviews with several stakeholders such as the Muncar Village community, Village Facilitators, Head of the Muncar Moncer Tourism Awareness Group, Head of the Temanggung Regency Culture and Tourism Office, Interviews were also conducted with Pulutan Village Valley tourism managers, namely the head of BUMDes Maju Mandiri, Market Managers, Stall Vendors, and local visitors. The questions asked to the informants were open-ended so natural communication was formed with the interview guide. Some of the questions asked included: the beginning of the development of tourism villages, the role of each stakeholder involved in tourism development, the benefits of economic and social opportunities from developing tourism villages for the community, and the challenges of tourism village development for local communities. The last data collection method is (3) documentation through secondary data analysis in the form of village reports, and literature (books, journals) related to the research theme.

4 Result and discussion

Muncar Moncer Tourism Village, Temanggung Regency, Central Java

Before the development of the tourism village, Muncar was one of the villages in Temanggung Regency that was not widely known by the wider community. This is because the location of Muncar Village is relatively far from the city center. In addition, Muncar Village is also located behind small surrounding hills such as Mbelang Hill, Ampel Hill, and Tanggulangsi Hill and is at an altitude of around 500 meters above sea level, making Muncar Village isolated from other villages. The existence of these conditions certainly has an impact on the welfare conditions of the local community, where social disparities that result in poverty problems occur in Muncar Village. This is because the villagers only depend on the agricultural sector for their livelihoods by becoming coffee farmers and farm laborers whose income is not fixed. Most people in Muncar Village, based on data from the Muncar Village profile in 2017, are in the pre-prosperous phase with a total of 517 people. The pre-prosperous phase is defined as a family that does not fulfill one of the 6 indicators of a prosperous family I (KS I) or the indicator of "basic family needs".

In addition, the community in Muncar Village also still has a low quality of education, with the majority of the community not attending or not attending school, and only completing primary school. Out of a total of 5,166 residents, there are 883 residents who have only finished primary school and 1,735 who are not in school. Nevertheless, the people of Muncar Village tend to be religious, expressive, and open to innovation. This encourages a culture of transparency in the implementation of development and governance.

Behind its location far from the city center, Muncar Village has the potential in the form of nature, socio-culture, and local communities that are developed into a tourist village so that it can drive the economy of the local community. In 2018, the development of Muncar Village into Muncar Moncer Tourism Village began to be carried out by polishing all the potential and attractions that exist. The term Muncar Moncer has the meaning of radiant, dazzling, victorious, prosperous, and prosperous. The vision of Muncar Moncer Tourism Village is that even though it is located at the very end of Temanggung, Muncar Moncer can become one of the role models of superior tourist village destinations. The first step taken is branding and advertising by creating the tagline Muncar Moncer "Place of Serenity", that Muncar Moncer Tourism Village can show the comfort side when tourists come, both through natural beauty, as well as the comfort of cultural wisdom and local communities (Muncar Moncer, 2022).

The various potentials owned by Muncar Moncer Tourism Village include: First, Muncar Village is one of the best robusta coffee producers in Temanggung Regency.

This coffee is considered to have considerable potential to be developed as a local commodity considering that each year coffee production in Muncar Village can reach 400 tons (Muncar Community, 2022).

In addition, local people have begun to apply a good cultivation system to coffee. One of them is harvesting red plucks to maintain the quality of the coffee harvest. Local communities also have various variants of coffee trademarks such as Muncar Moncer Coffee, Mulia Coffee, Sudimoro Coffee, Well Coffee, Klop Coffee, Moncar Moner Coffee, Inggil Coffee, and Lawe Coffee. This potential is then optimized into educational tourism in the form of a coffee school for tourists who come to Muncar Village. Tourists can learn how to process coffee from the beginning of the harvest until the coffee is ready to be brewed. In addition to coffee, Muncar Village also has superior commodities such as vanilla, cloves, horn bananas, and *nira* which are then processed into ant sugar with a distinctive taste and become a favorite product for consumers.

Second, natural tourism includes Mbelang Hill "Korean Van Java" located in Blawong Hamlet, Muncar Village, which utilizes natural expanses and hillsides as well as the beauty of residential areas; *Curug Lawe* by combining the concept of water tourism and hiking tourism; and Javanese eagle conservation where Muncar Village itself is a tropical forest area that is still preserved and beautiful so that it becomes a habitat for rare animals. Third, artificial tourism includes a suspension bridge over the river in Tlogowungu Hamlet, Muncar Village; a rice field bridge located right above the community's rice fields; a rice mina pavilion in the middle of the rice field area which is also used as a fish pond; a creative hub which is a creativity center or creative space as a place for village youth to express ideas and a place to promote Muncar Village MSME products; and homestays or inns by utilizing the housing area owned by the local community. Currently, there are around 20 inns available for tourists. Fourth, cultural tourism such as the *wiwitan* coffee ceremony tradition, *bumi phala* coffee harvest festival, *muncar moncer* coffee fun brewing, *sewu* torch festival, as well as the typical arts of Muncar Village, namely *sandul* dance, kuda lumping, shadow puppetry, and *lengger* dance. Fifth, specialty foods include *megono* rice, corn rice, *gedang didang* which is processed from horn bananas typical of Muncar Village, *jenang candil,* banana chips, and *klanceng* honey. Various activities and objects of tourist destinations in Muncar Moncer Village can be seen at the Tourism Information Center (TIC) installed at the object spot in front of the rice field bridge.

In the implementation of Muncar Moncer Tourism Village, local communities are included from planning to program evaluation. In addition, a collaboration between actors was also created in the development of Muncar Tourism Village, namely between the community, the government and the private sector. The role of the community is through the contribution of active participation in providing opinions and input related to the wants and needs of the community. This is done through the formation of a tourism-aware community. The community actors that play a role in the development of Muncar Moncer Tourism Village include the Muncar Moncer Tourism awareness group, a combination of Muncar Village farmer groups, youth organizations, MSME players, and DSA (*Desa Sejahtera Astra*) Temanggung. The government's role is as a regulator through Regent Decree Number 180/303/2021 regarding Muncar Moncer Tourism Village and facilitator in the form of training for the community. Government actors involved in the development of Muncar Moncer Tourism Village are the Muncar Village Government and the Culture and Tourism Office of Temanggung Regency. Furthermore, the role of the private sector is as an actor who can provide material and non-material support, both in terms of providing capital and cooperation so that all actors benefit from the cooperation that is built. Private actors involved in the development of Muncar Moncer Tourism Village are PT Astra International Tbk.

In 2021-2023, Muncar Moncer Tourism Village made it into the top 300 of the Indonesian Tourism Village Award (ADWI) by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. Several indicators used in the ADWI assessment include visitor attraction, homestays and toilets, digital and creative, souvenirs, and tourist village institutions (Jadesta Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2023). The existence of Muncar Moncer Tourism Village has made changes to the economic structure of the local community. Since the existence of the tourism village, Muncar Village has begun to be visited by local and foreign tourists, such as from the Netherlands, Australia, and Canada who are interested in educational tours to learn how to farm coffee to process Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) products, enjoy natural attractions, and buy MSME products from local communities. This is certainly a positive signal for the community so that they get a more diverse source of income from tourism, creative economy, and agricultural cultivation and processing. Before the existence of tourist villages, local communities only relied on income from agricultural products, and plantations. In addition, based on the Astra Temanggung Prosperous Village Activity Report in 2021, there was an absorption of labor with the existence of the Muncar Moncer Tourism Village as many as 80 people.

Pulutan Village Valley Tourism, Gunungkidul

Gunungkidul is one of the regions that utilizes tourism as a means to improve the welfare of the community. Tourism development in Gunungkidul does not only depend on natural potential objects but also objects made by the local community. One form of tourist destination that utilizes local potential is the development of tourism villages. Not a few can develop tourist villages in a sustainable manner to improve the standard of living of the community (Anggara & Rezki, 2023). Even tourist villages are used as a solution to move the community's economy and become a form of community effort in managing the potential of their respective regions. The government is also trying to encourage the development of tourism villages in various places by initiating policies such as the Village Law, building infrastructure, providing injections of funds to collaborate with local communities. However, it is not uncommon for tourist villages to become dormant after being formed. The failure to develop village tourism is caused by several factors such as accessibility, geography, poor management, guidance that is only fierce at the beginning and promotion.

Pulutan Village valley tour is one of the tourist destinations that is now very popular with the public. This tour carries the concept of education, nature and culinary combined with rice fields. Village Valley Tourism is located in Pulutan Village, Wonosari District, Gunungkidul Regency (Widhiastuti, Manik & Suindartini; 2023). The Pulutan Village Government through the Maju Mandiri Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes) manages this tourism by utilizing local potential and empowering the local community. There is an agricultural education destination with various facilities such as photo spots, gazebos, fish ponds and agricultural education (Anggara & Rezki, 2023). The location is also very strategic because it is in Wonosari sub-district and close to Playen sub-district, both of which are densely populated sub-districts in Gunungkidul. The road access to the Pulutan Village destination is also good. Two-wheeled vehicles, four-wheeled vehicles and buses can access the tourist location easily.

The geographical condition of Pulutan Village is very suitable for agriculture. The village has an area with adequate irrigation sources so that farming does not need to wait for the rainy season. The Pulutan village government saw this potential and sought to develop village valley tourism through BUMDes management. In the end, this tour offers beautiful views of rice fields as well as modern rice field management with fish farming or known as the *mina padi* system. Visitors can enter the tour by paying a ticket of Rp 5,000 which can later be exchanged for teabags at the kiosk. The local community is empowered by being used as partners to sell traditional culinary in kiosks that have been provided by the BUMDes management. People who used to have no jobs can finally be helped by the presence of Pulutan Village Valley Tourism. In addition, the solidarity and capacity of traders is also formed by holding activities such as comparative studies, regular social gatherings, visiting fellow sellers if someone is sick to training.

Pulutan Village Valley Tourism has various facilities, namely 25 traditional culinary stalls, 12 gazebos, an event stage, rice field views and fisheries (Anggara & Rezki, 2023). There is also a package of facilities for children who want to learn modern agriculture which will be taught by agricultural practitioners in Pulutan. More interestingly, the management of this tourism is purely carried out by residents without any outside investors. The BUMDes management has the assumption that such management can provide greater benefits to residents than involving investors even though the development of facilities is carried out slowly. In addition, the management also prioritizes residents around the tour to be empowered by being given tasks or jobs such as managing parking, waiting for tickets, selling at kiosks and becoming agricultural education tour guides.

Pulutan Village valley tourism can run well until now cannot be separated from the role of the government in synergizing various community actors. In addition, the creative ideas that emerged made the village valley tour sustainable until now. However, Pulutan Village Valley Tourism also experienced a vacuum when it was first established. This tourism program was initially initiated in 2019 by the Pulutan Village Head (2013 - 2019). During the 3 years of running this tour stopped due to several problems such as lack of structuring, unclear tourism concepts and also a pandemic. At the beginning, quite a lot of tourists came to take pictures or just relax looking at the rice fields. To enter, you only need to pay parking fees and voluntary donations to the community. After several years, no one visited this tour (vacuum) because the facilities were less developed. Not to mention that there were internal conflicts between managers, especially with regard to infrastructure development. It was only after the change of village head, in 2022, that the development process could be completed. The new government tried to collaborate with the local community and the private sector to create a grand map for Pulutan Village Valley Tourism. In the end, there is a concept of agricultural educational tourism that presents various facilities for visitors.

Opportunities and Challenges of Community Based Tourism for Tourism Villages

CBT development practices can be reviewed through social, economic, cultural, environmental, and political aspects (Suansri, P. 2003). The development of CBT-based tourism in Muncar and Pulutan Villages has many similarities. The village government actively involves the community in every planning, implementation, and evaluation of the program. In the cultural aspect, both of tourism destinations also rely on local potential as a driver of tourism, for example by utilizing traditional food, showing art, and creating a tourism awareness group (Pokdarwis). In the economic and environmental aspects, both tours try to encourage the local economy through inclusive and sustainable tourism management. However, politically, there are differences in strategies for implementing CBT in both places. Tourism management in Muncar Village has involved various outside actors such as companies in developing tourism. Meanwhile, for Pulutan Village Valley Tourism, the entire development still relies on the ability of community self-help funds. In addition, in the development of CBT in Pulutan Tourism, there is local political turmoil at the village level that hinders tourism development.

Based on the two cases of tourism villages above, the development of tourism villages is considered capable of providing opportunities in the form of economic value and positive social value for local communities. This tourism management has provided various positive impacts for the community, among others; First, there is a new source of employment for the local community, Second, increasing village income that can be utilized for development, Third, the development of local community products and fourth, a sense of solidarity and togetherness emerges, especially in managing village valley tours.

However, in its development, there are challenges that become inhibiting factors. As a result, many tourism villages have become vacant or even stopped operating. This is because Community Based Tourism (CBT) is a complex process and often the practice in the field is not in accordance with the principles that have been determined. In general, tourism villages do not run well because they are caused by several factors, namely First, poor management so that there is no management and coordination between related parties. It is not uncommon for the budget for tourism development to be misused by related individuals. Lack of coordination with related parties also often leads to conflicts in the development process. Second, low involvement of the surrounding community. The success of tourism development cannot be separated from the local community, especially about trust. In the development of tourism villages, the involvement of local communities is an important component. When people are involved in the tourism development process, they will tend to support and be involved in tourism development (Zhang et al., 2022). Third, poor promotion and infrastructure. Promotion can encourage the arrival of tourists from various places. In addition, it also needs to be encouraged by adequate infrastructure that can help tourist accessibility. Underdeveloped infrastructure can hinder the development of tourist experiences or tourists are easily saturated.

5 Conclusions

The existence of a tourist village is expected to be a positive signal for the economy of the village community. The potential of the village, whether it is the potential of nature, culture, or local communities if managed properly, will have a positive impact. Various challenges faced by many stakeholders in the development of tourism villages require a comprehensive policy response. Based on the findings of the above results, various policy steps must be taken so that the development of tourist villages does not experience a vacuum, and can provide opportunities for benefits for the community, including First, a regular and intensive communication forum is needed from all actors involved in the development of tourism villages so that there is no miss coordination between actors; Second, comprehensive training is needed related to tourism management, including branding and promotion strategies; Third, there are village assistants who can come from non-governmental organizations or the private sector who have the capacity related to "village tourism management" who always assist developing tourism villages.

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The Green Market: A Community-Based Event for Rural Sustainability

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Abstract

This research investigates a Green Market Event hosted in Sapphaya, Chainat Province, Thailand. This is a community-based event held on a monthly basis, since 2018. This paper presents the findings from a longitudinal study conducted over a 15-month period and utilises a novel qualitative approach recognised as participatory action research (PAR). Data was collected in three phases and included the following: (1) multi-stakeholders' views on values and progress of the Green Market participation, collected by participant observation, (2) focus group interviews with local government authority members, community members and local vendors, and (3) informal conversation with participants in the market. In addition, secondary data was obtained from the local community's own measures of sustainability impacts and the local government's market growth statistics to supplement the findings. The data was analysed using the themes that emerged from the data. One of the key findings highlighted that the green concept and practices of the event minimised environmental impact, leading to community pride and engagement in the market. This study recognises the importance of community-based events for sustainable development and the participative engagement and management of communities in rural areas.

Keywords: green market, action research, community, participation, sustainable tourism, Thailand

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1 Introduction

A number of studies have discussed the conceptualisation of event sustainability in tourism destinations (e.g., Andersson & Lundberg, 2013; Cernat & Gourdon, 2012; Getz, 2009; Sherwood, 2007), and such studies tend to emphasise the environmental impacts of events, rather than the community-based or social sustainability implications of the event. Community events focus on the inclusion of the community in the planning process and the celebration of the local community (Jepson & Clarke, 2013). Furthermore, Jepson and Clarke (2014) note that community-based events, fully initiated and developed by community members are more than a celebration of local culture. A community-based approach to an event is often used to achieve the community's own objectives, such as recognised by Kang, Park, and Kim (2019), Kim (2015), and Wise (2014) for purposes of intangible heritage conservation and building a sense of community identity. Nevertheless, the issue of sustainability in community-based rural events has received scant attention in the events literature, when considering tourism implications. Rural communities commonly struggle with their long-term viability, as younger people often move to urban areas to seek work opportunities, and such communities struggle with limited tourism infrastructure and scarce visitor attractions. To alleviate this research gap, this study investigates how a rural community develops and uses a monthly night market event (Green Market in Chainat, Thailand) as a means of strategic rural sustainability.

2 Literature review

Community events often take a festival form and can help showcase the culture and heritage of a place. According to Jepson and Clarke (2014), a community festival is an event developed from within a community where participation, involvement, and the creation of a sense of identity is often the key to improved social well-being of a community. Both local and regional governments have used community-based events to develop new tourist attractions, but often the true meaning of 'community' and "sense of belonging" is absent in the elite's political games in hosting and organising an event (Clarke & Jepson, 2011). Questioning this sense of belonging, Jepson and Clarke (2013, p. 7) have redefined the definition of community events as "events created as the result of an inclusive community planning process to celebrate the particular way of life of people and groups in the local community with emphasis on particular space and time".

The great majority of local events are rooted in community culture and identity, but this concept of a community-based event is not commonly shared or practised, although such a philosophy is evident in the tourism literature on community-based tourism (CBT). The CBT approach is concerned with sustainable tourism development and is widely implemented in locations where the primary industry along with the services industry of tourism are balanced. Tourism can support the long-term viability of a community by empowering the community to manage tourism, participate in decision-making, and take control of its own growth (Blapp & Mitas, 2018).

The principles of a community-inclusive approach such as CBT can apply to community-based events, as such community-based events have the potential to be tourist attractions in rural areas (Brewster, Connell, & Page, 2009; Jepson & Clarke, 2014). Furthermore, Brewster, Connell, and Page (2009) have highlighted the important role of events in enriching human networks, culture and heritage.

Community events can create a space where people can connect and contribute to improved social sustainability. Within the community, new connections have the potential to be developed during the planning and organisation of an event and existing social relationships can be enhanced and reinforced (Andrews & Leopold, 2013). Between the host community and visitors, a sense of place is shared via the cultural and environmental features embedded in events, and stronger ties may be developed between insiders and outsiders. For the rural society, losing younger generations to bigger cities, community-based events can build a stronger emotional tie to their hometown and even bring them back home to take a role in the conservation of the local culture or as volunteers in the event (Kang, Park, & Kim, 2019). Kwiatkowski, Oklevik, Hjalager and Maristuen (2020) assert that rural events become a strong motivation for the younger generation to remain in rural areas and for them to migrate to rural society, thus assisting population retention and rural development.

The existing literature therefore supports a strong linkage among CBT, community-based events, and rural events, which can be developed as tourist attractions and sustainable rural development. However, this linkage has not been fully researched yet, and this research study examines this research gap.

3 Methodology

Research Context

The municipality of Sapphaya District is located in Chainat Province, 188 km north of Bangkok. It is a lesser-known tourist destination as it has few distinctive tourist attractions that are not yet developed. The local government in Sapphaya municipality has recently initiated plans to develop Sapphaya as a tourist destination in collaboration with the local community, but this process is in the very early stages. For example, historical experts have already created the 'Sapphaya Study' text for local schools, and several architects keen on preserving local heritage have completed the renovation of the oldest police station in Thailand, which dates back to 1903. However, the development of a tourism plan is still at an early stage, along with the local community's capacity building, which will be detailed in the next section. Served as an advisor for tourism planning and destination management, the authors of this study decided to undertake a local engagement approach using participatory action research (PAR). The project was progressively implemented in different stages of action, such as tourism planning, destination branding, sustainable tourism workshops, and team building. This paper reports on this process and the progress to date on this initiative.

The data generated in this study was collected at each of the three stages. In particular, during stage three with the measurement and reflection of actions, which included three focus group sessions with key stakeholders, involving local government authority members, community members, and local vendors. The purpose of the focus groups was to gain insights from different perspectives into tourism planning, including roles and responsibilities in the Green Market, and views on the progress and achievement of the community-based event. Each focus group was composed of 10 participants, and interviews took approximately one hour each on average. Informal conversations recorded during the monthly market visits and the researchers' field notes during participation observation were also included in a data set. Secondary data were used to supplement the primary data and included statistics and meeting reports. Content analysis was conducted using a thematic coding process, and the results informed newly generated knowledge of community-based events, as well as issues and the potential for rural sustainability.

4 Discussion and conclusion

This research study focused on the potential of community-led events, to become a rural tourism product and a means of sustainable rural community development. The findings suggest there are many implications of community-based events for sustainable development and management of the communities in peripheral areas, as identified in the rural town in this study. There are two key mechanisms critical to the future success of this project. Firstly, the initiative of greening a night market is a challenging undertaking in Thai society and needs a multi-stakeholder collaborative approach. Secondly, turning a conventional form of night market into a uniquely positioned community-inclusive event required community-driven creative actions.

The findings highlight that the green concept and practices involved in the operationalisation of the event were put into practice to minimise the environmental impacts of the event, which became the ethos of the community. This was achieved through the green mechanism of production and the sales of goods and food, which boosted community pride and engagement. Encouragingly, participation from a range of community members was evident and involved a wide range of people from school children to older people. It is evident, that the event evolved into an environmentally friendly market and became a platform for local community members, where attention to a specific place identity helped preserve the culture of Sapphaya. Furthermore, the market was perceived as a means of sharing and managing intangible culture and the heritage of the place, which included food culture and knowledge of tradition in relation to arts and performance. Notably, the market grew as an attraction in terms of the increased volume of visitors and local participants. As a result, Sapphaya gained increased awareness as a tourist destination.

The outcomes of this research study indicate that the continued success of the Sapphaya Green Market, will largely be determined by community members and the extent to which they actively participate and contribute to the event. It appears that PAR is a useful method of research for generating community knowledge in events, but the process must be collaborative to be an effective strategy.

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Beyond Poverty Porn: Evaluating Tondo, Manila's Readiness for a Community-Based Sustainable Tourism Model

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Abstract

This study examines the preparedness of developing Tondo, Manila from a slum tourism destination to a community-based tourism (CBT) model. Tondo, known for its socio-economic challenges and dense population, presents an opportunity to implement sustainable tourism practices that benefit local residents. Through surveys and interviews with residents and local government officials, the study assesses community readiness and perceptions towards CBT. Findings reveal determined community commitment to CBT, citing economic development, cultural preservation, and community empowerment as primary benefits. The study proposes a model for community-based tourism in Tondo, emphasizing collaboration among stakeholders to ensure long-term success and equitable participation.

Keywords: community based tourism, Tondo Manila, slum tourism

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1 Introduction

The Philippines, classified as a third world country, harbors one of the most rapidly growing populations in Asia, as reported by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). With over 100 million inhabitants, it stands as the 13th most populous nation globally (UNFPA). This demographic density is notably manifested in the presence of numerous slums across the country. Tondo, Manila, emerges as a prominent example, identified by Patil (2022) as the most populous district in the Philippine capital, renowned for its high incidence of crime and drug-related issues. Residents of Tondo's slums face significant socio-economic challenges, with limited employment opportunities exacerbating their financial hardships (Douglas, 2023). Interestingly, amidst the adversity, initiatives such as Smokey Tours, as highlighted by Cepeda (2020), have emerged, offering tours of slum areas like Baseco in Tondo, Manila. Despite the noble intention of aiding these marginalized communities, concerns regarding the sustainability and ethical implications of such "slum tourism" have been raised.

Keite (2013) critiques slum tourism, arguing its unsustainable nature due to the minimal benefits accruing to local residents. Often, outsiders dominate tour operations, denying the community direct involvement and equitable profit-sharing. Lumibao's (2014) local study in Sitio Damayan, Manila, further emphasizes the detrimental effects of slum tourism, highlighting ethical breaches such as lack of consent and compensation for residents, rendering them as mere spectacles rather than active participants.

In light of these challenges, this research aims to explore the potential transition of Tondo, Manila, towards a community-based tourism (CBT) model, recognized as a sustainable tourism development approach (Samuil & Ionică, 2021). CBT emphasizes the inclusion of local stakeholders, particularly focusing on poverty alleviation and enhancing quality of life through economic empowerment. By assessing Tondo's readiness for such a transition, this study endeavors to propose a sustainable business model for transforming Tondo into a community-based tourism destination, moving beyond its current perception as a site for slum tourism. The goal is to recommend a tourism business model tailored to the community's needs, fostering sustainable development while ensuring the equitable participation and benefit of all stakeholders.

Furthermore, the study will identify the specific profile of the respondents, assess their level of preparedness for transforming Tondo into a Community-Based Tourism (CBT) area, and gather the perceptions of the Local Government Unit of Tondo, Manila, regarding the benefits of implementing Community-Based Tourism in the region.

2 Literature review

2.1. Community Based Tourism as A Sustainable Tourism Model

Community Based Tourism (CBT) is a sustainable tourism approach that empowers rural communities to manage and benefit from their local resources (Hamzah et al., 2009). It involves active community participation in tourism activities, aiming to generate income, preserve culture, conserve the environment, and provide educational opportunities while minimizing negative impacts. CBT promotes economic diversification and enhances local and visitor awareness of conservation, making it a valuable tool for community development and poverty reduction.

CBT becomes a focal point for contemplation, stemming from the imperative to invigorate rural activities and offering a sustainable tourism alternative for future generations. It also serves as a means to restore community self-esteem and advocate for the protection of local territories (Pilquimán-Vera, 2016). Blackstock (2005) underscores that community development aims to transform localities into sustainable models, fostering social justice and mutual respect while overcoming local challenges. Similarly, Janta and Lo (2020) discussed that CBT has emerged as a viable option for promoting sustainable tourist development in poor countries.

Moreover, Ruschmann (2008) emphasizes the importance of community consultation in seamlessly integrating tourism activities into communities, respecting local opinions to ensure sustainability. Sustainable tourism development anticipates adding value and promoting social inclusion, supported by effective public policies that regulate activities to preserve the environment and respect local customs (Medeiros and Moraes, 2013). Tavares (2009) stresses the necessity of incorporating local knowledge into tourism planning to mitigate potential negative impacts on geographical spaces and societal-natural relationships.

In navigating these challenges, de Melo and Barbosa (2020) emphasize the role of governments in understanding and addressing complexities, particularly in promoting sustainable development through community-based tourism initiatives.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study focuses on the foundational steps for developing Community-Based Tourism (CBT) as outlined by Hamzah et al. (2009). It emphasizes a stakeholder-driven approach to guide communities through the initial stages of CBT development, ensuring long-term sustainability. The framework involves four critical steps: assessing community needs and readiness for tourism, educating and preparing the community, identifying and establishing leadership or local champions, and preparing and developing a structured community organization. These steps aim to equip communities with the knowledge, skills, and organizational structures necessary for launching successful and sustainable CBT projects. This study specifically focuses on the initial steps in the model, assessing the community's preparedness for CBT and providing education on CBT principles and practices.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research methods

The study's respondents comprised 30 residents from Tondo, Manila, selected for their knowledge about their community and its future development potential. A survey questionnaire was provided to the respondents, eliciting opinions from them using 4-point scales as measurement, with purposive sampling method used in selecting respondents. Utilizing a convergent parallel technique mixed-method approach, the researchers also conducted in-depth interviews to collect data from local selected government officials of the area to understand their perception on implementing a community-based tourism model in Tondo, Manila. Data collection involved a series of questions designed for both interviews and questionnaires, targeting Barangay Officials and local residents. For data analysis, tools such as frequency distribution, percentage, weighted mean for (quantitative) and thematic analysis (qualitative) were utilized to interpret the collected data.

The 4-point scale points verbal interpretation are as follows:

Point	Scale Range	Verbal Interpretation
4	3.25 - 4.00	Strongly Agree
3	1.75 - 2.49	Agree
2	2.50 - 3.24	Disagree
1	1.75 - 2.49	Strongly Agree

4. Results

4.1 Profile of the respondents

Table 1: Age profile of the respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-24 years old	10	33.3%
25-29 years old	10	33.3%
30 and above	10	33.3%
Total	30	100%

Table 1 provides demographic information about the respondents' ages. The age distribution shows that out of 30 respondents, 10 are between 18 and 24 years old, another 10 are between 25 and 29 years old, and the remaining 10 are 30 years old or older. Apart from the data in Table 1, other demographic information gathered includes gender, occupation, and income range.

Regarding gender, 13 respondents (43.3%) are male, while 17 respondents (56.7%) are female. The occupational profile of the respondents reveals a diverse range of professions: 2 are construction workers (6.7%), 2 are housekeepers (6.7%), 1 is a janitor (3.3%), 3 work in fast food (10%), 10 are students (33.3%), and 12 fall into the "Others" category, which constitutes 40% of the total respondents.

Income data indicate that 9 out of 30 respondents have no source of income. Of those who do, 5 earn less than 9,100 pesos per month, 10 earn between 9,100 and 18,200 pesos, 4 earn between 18,200 and 36,000 pesos, and 2 earn 36,400 pesos or more per month.

4.2 Surveyed Data in Developing the CBT of the Community

Table 2: Community assessment of attitudes and perceptions toward CBT

Part I- Community Assessment of Attitudes and Perceptions Toward CBT	MEAN	SD	VI
1. I believe community-based tourism can benefit our community, Tondo, Manila in terms of economic development.	3.53	0.51	Strongly Agree
2. I believe in the ability of the community to actively participate and engage in the development of community-based tourism initiatives.	3.50	0.57	Strongly Agree
3. Involving all members of the community, regardless of age or gender, is important for the success of community-based tourism.	3.70	0.47	Strongly Agree
4. I will actively participate if there are discussions and activities related to the development of community-based tourism in Tondo	3.37	0.67	Strongly Agree
5. I am willing to collaborate and share ideas with other stakeholders such as local government, NGOs, and businesses in the development of community-based tourism.	3.40	0.81	Strongly Agree
6. The role of local traditions, culture, and heritage in the development of community-based tourism in Tondo, Manila is important.	3.73	0.45	Strongly Agree
OVERALL MEAN =	3.54		Strongly Agree

Table 2 suggested a positive attitude toward community-based tourism (CBT) among the respondents, with an overall mean score of 3.54, indicating strong agreement with the perception of a CBT-driven tourism model for the community.

Table 3: Community assessment of attitudes and perceptions toward CBT

Part II- Community and External Support for CBT	MEAN	SD	VI
1. It is important for the community to have a sense of ownership and involvement in driving the CBT assessment process.	3.43	0.50	Strongly Agree
2. External facilitators such as the experts, NGO's, and the Government can play a valuable role in maintaining a neutral position during the planning and decision-making stages of CBT.	3.30	0.53	Strongly Agree
3. Involvement of outside facilitators will help ensure that all community members are aware of the impacts of tourism on the local community.	3.43	0.50	Strongly Agree
4. The community of Tondo will be participative in their involvement in the planning phase of the CBT assessment.	3.43	0.50	Strongly Agree

5. The community of Tondo will be actively engaged in making decisions related to the development of community-based tourism.	3.40	0.56	Strongly Agree
6. The community of Tondo is capable of learning the management strategies to support community involvement in the CBT assessment process.	3.47	0.57	Strongly Agree
7. Outside facilitators should continue to be involved in future stages of the CBT initiative of Tondo	3.30	0.47	Strongly Agree
8. CBT will serve as a tool to empower the local community in Tondo, Manila.	3.53	0.51	Strongly Agree
OVERALL MEAN =	3.41		Strongly Agree

Table 3 established a positive response for active community involvement in a CBT-driven tourism model and highlighted the need for external support to ensure its success, with an overall mean score of 3.41 indicating strong agreement.

Table 4: Educating the community and understanding their need

Part III- Educating the Community and Understanding their Need	MEAN	SD	VI
1. CBT will provide economic opportunities in tourism through meaningful employment for community members.	3.47	0.63	Strongly Agree
2. Implementing CBT will reduce the “Tambay” in Tondo especially with young adults by providing them tourism employment jobs.	3.47	0.68	Strongly Agree
3. CBT will Implement livelihoods and economic alternative development strategy for poverty alleviation of the community of Tondo	3.27	0.64	Strongly Agree
4. Implementation of CBT will empower women in the community by encouraging them to take on leadership positions.	3.07	0.88	Agree
5. CBT in Tondo would mean community revitalization and development that would increase public services and employment opportunities.	3.47	0.51	Strongly Agree
6. CBT will empower the local community to sustainably manage their resources or eliminate and reduce reliance on unsustainable practices.	3.27	0.52	Strongly Agree
7. Implementing CBT will serve as a source of financing for other projects such as infrastructure, education or to assist other environmental and social goals	3.47	0.57	Strongly Agree
8. CBT will revitalize the community of Tondo’s tangible culture such as cultural events and festivals, local handicrafts by making them tourism ‘products’, which gives them renewed value and prominence through tourism.	3.33	0.48	Strongly Agree

9. As a community member, I am willing to collaborate with external stakeholders such as LGUs, NGOs, businesses to achieve the desired community development goals in the context of CBT	3.37	0.76	Strongly Agree
OVERALL MEAN =	3.35		Strongly Agree

Table 4 also demonstrated strong agreement on the understanding of CBT implementation and its benefits, with an overall mean score of 3.35. This indicates that the community recognizes the advantages of getting educated about and adopting this model.

4.3 Data analyzed from local government official interviews

4.3.1 Readiness of the community for CBT

The official interviewed from Barangay 2, Zone 1, District 1, highlighted Tondo's considerable potential for community-based tourism development, especially in areas like Ugbo and Divisoria, which have already garnered attention with regards to tourism. Divisoria stands out for its consistent influx of visitors, drawn by its reputation for offering goods at affordable prices. She emphasized that Tondo's appeal lies in its reputation for providing affordable goods, diverse culinary offerings, vibrant fresh produce markets, bustling trade, and various other amenities, all of which contribute to its popularity among visitors. *"Nakilala ang Tondo dahil sa mga murang bilihin, masasarap na kainan, bagsakan ng mga gulay at prutas, kalakalan,at iba pa. Ito ang dahilan kung bakit marami ang dumarayo dito".*

4.3.2 Infrastructure in progress to support tourism in the area

According to the barangay official interviewed, two malls are underway in Divisoria, promising to offer additional incentives and choices for visitors to the area. These malls, currently under construction in Tondo, aim to cater to a diverse array of products, with the goal of drawing in more shoppers.

4.3.3 Benefits of tourism to the local community

The participants also mentioned that many visitors who visit Divisoria are business sellers who buy supplies at lower wholesale prices than other shopping centers. This boosts local merchants financially and supports community development.

Tourism that involves the community directly benefits residents by creating jobs, increasing incomes, and improving infrastructure. It provides a platform for local artisans, preserves cultural heritage, and fosters a sense of pride and ownership. This inclusive approach to tourism ensures sustainable development and long-term prosperity for Divisoria. *"Gaya ng nabanggit ko, ang Tondo ay ang sentro ng kalakalan at bagsakan ng mga iba't ibang produkto kaya't maraming negosyante ang pumupunta rito lalo na ang mga Chinese na nakapag tayo na ng sarili nilang negosyo rito"*

4.3.4 Preserve and showcase Tondo's culture

The interviewed official emphasized the importance of preserving the area's distinct cultural heritage, which dates back to the Japanese era. Consequently, no modifications will be made to the area. This establishment is renowned for offering cost-effective merchandise and services, providing a wide range of products, including unique items like pot lids that are not commonly found elsewhere. Preserving this cultural legacy ensures the continued availability of these unique offerings and maintains the historical significance of Divisoria.

4.3.5 Economic impact of community-based tourism

As mentioned by the interviewed official, most stores in Divisoria are managed by the local residents, both within the mall and in the surrounding area. Some businesses are also owned by Chinese entrepreneurs, likely due to the area's reputation for offering reasonably priced items and its profitable opportunities.

Community-based tourism can significantly boost the local economy by attracting more visitors who spend money on goods and services. This influx of tourists creates job opportunities for residents, increases local business revenues, and stimulates entrepreneurial activities. Additionally, the presence of diverse businesses, including those owned by local and Chinese entrepreneurs, enhances the economic vitality of Divisoria, making it a vibrant and thriving commercial hub. By promoting and supporting community-based tourism, Divisoria can achieve sustainable economic growth and improve the quality of life for its residents. *"karamihan sa mga tindahan sa loob ng Divisoria ay nasa ilalim ng pamamahala ng mga lokal na residente at isa na rin dito ang mga Chinese na may sariling negosyo dahil mas marami ang oportunidad dito sa Tondo"*

5 Discussion and conclusion

5.1 Discussion and implications

The results of this study underscore the feasibility and potential benefits of transforming Tondo into a community-based tourism (CBT) destination. The positive attitude of the community towards CBT, as evidenced by the high mean scores in various metrics, suggests a strong foundation for developing a sustainable tourism model that aligns with the community's needs and aspirations.

Community attitudes and participation

The community's positive perception of CBT highlights a recognition of its potential to drive economic development, social cohesion, and cultural preservation. The willingness of community members to participate in discussions, share ideas, and engage with other stakeholders, such as local government units (LGUs), NGOs, and businesses, is crucial for the success of CBT initiatives. This active engagement can foster a sense of ownership and empowerment among residents, leading to more sustainable and resilient tourism practices.

Role of external facilitators

The involvement of external facilitators, including experts, NGOs, and government entities, is viewed positively by the community. These facilitators can provide the necessary support and neutrality required during the planning and decision-making stages. Their role in ensuring that all community members are informed about the impacts of tourism and in maintaining a balanced approach to CBT development is critical. This collaborative approach can help mitigate potential conflicts and ensure that the benefits of tourism are equitably distributed among all stakeholders.

Infrastructure development and economic opportunities

The ongoing infrastructure developments in Tondo, such as the construction of new malls in Divisoria, are expected to enhance the area's appeal to tourists. These projects not only improve the physical infrastructure but also signal a commitment to economic development. The potential for increased visitor numbers can provide substantial economic opportunities for local businesses and residents. By capitalizing on Tondo's existing commercial vibrancy and cultural heritage, CBT can create meaningful employment opportunities and stimulate local entrepreneurship.

Cultural preservation and community empowerment

The preservation of Tondo's cultural heritage is a central component of the proposed CBT model. By highlighting and celebrating the area's unique cultural assets, such as local festivals, handicrafts, and culinary traditions, CBT can foster a renewed sense of pride and identity among residents. This cultural emphasis can also attract tourists seeking authentic and meaningful experiences, further driving economic benefits. Empowering women and other marginalized groups to take on leadership roles within CBT initiatives can enhance social equity and inclusiveness.

Sustainable development and long-term prosperity

The study's findings indicate that CBT can serve as a powerful tool for sustainable development in Tondo. By promoting responsible tourism practices, CBT can help manage and preserve local resources, reduce reliance on unsustainable practices, and support other community development goals. The economic benefits generated from tourism can be reinvested into infrastructure, education, and environmental conservation projects, creating a positive feedback loop that supports long-term prosperity.

Policy and planning

The positive community response to CBT suggests that policymakers and planners should prioritize the development of CBT initiatives in Tondo. This includes creating supportive policies, providing training and resources to community members, and ensuring that infrastructure projects align with the goals of sustainable tourism. Collaborative planning processes that involve all stakeholders can help ensure that CBT initiatives are well-designed and effectively implemented.

Capacity building

To maximize the benefits of CBT, it is essential to invest in capacity building for local residents. This includes training in tourism management, hospitality, cultural interpretation, and other relevant skills. Building local capacity can enhance the community's ability to manage and sustain tourism initiatives independently, ensuring that the benefits of CBT are retained within the community.

Monitoring and evaluation

Establishing mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the impacts of CBT is crucial for ensuring its success. This includes tracking economic, social, and environmental indicators to assess the effectiveness of CBT initiatives and identify areas for improvement. Continuous feedback from the community and other stakeholders can help refine and adapt CBT strategies to changing conditions and emerging challenges.

Sustainable practices

Promoting sustainable tourism practices is essential for the long-term viability of CBT in Tondo. This includes encouraging environmentally friendly practices, such as waste management and resource conservation, as well as promoting ethical tourism that respects local culture and traditions. By adopting a holistic approach to sustainability, CBT can contribute to the overall well-being of the community and the preservation of Tondo's unique cultural and natural heritage

5.2 Conclusion

Figure 1 illustrates the proposed model for developing CBT in Tondo, adapted from Hamzah et al. (2009). The study recommends ongoing research to propose the second phase of the model, which focuses on sustaining CBT in Tondo.

Fig. 1: Developing CBT in Tondo, Manila (Initial Phase)

To ensure the sustainability of community-based tourism (CBT) in Tondo, the following key steps are recommended for future studies. These steps build upon the current foundation and aim to enhance the long-term viability and impact of CBT initiatives in the area.

Develop partnerships

To sustain CBT initiatives in Tondo, it is essential to develop robust partnerships. This involves fostering collaborations with local government units (LGUs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), businesses, and educational institutions. Leveraging existing relationships and the community's demonstrated willingness to collaborate (mean score of 3.41) will strengthen these efforts. Regular stakeholder meetings should be convened to ensure alignment and promptly address any emerging issues. Open communication channels must be maintained to facilitate effective collaboration and seamless information sharing among all parties involved.

Adopt an integrated approach

Adopting an integrated approach to CBT development requires holistic planning. This means integrating CBT initiatives with broader community development plans, ensuring that tourism development supports other local projects such as infrastructure improvements, education enhancements, and environmental conservation efforts. Promoting sustainable practices is crucial; this involves encouraging resource management and reducing reliance on unsustainable activities. Implementing eco-friendly measures and educating the community on sustainable tourism practices will help ensure long-term environmental and social benefits.

Plan and design quality products

Planning and designing quality tourism products that highlight Tondo's unique culture, traditions, and heritage is a key step. It is important to develop high-quality products that reflect the community's identity and appeal to tourists. Community workshops should be held to generate ideas and designs for these tourism products, actively involving local artisans and cultural practitioners in the process. This inclusive approach ensures that the tourism products are authentic and resonate with both locals and visitors.

Identify market demand and develop marketing strategy

Identifying market demand and developing an effective marketing strategy are critical for the success of CBT in Tondo. Conducting market research to identify target markets and understand their preferences is essential. This research should utilize data on visitors' interests in affordable goods, culinary offerings, and cultural experiences. Based on these insights, a comprehensive marketing strategy should be developed to highlight Tondo's unique selling points. Utilizing digital marketing, social media, and partnerships with travel agencies will enhance the visibility and attractiveness of Tondo as a tourism destination.

Implement and monitor performance

The final step involves implementing and monitoring the performance of CBT initiatives. Starting with pilot projects allows for testing and refining the approach, gathering feedback, and making necessary adjustments. A robust system to monitor the performance of CBT initiatives should be implemented, using key performance indicators (KPIs) to track progress and impact. Regularly reviewing and updating strategies based on performance data ensures continuous improvement and long-term success of the CBT model in Tondo.

Possible negative impacts or challenges

As adapted from Iran Nomad Tours, there are three aspects that affects tourism on local communities, (1) Socio-cultural aspect, wherein tourists may inadvertently disrespect local customs due to cultural misunderstandings. Behaviors considered normal in one culture can be deeply offensive in another. This can lead to the commodification of culture, where local traditions are exploited for profit. In some cases, locals may adopt behaviors aimed at appealing to tourists, potentially diluting their unique cultural identity. (2) Economic Aspect, developing a tourist destination often requires upgrading the community's infrastructure. These new facilities can attract a large number of visitors, potentially resulting in overcrowding. (3) Environmental aspect, increased tourism can strain natural resources and damage the environment. A larger population in an area demands more water, energy, and other resources. This can lead to pollution, ecological imbalance, soil erosion, habitat destruction, and increased risk for endangered species.

5.3 Limitations of this study and suggestions for future studies

This study identifies several areas for future improvement. Firstly, increasing the sample size of community respondents will enhance the representation of diverse perspectives within Tondo, enriching our understanding of community-based tourism (CBT) needs. Engaging a wider range of local government officials and national tourism stakeholders will provide a more holistic view, ensuring better alignment with local and national policies.

Additionally, future research should prioritize sustainability in Tondo's CBT initiatives. Phase 2 of this study could focus on long-term strategies like community engagement, capacity building, and adaptive management, ensuring resilience against market changes and environmental factors. Addressing these aspects will refine our approach to developing and sustaining CBT in Tondo, benefiting the community while supporting broader tourism goals.

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Session 6: Emerging Trends in Culinary Tourism

Exploring Determinants of Consumer's Intention to Visit Robotic Restaurants

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Abstract

The study aimed to examine Portuguese consumers' intentions to visit robotic restaurants. The proposed model was based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and was tested using an online questionnaire distributed to Portuguese individuals over 18 years old. The findings revealed that perceiving that the experience will be memorable, attitude, and perceived enjoyment significantly impact intentions to visit a robotic restaurant. Trust and perceived food quality did not affect intentions. Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use significantly impacted attitude, which in turn influenced intentions to visit robotic restaurants. These results provide insights for businesses seeking to innovate and stay ahead in the competitive restaurant industry.

Keywords: robotic restaurants, perceived usefulness, ease of use, trust, enjoyment, memorable experience

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1 Introduction

Incorporating physical robots in restaurants is an innovative response to the increasing demands for efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and enhanced customer experiences. However, consumers' perceptions of robotic restaurants still need to be explored, especially in countries such as Portugal, where few robotic restaurants exist. Many studies involving physical robots and robotic restaurants have been conducted in Asia, where such technologies are already widely employed. Therefore, the main aim of this study is to examine determinants of Portuguese consumers' intentions to visit robotic restaurants. The proposed model was based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) proposed by Davis (1985). TAM was designed to understand and predict how users adopt and use new technologies. The model suggests that Perceived

Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use directly influence users' attitude toward using a technology, which in turn influences their behavioral intention to use it. The TAM provides a valuable framework for understanding the factors that influence individuals' decisions to adopt and use new technologies, thereby helping researchers and practitioners design and implement more effective technology solutions.

2 Literature review and hypotheses

Several studies have consistently found that a favorable Attitude toward robotics in restaurants positively influences consumer acceptance (e.g., Cha, 2020; Hwang et al., 2021; Kao & Huang, 2023; Lee et al., 2018; Sung & Jeon, 2020). A positive attitude indicates that consumers are more open and receptive to robotic restaurants. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H1: A positive Attitude towards robotic restaurants positively influences intentions to visit Robotic Restaurants

Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use are variables from the Technology Acceptance Model that significantly shape consumers' acceptance of robotic restaurants. Several studies have found that the Perceived Usefulness of the robotic restaurant experience plays a pivotal role (e.g., Lee et al., 2018; Seo & Lee, 2021; Sung & Jeon, 2020). Consumers are motivated to visit these establishments when they perceive that robot technology enhances the convenience and efficiency of their dining experience. Perceived Ease of Use refers to consumers' perceptions of how effortless or straightforward they believe it is to interact with and use robots in restaurants. When consumers perceive robotic systems as easy and user-friendly, they positively influence their intentions to visit these establishments. Attitude is also positively influenced by Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use (Choe et al., 2021; Kao & Huang, 2023; Lee et al., 2018). Therefore:

H2: Perceived Ease of Use positively influences Attitude towards robotic restaurants

H3: Perceived Usefulness positively influences Attitude towards robotic restaurants

Trust is another fundamental determinant of consumers' intentions to visit robotic restaurants (Cha, 2020; Lee et al., 2018; Seo & Lee, 2021). Trust refers to consumers' confidence and reliability in robotic technology in restaurants.

H4: Trust positively influences intentions to visit Robotic Restaurants

Another important determinant of consumers' acceptance of robotic restaurants is perceived enjoyment (Cha, 2020; Guan et al., 2021; Sung & Jeon, 2020). If consumers believe that dining in a robotic restaurant will be an enjoyable experience, it can significantly increase their intentions to visit.

H5: Perceived Enjoyment positively influences intentions to visit Robotic Restaurants

Fusté-Forné (2021) argues that robots can offer a memorable experience. In an analysis of 582 TripAdvisor English reviews of robotic restaurants, Seyitoğlu and Ivanov (2020) found that many comments focused on how the robot system made the experience unique. The authors classified this as a component of a memorable experience. However, the effect of a perceived memorable experience and intentions to visit a robotic restaurant has never been examined. Therefore:

H6: Memorable Experience positively influences intentions to visit Robotic Restaurants

While some consumers believe that food made by robots is not as tasty as if it were made by a chef (Fusté-Forné, 2021; Seyitoğlu et al., 2021), others have found that the food in robotic restaurants is tasty and delicious (Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2020). Consumers are concerned about the cleanliness and food safety of robotic technology (Zemke et al., 2020). Therefore, Food Quality may influence intentions to visit Robotic Restaurants:

H7: Food Quality positively influences intentions to visit Robotic Restaurants

3 Methodology

An online questionnaire was developed in Portuguese, as the intention was to conduct this study exclusively with Portuguese individuals over 18 years of age who had never had contact with physical robots in the restaurant industry.

The questionnaire contained questions related to respondents' perceptions regarding the use of physical robots in the restaurant industry. Variables were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree) based on items used by other authors. Data were collected in July and August 2023 by employing a convenience sampling strategy. The online questionnaire link was distributed across multiple channels, including social media and email. A total of 361 valid responses were collected.

Partial Least Squares Equation Modelling was used to test the proposed hypothesis using SmartPLS software.

4 Major findings

The research sample comprised 361 participants that had never visited a robotic restaurant, with 73% identifying as female and 27% as male. Age groups were represented as follows: 18-25 (15%), 26-35 (13%), 36-45 (31%), 46-55 (27%), and 56 and above (14%), allowing for a comprehensive exploration of intentions to visit a robotic restaurant across varied demographic segments.

The results revealed that perceiving that the experience will be memorable (β=0.35, p<0.001), and attitude (β =0.34, p<0.001) have the most significant impact on intentions to visit a robotic restaurant. Perceived enjoyment also has a significant impact (β =0.23, p<0.001). Trust and Perceived Food Quality do not affect intentions to visit a robotic restaurant. Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use significantly impact Attitude (β =0.74 and β =0.18, p<0.001), indirectly influencing intentions to visit robotic restaurants. These results provide invaluable insights for businesses seeking to innovate and stay ahead in a dynamic and highly competitive restaurant industry.

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Eco-Gastronomy as a Tourism Driver: Leveraging Green Marketing in Department of Tourism-Accredited Restaurants

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Abstract

This study examines the implementation of green marketing practices among Department of Tourism (DOT) accredited restaurants in Rizal Province, Philippines, and aims to provide inputs to a green restaurant marketing framework. Using mixed method research, it utilized quantitative data from survey questionnaires with qualitative insights from interviews and focus group discussions. The quantitative analysis reveals positive perceptions of green marketing practices among stakeholders, with "Green Product" as the highest and "Green Promotion" as the lowest. Qualitative findings reveal challenges DOT-accredited restaurants face, including sourcing eco-friendly ingredients, resource consumption, effective communication of green initiatives, and balancing costs with eco-friendly practices. Based on the findings, most of the respondents were observing basic green practices in their restaurants per the LGU guidelines and their own initiatives. However, green marketing practices have been progressing slowly, mainly due to limited resources and communication. Hence, the study proposes inputs for "Green Marketing Strategy," espousing the adoption of green marketing strategies among DOT-accredited restaurants and positioning green dining experiences that contribute to UNWTO's SDGs.

Keywords: green marketing, sustainable practices, DOT-accredited restaurants, eco-friendly initiatives

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1 Introduction

The restaurant sector is facing mounting pressure to adopt sustainable practices and contribute to the global effort to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. In the restaurant industry, green marketing encompasses four key aspects: green product, green place, green price, and green promotion. By embracing these strategies, restaurants can not only reduce their environmental footprint but also tap into the growing market of environmentally conscious consumers.

Rizal Province, located near Metro Manila, is a popular tourist destination known for its natural attractions, historical sites, and diverse culinary offerings, which has not been extensively studied in the context of green marketing. The province's proximity to the capital city and its growing tourism industry makes it an ideal subject for studying the adoption of green marketing practices in the restaurant sector. Green marketing, which involves promoting environmentally friendly products, services, and practices, is gradually being adopted by some restaurants in Rizal Province. However, the adoption of green marketing practices, particularly in the Philippines, where a lack of standardized guidelines and certifications for sustainable practices can hinder progress.

Green product refers to the development and offering of environmentally friendly menu items, such as those made with locally sourced, organic, or plant-based ingredients. Rizal Province's rich agricultural heritage and access to fresh, local produce make it well-suited for the implementation of green product strategies. Green place involves the design and operation of sustainable restaurant facilities, including the use of energy-efficient equipment, water conservation measures, and waste reduction strategies. The province's natural resources and eco-friendly tourism initiatives provide a foundation for the adoption of green place practices. Green price relates to the pricing strategies used to promote sustainable menu items and encourage environmentally conscious consumer behavior. Rizal Province's diverse socio-economic profile offers an opportunity to study the effectiveness of various green pricing strategies. Green promotion focuses on communicating the restaurant's sustainability efforts to customers through various marketing channels, such as social media, in-store displays, and eco-labeling. The province's growing environmental awareness presents opportunities for innovative green promotion techniques.

The findings of this study can serve as a model for other regions in the Philippines and contribute to the country's efforts in hitting the UNWTO Sustainability Goals and promoting responsible tourism practices. Ultimately, the adoption of green marketing practices in Rizal Province's restaurant industry can contribute to the global effort to achieve the SDGs by 2030, while also promoting sustainable economic growth, preserving the province's natural and cultural heritage, and enhancing the quality of life for local communities.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The problem statement is centered on providing inputs for green marketing strategies in DOT-accredited restaurants by identifying potential challenges and opportunities to enhance their tourism-related aspects and sustainability efforts, thereby promoting a more environmentally responsible gastro-tourism sector in the Philippines. Specifically, the subsequent questions seek to answer the following:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:

1.1 Management

1.2 Employees

1.3 Customers

2. What is the extent of the marketing practices of Department of Tourism Accredited restaurants in Rizal Province with respect to:

2.1 Green Price

2.2 Green Product

2.3 Green Place

2.4 Green Promotion

3. Is there a significant difference in the extent of the marketing practices of Department of Tourism Accredited restaurants in Rizal Province as assessed by the three groups of respondents with respect to the aforementioned variables?

4. What are the challenges experienced by the Department of Tourism-Accredited restaurants in advocating green food businesses?

5. Based on the results of the study, what evidence-based recommendations for green marketing policies can be derived?

1.2 Research objectives

1. To determine the demographic profile of all respondents, including restaurant owners/managers, employees, and the customers.
2. To identify the extent of the marketing practices of Department of Tourism Accredited restaurants in Rizal Province in terms of Green Price, Product, Place, and Promotion.
3. To identify the significant difference in the extent of the marketing practices of DOT-Accredited restaurants in Rizal Province as assessed by the three groups of respondents with respect to the aforementioned variables.
4. To determine the challenges experienced by the Department of Tourism-Accredited restaurants in advocating green food businesses.
5. To provide practical recommendations that can help DOT-accredited restaurants enhance their green marketing policies, overcome challenges, and further contribute to the overall sustainability effort and obligation of the food service industry in the region.

1.3 Theoretical framework

The Green Marketing Theory was an extension of the traditional marketing mix, which was popularized by McCarthy in 1960 and consisted of the 4Ps: Product, Price, Place, and Promotion. Green marketing theory, also known as environmental marketing or sustainable marketing, emphasized promoting products or services that had environmental benefits. The theory recognized the increasing awareness and concern among consumers about environmental issues and aimed to address their preferences for environmentally friendly products (Polonsky & Rosenberger, 2001).

In the context of the restaurant industry, the Green Restaurant Association (GRA) provided guidelines and certification programs for restaurants such as (1) energy efficiency, (2) water efficiency, (3) waste reduction and recycling, (4) sustainable food, (5) disposables/packaging materials, (6) chemical and pollution reduction, and (7) sustainable furnishings and building materials (Green Restaurant Association, n. d.). These guidelines offered a comprehensive framework for restaurants to adopt environmentally responsible practices across various aspects of their operations, aligning with the principles of the Green Marketing Mix.

This research utilizes resources from various green restaurant organizations to inform sustainable practices. MeetGreen (n.d.) emphasizes sustainable menu planning; The Philippine Green Building Council's GREEEN program provides a framework for environmental performance assessment, supporting the study's central green marketing theory. These resources collectively offer a comprehensive basis for implementing and evaluating green practices in tourism-accredited restaurants.

These theoretical frameworks provided a solid foundation for understanding and evaluating the sustainable marketing practices adopted by the DOT-accredited restaurants in Rizal Province, Philippines. The application of these theories, along with industry-recognized sustainability guidelines and checklists, enabled the researcher to evaluate the restaurants' adherence to environmentally friendly practices, identify areas for improvement, and contribute to the growing body of knowledge on sustainable marketing practices in the restaurant industry.

1.4 Conceptual framework

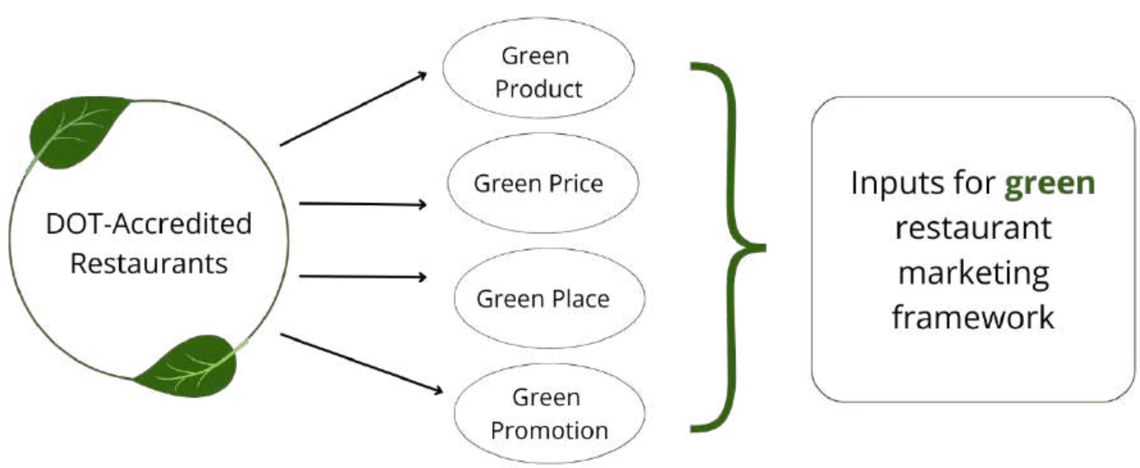

Fig. 1: Conceptual framework

2 Related literatures

2.1 Green marketing

Green marketing has gained significant attention in the Philippines as businesses recognize the importance of sustainable practices and the growing demand for eco-friendly products and services.

Domingo (2018) investigates the impact of green marketing on consumer behavior in the Philippines, highlighting the growing awareness and preference for environmentally friendly products and services among Filipino consumers. The study reveals that consumers are increasingly considering the environmental impact of their purchasing decisions and are willing to pay a premium for eco-friendly alternatives. This shift in consumer behavior has prompted businesses to adopt green marketing strategies to meet the changing demands of their customers.

In the restaurant industry, Virola (2019) explores the use of green marketing strategies in the Philippine context, emphasizing the importance of incorporating sustainable practices, the use of eco-friendly materials, into the marketing strategies of restaurants. By promoting their environmental initiatives, restaurants can attract environmentally conscious travelers and differentiate themselves from competitors.

Rahbar and Wahid (2011) explore the effect of green marketing tools on consumers' purchase behavior. Their study focuses on eco-labels, eco-brands, and environmental advertisements as key tools for influencing consumer decisions. The authors find that eco-labels and eco-brands have a significant positive impact on consumer purchase behavior, while environmental advertisements have a limited influence. They suggest that businesses should invest in developing credible eco-labels and building strong eco-brands to differentiate themselves in the market and attract environmentally conscious consumers.

2.2 Green promotion

Reyes (2018) examines the role of green promotion in building brand equity among Philippine companies. The study highlights the effectiveness of green promotional strategies, such as eco-labeling, green advertising, and sustainability reporting, in enhancing brand image and customer loyalty. By communicating their environmental commitment and sustainable practices, companies can strengthen their brand reputation and appeal to consumers who prioritize sustainability.

Santos (2021) conducted a case study of a restaurant chain in Cebu City, finding that its success in implementing green practices was largely due to its promotional efforts emphasizing its sustainable initiatives. Riva et al. (2022) found that effective promotional efforts highlighting sustainable initiatives positively affect restaurant revisit intention among millennials, particularly when coupled with green product offerings that meet their sustainability expectations.

2.3 Green price

Mohd Suki (2020) investigated the role of green pricing strategies in promoting eco-friendly tourism services in Malaysia. The study found that consumers were more willing to pay a premium for eco-friendly tourism services when the green pricing strategy highlighted the additional value, environmental performance, and functional benefits of these services. The authors suggested that businesses in the tourism industry should focus on communicating the environmental benefits and sustainability efforts to justify higher prices.

Seo and Moon (2021) conducted a study on the impact of green pricing strategies on consumer perception and purchase intention of eco-friendly electronics in South Korea. The study found that consumers were more willing to pay a premium for eco-friendly electronics when the green pricing strategy highlighted the additional value, performance, and functional benefits of the products. The authors suggested that businesses should focus on communicating the long-term cost savings and environmental benefits of eco-friendly electronics to justify higher prices.

Abichuela (2022) examined green marketing practices and challenges faced by mainstream restaurants in Catanduanes, noting that one of the challenges was the lack of a common quality standard for what constitutes "green" in the restaurant industry, which could impact pricing strategies.

2.4 Green restaurant

Green restaurants have emerged as a response to the growing demand for sustainable dining options. Domingo (2018) investigates the impact of green marketing on consumer behavior in the Philippines, emphasizing the role of green restaurants in shaping sustainable consumption patterns.

Alamsyah et al. (2021) investigate the awareness of environmentally friendly products and the impact of green advertising and green brand image on consumer behavior, underscoring the significance of green marketing strategies in promoting sustainable consumption in the restaurant industry. These studies demonstrate the growing importance of green restaurants in driving sustainable practices, meeting evolving consumer demands, and contributing to environmental conservation in the food service sector.

2.5 DOT Accreditation

DOT accreditation plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable practices and ensuring the quality of tourism services in the Philippines. Vidal & Umandap (2023) investigate the green practices in the kitchen management of Leslie's-Calamba, a DOT-accredited establishment, highlighting the importance of adopting eco-friendly practices to meet accreditation requirements and enhance sustainability in the food service industry. Montebon et al. (2023) examine the perception of green practices of selected restaurants in Cebu City, Philippines, providing insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing sustainable initiatives in DOT-accredited establishments.

Albano (2023) reports on a survey revealing that 8 out of 10 Filipinos are willing to pay more for sustainable products, underscoring the growing consumer demand for eco-friendly offerings and the importance of DOT accreditation in promoting sustainable practices in the tourism industry.

3 Research method and procedures

3.1 Research method & Design

The study employed a descriptive research design to accurately profile the persons, events, or situations related to the eco-friendly practices of DOT-accredited restaurants in Rizal Province. A survey questionnaire served as the primary instrument for data collection, supplemented by in-depth interviews to triangulate data analysis and enhance the credibility of the research study.

A mixed method research was used in this study. Qualitative research allowed for a detailed exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions regarding eco-friendly practices, providing rich insights into the strategies employed by restaurant operators. While, quantitative methods facilitated statistical analysis, enabling the identification of trends and patterns in eco-friendly practices among DOT-accredited restaurants in Rizal Province.

3.2 Setting of the study

Rizal Province, located in the CALABARZON region of the Philippines, was selected as the ideal location for this study. The study focused on 12 DOT-accredited restaurants, with 10 of them located in Tanay, Rizal, one in Rodriguez Rizal, and one in Antipolo, Rizal. The proximity of Rizal Province to Metro Manila, the country's capital and largest urban centre.

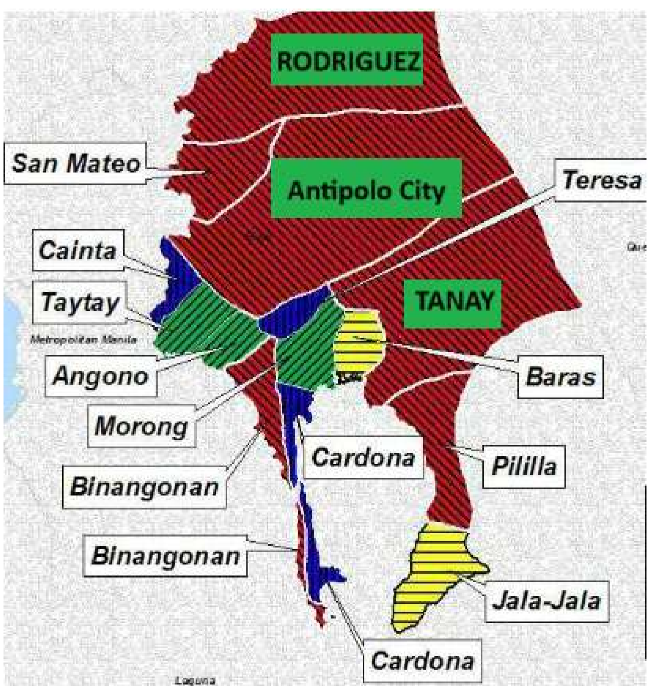

Fig. 2: Map of Rizal Province

The varied locations of these restaurants within Rizal Province allowed the researcher to gather data from different settings, capturing a more comprehensive understanding of eco-friendly practices in the region's restaurant industry.

3.3 Sources of data

The information about the twelve DOT-Accredited restaurants in Rizal Province was available from the Department of Tourism website on January 2024.Municipalities also provided the list and contact information of the DOT-Accredited restaurant.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts, with some sections adapted from existing sources and others developed by the research team. Three sets of questionnaires were utilized for Managers/owners, employees, and customers. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were also conducted with owners/managers, and employees.

For the managers/owners, the questionnaire consisted of four parts. Part I focused on the restaurant's business profile, Part II collected personal profiles, Part III examined the application of green marketing practices in the 4Ps of the Marketing Mix, and Part IV explored the challenges experienced by Department of Tourism-Accredited restaurants in promoting green food businesses through an interview.

3.4 Sampling design

The sampling technique used in choosing the 12 restaurants was total enumeration, in which all 12 DOT accredited restaurants in Rizal Province as of January 2024 were included in the study.

Within each restaurant, a simple random sampling technique was utilized to capture diverse viewpoints from the managers/owners, employees, and customers. All managers/owners and employees present at the time of data gathering were included in the study.

3.5 Research instrument

The researcher developed a survey questionnaire and interview guide for green marketing and restaurant practices, incorporating insights from various literature sources. The framework was built upon the 4Ps of Marketing integrated with sustainability practices, evolving into the Green Marketing Mix.

A 5-point Likert scale was used to assess the extent of green marketing practices employed by the DOT-accredited restaurants in Rizal Province. The verbal interpretation of the scale was as follows:

Table 1: Likert scale verbal interpretation

Scale	Verbal Interpretation (VI)	Description
4.2-5.00	Very Much Practiced (VMP)	If you strongly believe that the statement accurately represents the restaurant's green marketing practices.
3.4-4.19	Much Practiced (MP)	If you strongly believe the statement accurately represents the restaurant's green marketing practices.
2.60-3.39	Practiced (P)	If you believe that the statement is mostly consistent with the restaurant's practices
1.80-2.59	Seldom Practiced (SP)	If you believe that the statement has limited alignment with the restaurant's practices.
1.0-1.79	Least Practiced (LP)	If you strongly believe the statement does not reflect the restaurant's practices.

To gain access to essential information held by DOT-accredited restaurants, the researcher adopted a dual-pronged approach, focusing on official endorsement and direct engagement with individual establishments. Direct communication with individual restaurants was also crucial, with tailored emails and Facebook messages crafted for each establishment.

3.6 Statistical treatment of the data

The study utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods to address the research questions effectively. Descriptive statistics, including frequency analysis and percentages, were used to establish the business profile of the DOT-accredited restaurants and the profile of the respondents.

The extent of green marketing practices was assessed using the mean, a measure of central tendency. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to determine if there were significant differences in the extent of green marketing practices based on the four respondent groups.

The challenges experienced by the DOT-accredited restaurants in advocating green food businesses were explored through interviews and Focus Group Discussions, with the data analyzed using thematic analysis.

4 Presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data

4.1 Respondent's profile of DOT-Accredited restaurants

Table 2: Profile of the management respondents

Age	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
21-30 Years old	2	16.7
31-40 Years old	8	66.7
41-50 Years old	2	16.7
Total	12	100.0
Sex	**f**	**%**
Female	8	66.7
Male	4	33.3
Total	12	100.0
Civil Status	**f**	**%**
Married	7	58.3
Single	5	41.7
Total	12	100.0
Highest Educational Attainment	**f**	**%**
College	12	100.0
Years in the Position	**f**	**%**
Less than 1 year	3	25.0
1-5 years	6	50.0
6-10 years	1	8.3
More than 10 years	2	16.7
Total	12	100.0

Table 2 presents the profile of management respondents involved in the study, including their age, sex, civil status, highest educational attainment, and years in the position. It indicates that the majority of respondents are between 31-40 years old, female, married, hold a college degree, and have 1-5 years of experience in their current position.

Table 3: Profile of the employee respondents

Location	f	%
Antipolo City	8	8.2
Rodriguez	8	8.2
Tanay	81	83.5
Total	97	100.0
Age	**f**	**%**
20-30	63	64.9
31-40	27	27.8
41-50	6	6.2
No Response	1	1.0
Total	97	100.0
Sex	**f**	**%**
Female	41	42.3
Male	56	57.7

Total	97	100.0
Civil Status	**f**	**%**
Married	7	58.3
Single	5	41.7
Prefer Not to Say	12	100.0
Total	97	100.0
Highest Educational Attainment	**f**	**%**
College	59	60.8
High School	18	18.6
Post graduate	5	5.2
Vocational	14	14.4
No Response	1	1.0
Total	**97**	**100.0**
Monthly Income	**f**	**%**
Less than P 15,000.00	75	77.3
15,001-20,000.00	15	15.5
20,001-25,000	6	6.2
25,001-30,000	1	1.0
Total	97	100.0
Position		
Admin	3	3.1
Bartender or Barista	13	13.4
Cashier	6	6.2
Chef or Cook	23	23.7
Host/Hostess/Receptionist	2	2.1
Kitchen Staff	3	3.1
Others (maintenance etc)	3	3.1
Waiters/waitress	44	45.4
Total	97	100.0
Years in the Position	**f**	**%**
Less Than 1 y	31	32.0
1-5 years	49	50.5
6-10 years	12	12.4
More than 10	5	5.2
Total	97	100.0

Table 3 presents the profile of employee respondents involved in the study, including their location, age, sex, civil status, highest educational attainment, monthly income, position, and years in the position. It indicates that the majority of respondents are from Tanay, aged 20-30, male, single, with a college degree, earning less than P 15,000.00 per month, and working as waiters/waitresses for 1-5 years.

Table 4: Profile of the customer respondents

Location of Restaurant	f	%
Antipolo City	10	8.3
Rodriguez	10	8.3
Tanay	100	83.3
Total	120	100.0
Age	**f**	**%**
20-30	72	60.0
31-40	31	25.8
41-50	11	9.7
More than 50	6	5.0
Total	120	100.0
Sex	**f**	**%**
Female	56	46.7
Male	64	53.3
Total	120	100.0
Civil Status	**f**	**%**
Married	51	42.5
Single	69	57.5
Total	120	100.0
Place of Residence	**f**	**%**
Laguna	5	4.2
NCR	68	56.7
Bulacan	3	2.5
Rizal Province	44	36.7

Total	120	100.0
Average Amount Spent in Dining		
Less than P200.00	5	4.2
200.00-500.00	57	47.5
501.00-1000,00	26	21.6
1001,00-5,000.00	31	25.6
More than 5,000	1	0.8
Total	120	100.0
Monthly Income	**f**	**%**
Less than 15,000	13	10.8
15,001-20,000	6	5.0
20,001-25,000	36	29.2
25,001-30,000	32	23.3
More than 30,000	33	27.5
Total	120	100.0
Frequency of Visit in the Restaurant		
Once	55	45.8
2-5 times	49	40.8
6-10 times	10	8.3
More than 10 times	6	5.0
Total	120	100.0
Usual Day of Visit in the Restaurant	**f**	**%**
Either Weekdays or Weekends	19	15.8
Holiday	14	11.7
Weekdays	37	30.8
Weekends	50	41.7

Total	120	100.0
Time of Visit in the Restaurant	**f**	**%**
Breakfast	55	45.8
Lunch	49	40.8
Dinner	10	8.3
Snacks in between meals	6	5.0
Total	120	100.0
Primary Purpose in Visiting the Restaurant	**f**	**%**
Bond with family	28	23.3
Business or Professional meetings	15	12.5
Casual dining or socializing with friends	29	24.2
Celebrating a special occasion	3	2.5
Exploring new culinary experiences	10	8.3
Just having some personal time	26	21.7
Quick and convenient meal	9	7.5
Total	120	100.0

Table 4 provides a profile of customer respondents who visited DOT-accredited restaurants, including their location, age, sex, civil status, place of residence, average amount spent in dining, monthly income, frequency of visit, usual day of visit, time of visit, and primary purpose in visiting the restaurant. The majority of respondents visited restaurants in Tanay, were aged 20-30, mostly male, single, residing in the NCR, and spent between P200.00 to P1000.00 on dining. They typically visited the restaurant 2-5 times a month, mostly on weekends, and their primary purposes varied from bonding with family to casual dining with friends.

4.2 Extent of the marketing practices of Department of Tourism accredited restaurants with respect to green price

Table 5: Extent of the marketing practices of Department of Tourism accredited restaurants with respect to green price

Additional Value	Management		Employees		Customers		Overall	
	Mean	VI	Mean	VI	Mean	VI	Mean	VI
1.The eco-friendly dishes at this restaurant provide added nutritional benefits.	4.00	MP	3.87	MP	3.70	MP	3.79	MP
2.The restaurant has ethical sourcing practices such as sourcing organic vegetables from local farms	3.50	MP	3.86	MP	3.77	MP	3.79	MP
3.The eco-friendly dishes in this restaurant offer unique and appealing flavors.	3.00	P	3.34	P	2.48	P	2.87	P
4.Green menu items enhance the overall dining satisfaction of customers.	3.83	MP	3.32	P	2.53	P	2.93	P
5.The restaurant's healthy dishes contribute positively to my health and well-being of customers	3.25	P	3.84	MP	2.43	P	3.07	P
Average	**3.52**	**MP**	**3.64**	**MP**	**2.98**	**P**	**3.29**	**P**
Performance								
1.Customers consistently enjoy the restaurant's high-quality green menu items, leading to positive feedback and repeat visits.	4.33	VMP	4.18	MP	2.38	SP	3.24	P
2.Customer’s dining experience are enhanced with meticulous attention	3.75	MP	4.01	MP	2.35	SP	3.13	P

to detail, the eco-friendly dishes.								
3.Customers can rely on the restaurant to consistently provide sustainable dining experiences that meet their expectations, fostering loyalty and positive word-of-mouth.	4.42	VMP	3.98	MP	2.82	P	3.39	P
4.The taste and quality of eco-friendly dishes served in this restaurant consistently resonate with customer preferences, enriching their dining experience.	3.50	MP	4.04	MP	2.33	SP	3.11	P
5.The restaurant consistently excels in maintaining high performance standards for its eco-friendly menu items, ensuring a consistently satisfying customer experience.	3.58	MP	3.70	MP	3.57	MP	3.62	P
Average	3.92	MP	3.98	MP	2.69	P	3.30	P
Function								
1.The restaurant's green option of dishes catering to a variety of dietary preferences.	1.67	SP	3.45	MP	2.92	P	3.08	P
2.Eco-friendly dishes served in this restaurant are versatile and suitable for different occasions.	2.92	P	2.91	P	2.23	SP	2.55	SP
3.The restaurant's green menu complements various dining	1.33	NP	2.38	SP	2.41	SP	2.34	SP

experiences for customers.								
4.The restaurant's sustainable choices align with the customer's different dietary and lifestyle requirements.	1.67	NP	2.41	SP	1.76	NP	2.03	SP
5.The restaurant's eco-friendly menu is designed to seamlessly integrate sustainable ingredients into flavorful and satisfying dishes, enhancing both the dining experience and environmental consciousness.	2.92	P	3.49	MP	3.40	MP	3.41	MP
Average	**2.10**	**SP**	**2.93**	**P**	**2.54**	**SP**	**2.68**	**P**
Design								
1.The visual presentation of eco-friendly dishes in this restaurant is aesthetically pleasing.	3.33	P	3.93	MP	3.58	MP	3.72	MP
2.Green menu items at the restaurant are thoughtfully crafted and presented with creativity.	3.33	P	3.93	MP	3.95	MP	3.91	MP
3.The artistic presentation of sustainable dishes enhances the overall dining experience of the customer.	3.42	MP	3.71	MP	3.28	P	3.47	MP
4.The restaurant meticulously crafts the design of its eco-friendly menu options with careful attention to detail.	2.42	SP	3.10	P	3.07	P	3.05	P

5.The restaurant's ambiance and offerings provide excellent photo opportunities for social media platforms and instagrammable.	4.67	VMP	4.58	VMP	4.14	MP	4.35	VMP
Average	**3.43**	**MP**	**3.85**	**MP**	**3.60**	**MP**	**3.70**	**MP**
Traces:								
1.The restaurant offers clear information about the origins of its green menu ingredients, highlighting their organic sources and environmental footprints.	4.17	MP	3.94	MP	2.95	P	3.43	MP
2.Customers are well-informed about the environmental impact of the restaurant's eco-friendly practices.	4.17	MP	4.22	VMP	3.14	P	3.65	MP
3.The restaurant ensures transparency regarding the sources of its sustainable ingredients, emphasizing their organic origins and reduced environmental footprints.	4.42	VMP	4.44	VMP	4.51	VMP	4.48	VMP
4.Customers are aware of the efforts made by the restaurant to minimize its ecological footprint through effective communication about the traces of sustainability in its green menu.	3.92	MP	4.29	VMP	3.23	P	3.71	MP
5.The restaurant effectively communicates the traces of sustainability in its green	4.50	VMP	4.33	VMP	2.45	SP	3.35	P

menu to customers, emphasizing its commitment to environmentally friendly practices.								
Average	**4.23**	**VMP**	**4.24**	**VMP**	**3.26**	**P**	**3.72**	**MP**
Overall	**3.44**	**MP**	**3.73**	**MP**	**3.01**	**P**	**3.34**	**P**

The results shed light on the discrepancy between management and customer perspectives regarding green price menu marketing practices in Department of Tourism accredited restaurants. In the "Traces" category, while management perceives a high implementation of transparency practices in sourcing sustainable ingredients, customers rate these practices as less prevalent. This suggests a potential gap in communication or visibility of sustainability efforts to customers, highlighting the need for enhanced transparency in marketing strategies.

4.3 Extent of the marketing practices of Department of Tourism accredited restaurants with respect to green product

Table 6: Extent of the marketing practices of Department of Tourism accredited restaurants with respect to green product

Resources Consumption	Management		Employees		Customers		Overall	
	Mean	VI	Mean	VI	Mean	VI	Mean	VI
1.The restaurant's food waste management practices, including the management of leftovers, were noticeable by the customers.	4.75	VMP	4.03	MP	4.05	MP	4.08	MP
2.The restaurant practices energy-saving efforts, such as efficient lighting and kitchen equipment.	4.25	VMP	4.13	MP	4.12	MP	4.13	MP
3.The restaurant's conscientious approach to water usage, particularly in its disposal methods is observable.	4.00	MP	4.16	MP	4.08	MP	4.11	MP
4.The restaurant's outdoor dining experience showcased its commitment to eco-friendly practices.	5.00	VMP	4.64	V	4.63	VMP	4.66	VMP

5.The restaurant harnesses solar panel technology to effectively generate renewable energy, thereby reducing its reliance on non-renewable energy sources and mitigating its carbon footprint.	4.17	MP	4.53	V	4.53	VMP	4.51	VMP
Average	4.43	VMP	4.30	V	4.28	VMP	4.30	VMP
Pollution								
1.The restaurant's green practices effectively mitigate air pollution through the use of energy-efficient appliances and cooking methods.	4.08	MP	4.52	V	4.56	VMP	4.52	VMP
2.Waste management initiatives at the restaurant significantly reduce land pollution by properly disposing of food waste and implementing recycling programs.	4.33	VMP	4.57	V	4.53	VMP	4.54	VMP
3.The restaurant's water conservation strategies play a crucial role in minimizing water pollution	4.50	VMP	4.53	V	4.47	VMP	4.49	VMP
4.The restaurant employs advanced ventilation systems and odor-control measures to effectively mitigate smell pollutants, ensuring a pleasant dining experience for patrons while minimizing environmental impact.	2.92	P	2.98	P	2.97	P	2.97	P
5.The restaurant’s efforts to combat noise pollution, such as soundproofing	3.75	MP	4.28	VMP	4.03	MP	4.12	MP

measures and quieter equipment, contribute to a more pleasant dining environment.								
6.Implementation of eco-friendly lighting and outdoor lighting intensity reduction efforts demonstrate the restaurant's commitment to reducing light pollution.	4.23	VMP	4.18	MP	4.08	MP	4.16	MP
Average	3.92	MP	4.17	MP	4.11	MP	4.13	MP
Recycling								
1.The restaurant actively encourages patrons to bring their own takeout materials, reducing the need for disposable packaging and promoting sustainable practices.	3.00	P	3.58	MP	1.71	NP	2.57	SP
2.Waste from food cuttings is efficiently recycled in the restaurant's operations, minimizing organic waste and contributing to environmentally friendly practices.	5.00	VMP	4.60	VMP	4.57	VMP	4.60	VMP
3.The restaurant implements water recycling systems, such as utilizing rainwater collection and reusing water for various purposes like irrigation and cleaning processes.	4.67	VMP	4.63	VMP	4.59	VMP	4.61	VMP
4.Recycled decor elements are prominently featured throughout the restaurant.	2.08	SP	2.22	SP	2.06	SP	2.13	SP
5.The restaurant actively manages food waste	4.92	VMP	4.39	VMP	4.38	VMP	4.41	VMP

through composting and donation programs								
Average	3.93	MP	3.88	MP	3.46	MP	3.66	MP
Scarce Resources								
1.The restaurant prioritizes the use of natural resources for design	3.75	MP	4.24	VMP	4.28	VMP	4.23	VMP
2.Fresh live plants are prominently featured throughout the restaurant	5.00	VMP	4.43	VMP	4.42	VMP	4.45	VMP
3.Native materials, such as bamboo plates and locally sourced ceramics, are utilized for dining equipment.	3.08	P	2.46	SP	2.52	SP	2.52	SP
4.The restaurant implements water-efficient practices, such as low-flow faucets and water-saving appliances.	3.25	P	3.60	MP	3.60	MP	3.58	MP
5.Energy-saving measures, including LED lighting and energy-efficient appliances, are integrated into the restaurant's operations.	3.42	MP	3.73	MP	1.93	SP	2.77	P
Average	**3.70**	**MP**	**3.69**	**MP**	**3.35**	**P**	**3.51**	**MP**
Overall	**4.00**	**MP**	**4.01**	**MP**	**3.80**	**MP**	**3.90**	**MP**

Table 6 reveals that the "Resources Consumption" category received the highest mean score across all aspects, indicating robust implementation of eco-friendly practices related to resource management. Both management and customers perceive these practices as very much practiced, suggesting alignment in their perceptions. The item "The restaurant's outdoor dining experience showcased its commitment to eco-friendly practices" received the highest individual mean score, indicating a strong endorsement from all stakeholder groups.

4.4 Extent of the marketing practices of Department of Tourism accredited restaurants in Rizal Province with respect to green place

Table 7: Extent of the marketing practices of Department of Tourism accredited restaurants in Rizal Province with respect to green place

Location	Management		Employees		Customers		Overall	
	Mean	VI	Mean	VI	Mean	VI	Mean	VI
1.The restaurant's strategic location enhances accessibility for customers encouraging sustainable transportation options	1.33	NP	1.71	NP	1.72	NP	1.69	NP
2.This restaurant proximity to public markets reduces transportation emissions and supports local food sourcing	2.08	SP	2.23	SP	1.92	SP	2.06	SP
3.The restaurant's conscious choice of location minimizes the distance from public markets, facilitating the procurement of fresh, locally sourced ingredients and reducing the carbon footprint associated with transportation.	1.67	NP	2.41	SP	2.41	NP	2.37	NP
4.By selecting a location with easy access to public transportation hubs, the restaurant promotes eco-friendly commuting options for both staff and customers, contributing to sustainable urban mobility.	2.08	SP	1.73	NP	1.62	SP	1.69	SP
5.The restaurant's strategic location near natural resources exemplifies its holistic approach to sustainability, promoting eco-friendly transportation options, reducing food miles, and fostering a deeper	5.00	VMP	4.60	VMP	4.59	VMP	4.62	VMP

connection to the local environment.								
Average	**2.43**	**SP**	**2.54**	**SP**	**2.45**	**SP**	**2.49**	**SP**
Operating Hours								
1.The restaurant optimizes resource usage, reduces energy consumption, and promotes a sustainable approach to staffing and service delivery.	4.33	VMP	4.16	MP	4.10	VMP	4.14	VMP
2.By maintaining 12-hour operations daily, the restaurant minimizes environmental impact through streamlined energy usage, reduced idle periods, and efficient resource management.	1.83	SP	1.86	SP	1.97	SP	1.91	SP
3.The restaurant's extended operating hours, coupled with its eco-friendly practices, cater to diverse customer schedules while minimizing transportation emissions and promoting responsible consumption habits.	4.67	VMP	4.43	VMP	4.31	VMP	4.38	VMP
4.Through its commitment to flexible scheduling, the restaurant reduces food waste, energy consumption, and carbon emissions, ensuring efficient resource utilization and environmental sustainability.	4.33	VMP	4.48	VMP	4.47	VMP	4.47	VMP
5.Operating with flexibility and efficiency, the restaurant's green practices extend to its operating hours,	4.25	VMP	4.28	VMP	4.17	VMP	4.22	VMP

promoting resource conservation, waste reduction, and sustainable business operations.								
Average	4.33	VMP	4.16	MP	4.10	VMP	4.14	VMP
Overall	**3.88**	**MP**	**3.84**	**MP**	**3.80**	**MP**	**3.82**	**MP**

Table 7 reveals that the "Green Place" category received a relatively high mean score across all aspects, indicating a strong emphasis on eco-friendly practices related to restaurant location and operating hours. Both management and customers perceive these practices as somewhat practiced, suggesting a moderate level of implementation. The related literatures on green logistics practices and water conservation in Philippine restaurants (Montebon et al., 2023) further support the findings.

4.5 Extent of the marketing practices of Department of Tourism accredited restaurants with respect to green promotion

Table 8: Extent of the marketing practices of Department of Tourism accredited restaurants with respect to green promotion

Lifestyle	Management		Employees		Customers		Overall	
	Mean	VI	Mean	VI	Mean	VI	Mean	VI
1.Through targeted digital marketing campaigns, the restaurant promotes its eco-friendly lifestyle offerings, encouraging patrons to embrace sustainable dining habits and reducing reliance on traditional print advertising, thereby minimizing paper waste and environmental impact.	2.68	P	2.87	P	2.49	SP	2.66	P
2.The restaurant incentivizes green living through discounts on sustainable menu items, fostering a culture of environmentally conscious consumption and encouraging patrons to make eco-friendly choices in their dining habits.	2.68	P	2.87	P	2.49	SP	2.66	P
3.Seasonal promotions highlight the restaurant's commitment to sustainability, featuring locally	2.68	P	2.87	P	2.49	SP	2.66	P

sourced ingredients and eco-friendly practices, while engaging customers in the celebration of seasonal flavors and reducing the carbon footprint associated with long-distance food transportation.								
4.Giveaways made of recycled materials serve as tangible reminders of the restaurant's dedication to environmental stewardship, reinforcing its green brand identity and encouraging patrons to adopt eco-friendly behaviors beyond their dining experience.	2.68	P	2.87	P	2.49	SP	2.66	P
5.By integrating lifestyle promotions into its marketing strategy, the restaurant not only drives customer engagement but also educates and empowers individuals to make sustainable choices in their daily lives, fostering a community of environmentally conscious consumers committed to positive environmental impact.	2.68	P	2.87	P	2.49	SP	2.66	P
Corporate Image	2.68	P	2.87	P	2.49	SP	2.66	P
1.The restaurant's corporate image reflects its commitment to sustainability, with a strong emphasis on promoting a green image in the community through eco-friendly policies and initiatives that prioritize environmental conservation.	2.68	P	2.87	P	2.49	SP	2.66	P
2.Through its green policies and practices, such as carbon offset programs and sustainable sourcing policies, the restaurant establishes itself as a leader in environmentally	1.42	NP	2.21	SP	1.77	NP	1.93	SP

responsible corporate citizenship, fostering positive perceptions among customers and stakeholders.								
3.The restaurant actively engages in carbon-neutral activities, such as car-free days and bicycle commuting incentives for staff, demonstrating its dedication to reducing its carbon footprint and promoting eco-friendly transportation alternatives.	1.17	NP	1.72	NP	1.48	NP	1.56	SP
4.The well-groomed staff members embody the restaurant's commitment to cleanliness and professionalism, contributing to a positive corporate image that aligns with its values of maintaining a clean and sustainable restaurant environment.	4.83	VMS	4.56	MP	4.56	VMP	4.57	VMP
5.With a clean restaurant reputation, earned through rigorous sanitation practices and waste management protocols, the restaurant upholds its green image by prioritizing cleanliness and environmental stewardship in all aspects of its operations.	5.00	VMS	4.21	VMP	4.31	VMP	4.30	VMP
Relation (Customer Relations)	3.20	P	3.32	MP	2.76	SP	3.02	P
1.The restaurant enhances customer relations by providing educational materials on green practices, such as pamphlets or signage, to inform patrons about the restaurant's sustainable initiatives and empower them to make environmentally conscious choices.	1.75	NP	1.77	NP	1.72	NP	1.74	NP

2.Staff members actively engage with customers to discuss the restaurant's green initiatives, including featuring information on sustainable practices directly on the menu, fostering transparency and dialogue around environmental stewardship.	1.83	SP	1.90	SP	1.83	SP	1.86	SP
3.By promptly addressing inquiries on social media platforms like Facebook, the restaurant ensures open communication channels with customers, alleviating potential frustrations	4.50	VMS	4.21	VMP	2.24	SP	3.19	P
4.The restaurant facilitates customer engagement with its green practices by organizing educational events or workshops, providing opportunities for patrons to learn more about sustainability and interact with staff to discuss eco-friendly initiatives.	1.33	NP	1.96	SP	1.67	NP	1.77	NP
5.Through proactive customer relations efforts, such as conducting surveys or soliciting feedback, the restaurant continually evaluates and improves its green practices, fostering a collaborative relationship with patrons in the shared goal of environmental conservation.	3.17	P	3.58	MP	3.63	M	3.58	MP
Average	2.52	SP	2.68	P	2.22	SP	2.43	SP
Overall	**2.68**	**P**	**2.87**	**P**	**2.49**	**SP**	**2.66**	**P**

Table 8 reveals contrasting perceptions regarding the implementation of green marketing practices in the "Corporate Image" and "Relation (Customer Relations)" categories among stakeholders. Both management and customers perceive the restaurant's corporate image positively, particularly regarding staff grooming and professionalism. However, both customers and management perceive customer engagement with green practices as lacking, particularly in terms of organizing educational events or workshops.

4.6 Composite table on the extent of the marketing practices of Department of Tourism accredited restaurants

Table 9: Composite table on the extent of the marketing practices of Department of Tourism accredited restaurants

Aspects	Management		Employees		Customers		Overall	
	Mean	VI	Mean	VI	Mean	VI	Mean	VI
Green Price	3.44	MP	3.73	MP	3.01	P	3.34	P
Green Product	4.00	MP	4.01	MP	3.80	MP	3.90	MP
Green Place	3.88	MP	3.84	MP	3.80	MP	3.82	MP
Green Promotion	2.68	P	2.87	P	2.49	SP	2.66	P
Overall	3.32	P	3.45	P	3.11	P	3.26	P

The findings underscore the importance of enhancing green promotion efforts to effectively communicate and promote sustainable practices to customers. Restaurants can utilize various marketing channels, such as signage, social media, and promotional campaigns, to highlight their eco-friendly initiatives and differentiate themselves in the market. Additionally, improving customer engagement and communication channels can bridge the gap between management perceptions and customer expectations regarding green marketing practices. By actively involving customers in sustainability initiatives and seeking feedback, restaurants can foster a sense of ownership and loyalty among environmentally conscious consumers.

Table 10: Significant difference in the extent of the marketing practices of DOT-Accredited restaurants in Rizal with respect to the aforementioned variables based on the 4 groups of respondents

Aspects	Source of Variation	Mean Square (MS)	F-test ANOVA (F)	Significant Difference (Sig.)	Hypothesis (Ho)	VI
Green Price	Between Groups	13.816	284.440	.000	Reject (R)	Significant (S)
	Within Groups	.049				
	Total					
Green Product	Between Groups	1.256	27.510	.000	R	S
	Within Groups	.046				
	Total					
Green Place	Between Groups	.109	1.475	.231	Failed to Reject (FR)	Not Significant (NS)
	Within Groups	.074				
	Total					
Green Promotion	Between Groups	3.848	97.501	.000	R	S
	Within Groups	.039				
	Total					
Overall	Between Groups	3.164	190.425	.000	R	S
	Within Groups	.017				

Table 10 reveals significant differences among groups of respondents in the implementation of green marketing strategies, with notable variations in Green Price, Green Product, Green Promotion, and Overall implementation. However, the absence of significant differentiation concerning Green Place suggests a need for further exploration and understanding.

5 Conclusion and Recommendation

Challenges experienced by the DOT-Accredited restaurants in advocating green food businesses

The results of the respondents' demographics showed their relevance to the study by knowing the significant characteristics and ranking per category. On the other hand, based on the results and data collected, it was found that DOT-accredited restaurants in Rizal partially conduct and implement Eco-Friendly Initiatives following local Government regulations and their initiatives, such as wooden utensils and microwavable containers, for compliance with the existing "Zero-Use of Plastic" protocol of Rizal. The study's findings revealed the following challenges:

Sourcing environmentally friendly ingredients: Limited availability and high costs of environmentally friendly ingredients pose significant challenges for restaurants.

Establishing restaurants in environmentally friendly locations. Difficulty in finding suitable sites that align with sustainability values, coupled with logistical issues like poor infrastructure, presents hurdles for restaurants.

Logistical challenges in waste management and energy consumption. Managing waste effectively and reducing energy consumption are essential but challenging tasks for restaurants.

Accessibility via eco-friendly transportation pptions. Ensuring accessibility to the restaurant via eco-friendly transportation options is crucial but challenging, especially in areas with limited public transportation. Addressing this challenge may involve advocating for improved public transportation infrastructure and promoting alternative transportation modes like cycling or walking.

Effective communication of green Initiatives. Communicating green initiatives effectively to the target audience is essential but complex.

Integration of sustainability messaging in marketing strategies. Integrating sustainability messaging into marketing strategies while maintaining customer engagement can be challenging. Striking a balance between promoting sustainability and addressing customer preferences and interests is essential for effective messaging.

Balancing costs with eco-friendly practices. Balancing the costs associated with eco-friendly practices while remaining competitive in pricing presents a significant challenge for restaurants.

The challenges identified in the analysis, such as sourcing environmentally friendly ingredients, establishing restaurants in environmentally friendly locations, and balancing costs with eco-friendly practices, provide inputs regarding the existence and compliance of sustainable practices of DOT-accredited restaurants. Adopting and implementing eco-friendly initiatives increases operational efficiency and sustainability while advocating for the green food business in the industry. Furthermore, establishing partnerships with local farmers and suppliers can help ensure a consistent supply of sustainable ingredients. Moreover, educating customers about the benefits of eco-friendly menu items is crucial to increase acceptance and appreciation—a collaboration with local authorities to improve infrastructure and identify environmentally friendly locations. Leveraging various communication channels and ensuring messaging resonates with customers can help overcome this challenge, although it may require ongoing efforts and adjustments based on customer feedback. Moreover, finding cost-effective solutions and exploring opportunities for cost-sharing or incentives can help address this challenge while maintaining a commitment to sustainability. The observance of green practices can also help promote a tourist destination by showcasing its commitment to sustainability, adhering to one of the few marketing trends - green marketing, through compliance with local government regulations and restaurant initiatives.

Recommendation: Utilizing the Green Marketing Strategies of Department of Tourism-accredited Restaurants as Drivers for Tourism

Green product

Implement a tiered "Green Gastronomy Certification" program for restaurants. Promote the use of local, organic, and sustainable ingredients. Encourage creation of signature eco-friendly dishes and develop sustainable packaging solutions for takeaway and delivery.

Green price

Adopt a "True Cost" pricing model reflecting environmental benefits. Introduce "Green Value Meals" and loyalty programs for eco-friendly choices. Ensure price transparency, clearly explaining any premiums for sustainable options.

Green place

Establish an "Eco-Culinary Trail" connecting certified sustainable restaurants nationwide. Design interiors using sustainable materials and local eco-art. Prioritize locations accessible by eco-friendly transport. Partner with sustainable accommodations for cross-promotion.

Green promotion

Launch a "Taste Sustainability" national campaign. Develop a mobile app for discovering green restaurants. Organize annual regional Sustainable Food Festivals. Collaborate with eco-influencers and travel agencies. Use QR codes for sustainability information and create virtual kitchen tours. Integrate sustainable dining into broader tourism packages.

Scope and delimitations

Several inherent limitations that may influence the interpretation and generalization of the findings are as follows:

Limited number of respondents: The research focused specifically on a sample of 12 Department of Tourism (DOT) accredited restaurants as of January 2024 record, involving 97 employees located within the geographical boundaries of Rizal Province in the Philippines.

Rizal Province was chosen as the study area due to its growing prominence as a Food Tourism Hub in the country. Through total enumeration, these 12 DOT-accredited restaurants were selected.

Study's timeframe: Data gathering began in September 2023, initiating with a pre-test, followed by the actual study conducted in Rizal Province from January to March 2024. Official data collection extended until March 2024, with sessions held every Saturday and Sunday during lunch hours from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM to accommodate respondents and uphold consistency.

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Wine Tourism Sentiment and Expectation from the Perspective of Customers: A Study of Wine Tourism in Thailand

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Abstract

There are several wineries in Thailand. The wine produced by some of them is reputable worldwide. Also, some scholars claimed the competence of these wineries in organising wine tourism; in particular Thailand is the only country in Southeast Asia that offers wine tourism. Despite these claims and that 10 percent of the Thai population drink wine, some of the drinkers questioned the suitability of the climatic condition of Thailand in growing premium grapes. Also, some scholars claimed that wine tourism in Thailand is still at its infantry stage, and it is not first choice of people for wine tourism. This paper looks into ways for these wineries could attract Thai people to visit them for wine tourism from the perspective of Thai people. Also, challenges of these wineries to attract Thai people for wine tourism will be discussed. To collect data, the author of the paper will use a qualitative research methodology. The author of the paper will interview 40 interviewees who are Thai people. However, their age must be over 20 years old that is the legal drinking age in Thailand. The author hope that the paper could provide guidelines to these wineries ways to attract Thai people to visit them for wine tourism.

Keywords: wineries, wine tourism, wine tourists, Thailand

1 Introduction

Global wine business generates enormous revenue. In 2023, the revenue reached US$333.00bn. (Statista, 2023). Also, this business is expected to grow annually by 5.52% (CAGR 2023-2027) (Statista, 2023). Though the revenue is enormous, many of these wineries tend to organise wine tourism so as to generate additional income. The global wine tourism revenue is expected to reach around US$ 293 billion in 2033 (Future Market Insight, n.d.). However, apart from generating income, wine tourism is also a means to help promote the wineries, educate wine tourists and up to a point, to introduce new wine products to tourists.

Thailand is one of the wine producing countries. Grapes were said to be introduced during the time of the reign of King Narai (Wikipedia, 2023). In 1986, Khun Charlerm Yoovidhya founded the Siam Winery to begin his quest for making Thai wine in Thailand. Later, the Monsoon Valley was founded (A World of Food and Drink, 2019). Up to a point, wine drinking is popular in Thailand. Evidently, 10% of Thais are wine drinkers (Sirikeratikul, 2009). On the basis of the population in Thailand that is around 71 million (World Meters, n.d.), over 7 million local Thai drink wine. These Thai wine drinkers consumed 103 million liters of wine in 2020 and the annual per capita consumption is up to 0.3 liters (Zhao, 2024).

Of the wineries in Thailand, they are located in four main grape-growing regions: Northern Thailand, Khao Yai, Hua Hin, and Pattaya (figure one) (Oonphamon, 2020). These wineries produced around one million bottles of wine annually (Banks, Klinsrisuk, Dilokwanich & Stupples, 2013). Some of the wineries, such as, GranMonte and Monsoon Valley had won several international awards. For example, in 2011, GranMonte's Asoke Cabernet Saubignon Syrah and Busaba Natural Sweet Wine won the silver medal and gold medal of AWC 2020 respectively (Granmonte, n.d.). While Monsoon Valley won eight silver medals at the AWC Vienna 2023 (figure 2). However, in spite of winning international acclamations, the majority of wine consumed in Thailand are imported wine. 94%of wine consumed are imported wine (Charonnit, 2020) among which the wine from France, Australia and Italy take the lead (OEC World, n.d.).

Fig. 1: https://cellar.asia/wine/thailand-wine-regions-and-map/

Fig. 2: https://monsoonvalley.com/en/articles/_news-blog-list/awc_vienna_2023

Of these wineries in Thailand, many of them such as Silver Lake and GranMonte organise wine tourism to attract wine tourists. Although these wineries own the competency to attract wine tourists for wine tourism (Chong, 2017), and Thailand is the only wine tourism providing countries in Southeast Asia (Timothy, in Chong, 2017), wine tourism is still an infant industry (Chong, 2017). Also, as claimed by Hinson (2021), Thailand is not at the top of a wine lover's list for the choice of wine tourism.

Chong (2017) claimed that one reason for this phenomenon stemmed from the tourism operators might not be aware of the wine tourism (Chong, 2017). Charoennit (2020) in her research claimed that the majority of her respondents remarked that despite they realized some key wine producing regions in Thailand, they perceive Thailand's climatic condition does not fit the "prime condition of grape vine" to grow. However, there are reservations on these claims. Today search engines of the internet can provide browsers tonnes of information about the availability of wine tourism and the fame of wineries in Thailand. Also, the international awards won by some of the wineries in Thailand indicate the quality of wine produced in Thailand was up to international standard and exceed several wine producing countries worldwide.

Wine tourism comprises three main elements of: consumers and their behaviour, marketing strategy and wine companies, and destination planning and marketing planning (Getz, Dowling, Carlsen and Anderson, 1999). Among these elements, to know the sentiments of consumers is of top priority because the central purpose of marketing is to serve customers. Also, the Stimulus-response or the Black Box model (in Charoennit, 2020) claimed that consumer decisions are influenced by factors such as consumer belief, values or attitude and external factors such as the marketing mix and environmental factors influence decision-making of customers.

This paper aims to know sentiments and expectation of local people in Thailand for wine tourism experience in Thailand. In what ways can wineries in Thailand attract wine drinkers to visit them for wine tourism? The author of the paper would like to achieve the following objectives:

To know the popularity of local wineries among local and tourists and

To know the opportunities and threats to the wineries to organise wine tourism to attract wine tourists.

2 Methdology

To collect data, the author of this paper will use a qualitative research methodology to interview 40 respondents that the number is considered valid by Walker (1985). However, the number of respondents depend on the level the saturation point. The author of the paper will use a simple random methodology. The main target respondents are Thai people.

In order to achieve the objectives, the author will ask the respondents their familiarity with and impression of wineries in Thailand. Also, questions that are about their perception of wine tourism and experience will be asked. About those who had visited wineries in Thailand or overseas for wine tourism the author will ask their comments on the tourism. Of those who had visited wineries both in Thailand and overseas for wine tourism, the author will ask their comparison of their experiences in the visits. Also, the author will ask respondents to give suggestions to improve wine tourism organised by wineries in Thailand.

The author believes the paper would help wineries in Thailand formulate a marketing strategy to attract local wine tourists for wine tourism.

Note: For the purpose of brevity, the term wineries cover vineyards and wine making factories.

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Taste without Limits: Enhancing Accessibility in the Culinary Tourism Experience

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Abstract

This study investigates the food experiences of disabled travelers, focusing on those with mobility challenges, visual impairments, and the elderly. Despite advancements in travel accessibility, a gap remains in inclusive culinary experiences for these groups. Utilizing a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with visually impaired individuals, wheelchair users, and elderly tourists to explore their dietary needs and preferences. The data, analyzed through rigorous coding and thematization, informed the development of tailored recipes and culinary training programs. The research underscores the significance of accessible food experiences in tourism and hospitality, revealing that inclusive culinary practices can enhance travel experiences for disabled individuals. By promoting accessibility and inclusivity in culinary offerings, the tourism industry can create memorable and enriching experiences for all travelers. This study provides valuable insights and practical recommendations for integrating accessible dining options and culinary activities into travel services, paving the way for a more inclusive travel landscape.

Keywords: Accessible tourism, inclusivity, disable travelers, culinary experience

1 Introduction

The tourism industry is a vibrant and dynamic sector that caters to a diverse range of travelers with varying needs and preferences (Devile et al., 2024; Gao et al., 2024; Ojijo & Steiger, 2024). However, one persistent challenge is accommodating travelers with disabilities, mobility limitations, visual impairments, and the elderly (Karl et al., 2024). Despite significant progress in improving accessibility in various aspects of travel, such as transportation (Rubio-Escuderos et al., 2024; Wagner et al., 2024) and accommodation (Devile et al., 2024; Tao et al., 2024), there remains a notable gap in providing inclusive and enriching experiences related to food and culinary activities for these specific traveler groups. Addressing this gap is essential to ensure that all travelers can enjoy comprehensive and satisfying tourism experiences.

The objectives of this study are threefold. Firstly, it aims to understand the particular needs and preferences of disabled travelers, including those with mobility challenges, visual impairments, and the elderly, concerning food consumption and culinary activities during their travels. These groups often face unique barriers that can hinder their enjoyment of culinary experiences, from inaccessible dining facilities to a lack of dietary accommodations (Liu et al., 2024). Understanding these challenges is the first step in creating a more inclusive tourism environment.

Secondly, this research seeks to identify and evaluate existing practices and initiatives that promote accessible food consumption for disabled travelers. This includes assessing the availability of inclusive menus, dietary options, and dining facilities that cater to diverse needs (Asher et al., 2022; Hatzikiriakidis et al., 2024). By examining current best practices, this study aims to highlight successful strategies that can be adopted and adapted by other tourism and hospitality providers. Additionally, this evaluation will consider the effectiveness of these practices in responding to the needs of disabled travelers, ensuring that they provide meaningful and enjoyable experiences.

Lastly, the study investigates innovative approaches and best practices for incorporating inclusive culinary activities into travel itineraries (Kim et al., 2024). This may include cooking classes, food tours, tastings, and cultural experiences that are accessible and enjoyable for all travelers. These activities not only enhance the travel experience but also provide opportunities for cultural exchange and personal enrichment. By making these activities accessible, tourism providers can offer more holistic and satisfying experiences to all their guests.

This research highlights the importance of accessible food experiences in the realm of tourism and hospitality. By understanding and addressing the unique needs of disabled travelers and promoting inclusive culinary practices, the tourism industry can unlock new possibilities for enhancing accessibility, diversity, and inclusivity in travel experiences. In exploring and promoting accessible tourism through the lens of culinary experiences, this study provides comprehensive recommendations to hotels and tourism service providers. These recommendations aim to develop service practices and guidelines to enhance their offerings in terms of accessible food experiences. By incorporating accessible dining options, culinary workshops, and immersive food experiences, hotels and tourism service providers can create memorable and inclusive experiences for all guests, including those with disabilities. Through collaborative efforts and innovative approaches, we can pave the way for a more inclusive and enjoyable travel landscape for everyone.

2 Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach, specifically utilizing semi-structured interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' food-related perspectives, preferences, and needs (McFarland et al., 2024). Interviews were conducted with visually impaired individuals, wheelchair users, and elderly tourists to explore their unique dietary requirements. The collected data will inform the development of tailored recipes and culinary activity programs for these specific populations.

Data collection and sampling

To delve into the unique dietary needs and preferences of visually impaired individuals, wheelchair users, and elderly tourists, we conducted interview sessions with the designated target groups. An in-depth interview is deemed an appropriate data collection method to explore diverse perspectives and encourage participants to share their personal experiences and specific needs. Each interview session is anticipated to last approximately 45-60 minutes to ensure adequate time for participants to convey their experiences and to gather in-depth insights from the participants.

The sample size of 15 participants is breakdown into the following categories:

5 Visually impaired individuals

5 Wheelchair users

5 Elderly tourists

Data Analysis

Following the completion of the interview sessions, researchers will employ qualitative data analysis techniques. The collected data, comprising audio recordings and transcripts, will undergo rigorous examination and analysis. The data will be systematically coded to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the dietary needs of visually impaired individuals, wheelchair users, and elderly tourists. Thematization will provide a framework for extracting meaningful insights.

Recipe Development

The coded and thematized data will serve as the basis for developing recipes tailored to the specific needs of the target groups. Considering the requirements identified by participants, recipes will be developed to enhance accessibility, promote quality of life, and cater to diverse preferences within each demographic group (Asher et al., 2024).

3 Conclusion

In conclusion, this research endeavors to shed light on the importance of accessible food experiences in the realm of tourism and hospitality. By understanding and addressing the unique needs of disabled travelers and promoting inclusive culinary practices, the tourism industry can unlock new possibilities for enhancing accessibility, diversity, and inclusivity in travel experiences. Through collaborative efforts and innovative approaches, this study can pave the way for a more inclusive and enjoyable travel landscape for all.

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Session 7: Hospitality Business Operations and Strategies

Survey on Revenue Management of Japanese Accommodation Facilities in a Period of Shrinking Demand

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Abstract

COVID-19 had a severe impact on tourism-related industries, with Japanese accommodation facilities experiencing a downturn in business performance due to a sharp drop in travel demand. This drastic change in the business environment also had a significant impact on the revenue management practices of Japanese accommodation facilities. Therefore, this study aims to clarify how the revenue management of Japanese accommodation facilities changed during the period of shrinking demand. We conducted a questionnaire survey and interviews with Japanese accommodation facilities, and the results showed that the essential aspects of revenue management, i.e. allocating rooms by price and sales channel and customer segment based on demand forecasts, did not change significantly, but revenue management shifted to be more profit-oriented than revenue-oriented, and the KPIs that hotels should focus on changed.

Keywords: revenue management, COVID-19, accommodation facilities, sustainable business model, shrinking demand

1 Background

COVID-19 cases in Japan were reported in 2020 and spread further in 2021, with regulatory restrictions on the activity having a major impact worldwide. Tourism-related industries were particularly affected, with the accommodation industry experiencing a sharp decline in business performance due to a sharp drop in travel demand. According to Jiang and Wen (2020), hotel industry professionals were under tremendous pressure to deal with partial or complete closure of facilities, financial losses due to fixed costs that rarely decrease, and uncertainty about the short- and long-term demand for hotel rooms. This dramatic change in the business environment has also had a significant impact on the revenue management practices of accommodation facilities in Japan. In addition, some articles have suggested that the global COVID-19 epidemic has rendered past demand patterns meaningless and that revenue management systems can no longer provide accurate demand forecasts and pricing recommendations (Guillet and Chu, 2021).

Talon-Ballestero et al. (2023) found that key factors in managing this crisis were the further professionalisation of revenue managers, which has enabled the correct application of strategies and measures, highlighting the importance of not lowering prices, the flexibility of booking conditions, the development of other sources of income and the increase in the value of services, amongst others.

Guillet and Chu (2021) found that among the main RM components, business analysis, pricing strategy, and demand modelling and forecasting were the most critical during the COVID-19 crisis. Piga et al. (2022) found that hotels with a more managerial approach have more proactively applied dynamic pricing strategies.

Under these circumstances, we conducted a questionnaire survey and interviews to determine how revenue management in Japanese accommodation facilities has changed during periods of shrinking demand (Aoki and Uetake, 2021) (Uetake and Aoki, 2023).

The purpose of this survey is to identify the efforts made by each accommodation facility during the period of shrinking demand due to the spread of infectious diseases and the results of these efforts, and to leave them as research materials for the accommodation industry and researchers.

2 Revenue Management of Japanese Accommodation Facilities in a Period of Shrinking Demand

Guillet and Chu (2021) found that the core processes of revenue management remained the same during the COVID-19 crisis, but also found that not all components were equally important. They also found that business analysis, pricing strategy, demand modelling, and forecasting were highly important during the crisis. At the same time, room inventory and pricing optimization and setting booking controls were less important and will become more important as demand recovers, along with distribution channel management.

In general, during periods of shrinking demand, price reductions are often made in anticipation of supply/demand relationships. Where there is a fixed market size and competition for market share within that market, price reductions are likely to result in increased sales volumes. However, if there is no fixed market, price reductions will not create new demand.

3 Questionnaire survey

To clarify the actual situation regarding revenue management of accommodation facilities in a period of shrinking demand, a questionnaire was sent to accommodation facilities (528 facilities) in the Hokkaido and Okinawa regions of Japan's resort areas that have five or more guest rooms. 63 facilities responded (11.9% response rate). The size of the responding facilities was 28 large (201 or more rooms), 25 medium (31-200 rooms), and 9 small (30 rooms or less).

Specifically, we examined the following three points.

- Business environment
- Revenue management policy
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

While revenue management policies vary depending on the type of facility and the types of targeted customers, the survey results suggest the following three changes are occurring.

Firstly, revenue managers tend to avoid extreme price reductions when it is difficult to create demand.

Secondly, although reducing fixed costs likely damages their reputation, in independent accommodation facilities where the survival of the business is at stake, revenue managers prioritize short-term revenue maximization, accept the loss of reputation, and prioritize short-term fixed cost reductions over reputation. The tendency to prioritize short-term fixed cost reductions over reputation is confirmed.

Third, the importance of repeat customers, who are less susceptible to reputation damage, tended to increase during COVID-19, although the percentage is not as high.

4 Interviews

To identify the actual situation regarding revenue management during periods of shrinking demand, interviews were conducted with revenue managers and managers of 6 large facilities in the Hokkaido/Okinawa regions.

While the amount of authority of the revenue manager varies depending on the facility, the results of this survey suggest the following three changes have occurred.

Firstly, the sales method has changed and the number of rooms sold is no longer a constraint. Historical data is no longer reliable, accurate forecasting is impossible and cancellations cannot be predicted.

Secondly, the segment mix has changed dramatically. Inbound and MICE segments have disappeared, while new segments such as micro-tourism and workcations have emerged.

Third, KPIs have also changed dramatically: the importance of RevPAR remains the same, but the importance and view of occupancy have changed. Do not pursue higher occupancy rates than necessary, as this will lead to overcrowding in various areas of the facility.

5 Conclusion

This survey summarizes the following points.

- While many hotels have reduced fixed costs to ensure business survival in the face of a sharp decline in customer numbers, revenue management has become more profit-oriented than revenue-oriented and is increasingly linked to cost management with a focus on fixed costs.
- With the emphasis on short-term profitability rather than medium- to long-term profitability, the factors that revenue managers need to focus on to maintain financial performance have changed significantly, as have the KPIs that should be emphasized.

On the other hand, this research also found that the essential aspects of revenue management, namely the distribution of rooms by price and distribution channel and customer segment based on demand forecasts, have not changed significantly in Japan.

As events that cause a sharp drop in demand are expected to occur periodically, the results of this survey will certainly be useful in such future cases.

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Understanding Factors Affecting the Specialty Coffee Bean Subscription Model in Thailand

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Abstract
The study focuses on different factors affecting consumer decision-making in specialty coffee bean subscriptions. This paper is a preliminary study that is aimed at helping researchers understand the factors involved in specialty coffee bean subscription decision-making in Thailand. We used a selective sampling approach in conducting 1-on-1 interviews with five high-profile influencers in the specialty coffee bean industry. The result of the research showed that 13 key factors affect consumer decision-making in specialty coffee bean selection. Based on these results, we have developed our proposed theoretical framework, which would contribute to the literature by providing direction for future research in this industry.

Keywords: specialty coffee, subscription, decision making, Thailand coffee industry, Thailand business

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1 Introduction

Specialty coffee has become one of the most popular beverages in Thailand, growing in popularity from being an occasional beverage of choice to being an everyday beverage. The specialty coffee industry has been recognized for its significant growth (Maspul et al., 2024). It is not only a refreshing beverage, but also a beverage that drives the economy at both the macro and micro levels. A great example is the tourism industry. There has been a rapid expansion of coffee tourism in Thailand, with people traveling to visit cafes in both the main and secondary cities across the country or visiting various coffee plantations in the northern region. This growth has been particularly significant over the past few years. A recent study also shows the importance of the coffee business in driving the tourism industry (Madhyamapurush, 2020).

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the monthly subscription model has become widely adopted around the world, and the same has been observed in Thailand. This growth is largely driven by better technology. The internet and the arrival of e-commerce have made it easier for consumers to access various services. Iyengar et al. (2020) suggest that subscription programs have a high impact on customer behaviour and purchase decisions. In relation to this connection, the trend of monthly subscriptions is also gaining popularity in the specialty coffee bean business in Thailand. This model enhances the spending opportunities of consumers by encouraging them to choose to buy coffee from their favourite coffee roaster even when they are not out drinking coffee. Also, this approach allows coffee roasters to engage with a consistent customer base and provide a regular supply of freshly roasted coffee beans to subscribers to create sustained economic revenue for the industry.

This study aims to explore two key areas: (1) specialty coffee; and (2) the food and beverage subscription nomad trend in Thailand. To uncover the factors affecting consumers' decisions when opting for specialty coffee subscriptions, the preliminary study was conducted to identify the potential factors and their relationship with one another.

2 Literature review

2.1 Coffee, culture and specialty coffee

Coffee is a tropical plant that grows at 600–1800 metres above sea level (Buffo, 2004). What we typically refer to as 'coffee' is a beverage made by brewing roasted and ground coffee beans. Over the centuries, coffee has become a global beverage and has become a part of people's lives on various occasions. The role of coffee has indeed evolved beyond being just an "energy drink." It has transformed into being an integral part of daily life, becoming a staple "everyday beverage" for many people around the world. The cultural shift towards appreciating the nuances of coffee, exploring different bean varieties, and savoring the experience reflects the dynamic and diverse ways in which coffee is now enjoyed. According to Triolo et al. (2023), coffee has now become a global marketplace icon that is truly international. In addition, Vegro & de Almeida (2020) suggested that coffee is not only a drink, but in fact, also a key driver that drives socio-economic growth and contributes significantly to cultural dynamics.

The culture of enjoying Specialty Coffee is relatively new, having only emerged in the last few decades. Its inception is often attributed to the Third Wave Coffee movement, a significant milestone in the coffee industry's evolution. This movement can be understood in the context of three distinct phases or "Waves" as follows:

i. First Wave: Introduction of coffee consumption to the world

ii. Second Wave: Globalization of coffee culture with a focus on mass production

iii. Third Wave: The current era, emphasizing coffee quality, sustainability, and innovative processing methods like Nordic Roasted or Honey Process.

In this Third Wave, attention is directed toward developing coffee strains, collaborating with farmers, and creating a superior coffee-drinking experience. The emphasis is on having diverse coffee beans, exciting extraction methods, and, most importantly, delivering a delicious taste.

From 1962 to 1989, the coffee market was under the regulation of the International Coffee Agreement (ICA). The ICA consisted of a series of agreements that established production quotas and standardized quality requirements for the majority of coffee-producing nations. (Traore, 2018). The Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA) defines specialty coffee as coffee that is grown in unique and optimal climates, boasting distinct taste and flavour profiles, and exhibiting minimal to no defects. To be officially categorized as specialty coffee, the coffee must receive a quality score of 80 or higher on a 100-point scale through the coffee-tasting evaluation process.

2.2 Specialty coffee subscription in Thailand

Subscription commerce is an integral part of today's consumption space (Roy and Ortiz, 2022). In subscription-based commerce, consumers make recurring payments at regular intervals to access products and services, and the trend of subscription models is growing and is widely used around the world, including Thailand. This growth is driven by better technology. Improved internet quality and access and the arrival of e-commerce make it easier for consumers to choose services that best fit their needs. The trend of monthly subscriptions is also gaining popularity in the specialty coffee bean business in Thailand. Notable coffee roasters, including Phil Coffee Roaster, Brave Coffee Roaster, and Livid Coffee Roaster, have adopted the subscription model to enhance their revenue streams. This approach allows coffee roasters to engage with a consistent customer base and provide a regular supply of freshly roasted coffee beans to subscribers.

Adopting monthly subscriptions not only diversifies income streams for coffee roasters but also enhances their competitiveness in a saturated market. This model provides consumers with greater convenience and choice, contributing to a more flexible and customer-friendly business approach. The result is a win-win situation that benefits both the coffee roasters and the consumers.

This study aims to explore potential factors affecting consumers' decisions when opting for specialty coffee subscriptions. The findings will inform strategic marketing plans for subscription commerce businesses, especially entrepreneurs and startups, enabling them to align their business strategy with consumer preferences, enhance their competitive edge, and facilitate more efficient business development.

In 2021, Thitapon Puengsuk conducted a study on factors and formats that affect consumers' decisions in choosing food business subscription services. Factors related to service factors, membership conditions, shipping, prices, promotions, and benefits, as well as intention to choose the Food Business Subscription service, exhibit confidence level values that are considered acceptable and good. opinions of respondents on factors influencing the decision to use subscription services in the food business. However, there is still no exact study focusing on the understanding of specialty coffee subscriptions in Thailand. We believe that there are distinctive characteristics in high-touch products, like specialty coffee, that the previous studies may not have been able to fully explore and thus warrants further study.

3 Research design

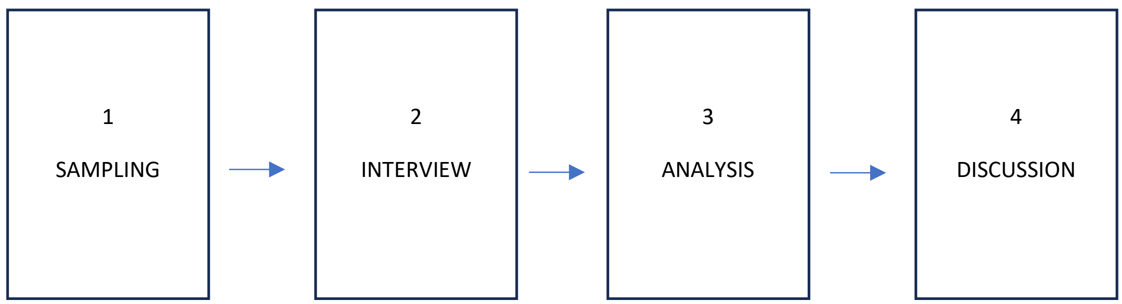

Fig. 1: The research design of this study

3.1 Sampling

This research employed a selective sampling approach. Since the aim of this research is to obtain in-depth understanding regarding the people involved in this business, this method was selected as it isa long-recognized methodology that helps researchers obtain in-depth information (Campbell et al., 2020). We then came up with the selection criteria that would help us carefully investigate different viewpoints:

i. Selected Participants must have been in the business for more than *5 years.*

ii. Selected Participants must be in *different roles* in the industry.

iii. Selected Participants must be recognized as "*key players*" in their domain as recommended or referred by others in the industry.

iv. Selected Participants must still *"be active"* in the industry.

v. Selected Participants must have *international experience and exposure*

The following are the profiles of the participants selected for our study. Both male and female participants were included, with an age range between 25–40.

i. **Participant A** is an international green coffee bean import/export entrepreneur.

ii. **Participant B** is a Thai global specialty coffee competition icon. The participant owns specialty coffee shops in Thailand.

iii. **Participant C** is a specialty coffee roaster entrepreneur. The participant has worked in the specialty coffee segment for more than 7 years.

iv. **Participant D** is a specialty coffee consumer who buys coffee beans regularly. The participant does not directly work in the coffee industry but loves drinking specialty coffee and has experience brewing coffee at home for personal consumption for more than five years.

v. **Participant E** is a home coffee brewer. The participant has been drinking specialty coffee for more than 5 years, with 2 years of experience brewing coffee at home.

4 Interview & Analysis

4.1 Interview

The study employed semi-structured interview questions. The questionnaire was developed based on Puengsuk's study (2021) and previous relevant literature that focused on studying potential factors affecting consumer decisions in food subscription services.

The information obtained from the sample was kept confidential, and no name or identity was specified in the questionnaire. Participants voluntarily answered the questions with full awareness and had the option to withdraw at any point.

The semi-structured interview method allows researchers to explore the factors affecting specialty coffee bean subscription models in Thailand. The interview was conducted in a shop, office, or an outdoor location which was convenient and comfortable for the interview session. Each interview took around 45 minutes to 1 hour per person. The interview was very insightful and useful, and we found some insightful and significant information from the five participants as follows:

"…I think taste is by far the most important. I might need to have something extraordinary aside from retail experience to motivate me to go to the subscription model.…" (Participant A).

"…The coffee that we received should be tasty and have good quality from the roaster. …" (Participant B).

"…I don't think it is acceptable if we subscribe to coffee but receive something that is not good enough to drink. …" (Participant C).

"…I prefer having a good cup of coffee every morning. …" (Participant D).

"…Taste is subjective. If the price is okay, I can subscribe. …" (Participant E).

"…The variety of roasters is the key to success in this business model. …" (Participant C).

"…I think freshness is the key. The platform needs to provide the exact date and time of the product origin. This would help give consumers confidence and trust in the product they buy. …" (Participant A).

"…A roaster's reputation in the industry can help people decide to subscribe. We can believe we will get something good, for sure. …" (Participant D).

"…acceptable price…" (Participant A).

"…I can't afford expensive beans every month. …" (Participant E).

"…if I subscribe and get a discount on an add-on item, it would be interesting. …" (Participant D).

"…I don't think consumers will be okay if you send them Kenya Washed for two months in a roll. …" (Participant A).

"…do the surprise box! I want to try roasters from around the world…" (Participant C).

"… I just want a few clicks to register…" (Participant B).

"…I want to know exactly when the payment is due. …" (Participant C).

4.2 Analysis

The researcher adopted the method of conventional content analysis, in which we identified key factors and coded data during the analysis. We constructed the table using factors addressed or mentioned by interviewees on the left and put the list of interviewees at the top. We coded the data with the symbol "X.". If the factor was mentioned, we coded the X inside the table, and we left them blank if the factor was not mentioned. According to the data shown in Table 1, various aspects and factors influence the decision-making process.

Table 1: Factors' validity and consistency from in-depth interview

Factors	Participant A	Participant B	Participant C	Participant D	Participant E
Taste		x	x	x	
Variety of Origins	x	x		x	x
Variety of Roaster		x	x		x
Freshness	x				
Service and Membership Condition			x		
Convenience		x			x
Logistics			x		
Price	x	x	x		x

Promotions					
Benefits	x			x	x
Brand Information and Trustworthiness	x	x		x	

5 Discussion

The result of the in-depth interview found that variety of origins and price were the most important factors affecting participants' decisions on whether to subscribe to specialty coffee beans, followed by taste, variety of roasters, benefits, brand information and trustworthiness, convenience, freshness, service, and membership conditions. Moreover, the 13 factors we identified in the decision-making framework provide additional insights to supplement the current literature. For example, Ramírez-Correa (2020) applied the Theory of Planned Behaviour to explore the purchase intention; however, our research shows that there are other factors that are interconnected that need to be further explored.

To further refine the insights gained from the interview, other ideas were drawn from previous literature and used to develop the key "Conceptual Framework" that helps us understand factors affecting specialty coffee bean subscription models in Thailand. The process of content analysis gives us the ability to group five independent variables as the antecedents of specialty coffee subscription making, including (1) demographics; (2) perceived ease of use; (3) marketing mix; (4) brand information; and (5) attitude. All of them have a direct effect on subscription decision-making, which serves as the dependent variable in the model.

5.1 Conceptual Framework

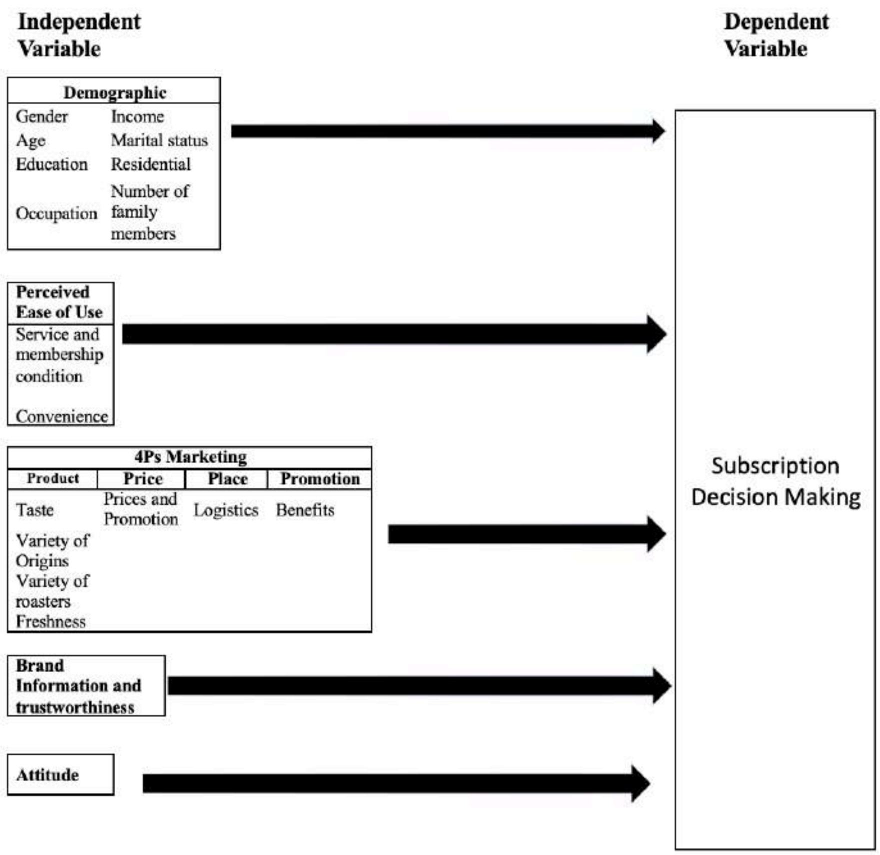

Fig. 2: The Proposed Theoretical Framework for Future Research

6 Future study

From the preliminary results, it was found that factors obtained from Puengsuk's study were important to the selected group of interview participants. The study must be conducted by grouping factors with theories and asking more questions on what can influence consumer decisions, such as ease of use of platforms or consumers' point of view of specialty coffee subscriptions. Therefore, in future studies, the researcher should aim to discover answers to the following questions:

i. What factors affect the decision-making process for specialty coffee bean subscriptions?

ii. How does demography affect the decision to subscribe to specialty coffee?

iii. How does 4Ps marketing affect the decision to subscribe to specialty coffee?

iv. How does perceived ease of use affect the c decision to subscribe to specialty coffee?

v. How does consumer attitude affect the decision to subscribe to specialty coffee?

We recommend that future research would benefit from conducting more in-depth interviews with more participants. More high-profile samples are also recommended. In addition, we recommend conducting a quantitative study to advance this framework by developing hypotheses and testing them.

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Literature Review on Hotel Ownership Structure, Competitive Advantage, and Performance of Branded and Independent Hotels

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Abstract

This study explores the competitive advantages and performance differences between branded and independent hotels, examining the impact of ownership structure on hotel performance. 60 documents were studied with three research questions: (1) What competitive advantage do branded hotels have over independent hotels? (2) What are the performance differences between branded and independent hotels? (3) What strategic or market conditions prompt investors to reconsider their hotel's ownership structure, and how do these shifts potentially benefit or challenge their market positioning? Our findings reveal that branded hotels excel in larger and more competitive markets due to their infrastructure and brand recognition. Conversely, independent hotels thrive in less competitive environments through leveraging the flexibility and lower cost structures. The study also highlights that market dynamics, brand diversification, and cost reduction influence changes in hotel ownership structure. These changes can improve performance and strategic advantages depending on the specific market conditions and investment objectives.

Keywords: branded hotels, independent hotels, performance, competitive advantage, ownership structure

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1 Introduction

Tourism and hospitality are a critical sector within the global economy, with hotels as cornerstone entities contributing significantly to economic vibrancy and cultural exchange. Within this context, the difference between branded and independent hotels emerges as a critical area of study, mainly through the lens of ownership structure. Ownership structure, encompassing the legal and financial frameworks that govern hotel operations, fundamentally influences strategic decisions, operational efficiencies, and guest experiences. This paper explores how these dynamic ownership models—branded chains versus independently owned hotels—affect hotel performance with a nuanced examination that extends beyond the traditional management perspective.

Branded hotels, typically affiliated with national or international hotel chains, offer the advantage of standardized service quality and amenity offering. This standardization potentially translates to higher operational costs yet provide a consistent guest experience, which can be important for brand loyalty and repeat business (Górska-Warsewicz & Kulykovets, 2020; Carvell et al., 2016). In contrast, independent hotels offer a unique, often localized, guest experience, potentially allowing for greater operational flexibility but facing challenges in lower brand recognition, lower brand awareness, unstandardized service quality and lower market penetration.

This study aims to clarify the performance dynamics and competitive advantages between branded and independent hotels, specifically examining situations where independent hotels may outperform branded counterparts and the potential for shifts in hotel ownership structures. Utilizing a systematic review conducted by PRISMA guidelines (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) (Page et al., 2021), we will delve into the existing literature across Web of Science and EBSCO Host databases, focusing on studies that discuss 'branded hotels, independent hotels, investment, and cost.' This review will inform on performance metrics, competitive strategies, and market positioning, aiming to dissect the nuanced factors influencing hotel ownership decisions and their implications for operational success. Our research seeks to answer the following questions:

1.What competitive advantage do branded hotels have over independent hotels?

2.What are the performance differences between branded vs independent hotels?

1. What strategic or market conditions prompt investors to reconsider their hotel's ownership structure, and how do these shifts potentially benefit or challenge their market positioning?

2 Methods

This review followed the PRISMA guidelines (Page et al., 2021), ensuring a structured and transparent approach to literature examination. We focused the search on English-language journal articles within the Web of Science and EBSCO databases, from the year 2000 to the end of 2022. This period was selected to capture the evolving dynamics of the hotel industry in the 21st century, marked by significant technological, economic, and social changes affecting hotel operations and strategies.

From our initial search, we retrieved 347 articles, with 112 from Web of Science and 235 from EBSCO. Utilizing Mendeley's referencing tool (version 1.19.18), we identified and eliminated 73 duplicates through automatic and manual checks, resulting in 268 records for screening. We then applied a two-stage screening process, initially reviewing titles and abstracts for relevance, followed by a full-text assessment against predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Hence, we can ensure the studies' direct relevance to our research questions, focusing on empirical research, case studies, and reviews that specifically address branded and independent hotels' performance, competitive advantages, and investment dynamics.

Out of 268 potentially relevant articles, 100 were excluded due to their lack of relevance to the specific focus of our study, leaving 168 articles for more detailed evaluation. Upon closer inspection, additional exclusions were made based on the following criteria: inability to distinguish between independent and branded hotels (n=28), not being article publications (n=37), language barriers as we focused exclusively on articles published in English (n=25) and lack of peer review (n=5). Our selection process resulted in a final set of 60 studies that are suitable for in-depth analysis.

The inclusion and exclusion process are visually detailed in Figure 1. This figure illustrates the systematic approach taken to refine the literature, ensuring that the studies included in our review are directly pertinent to examining the nuances of performance and competitive strategies between branded and independent hotels.

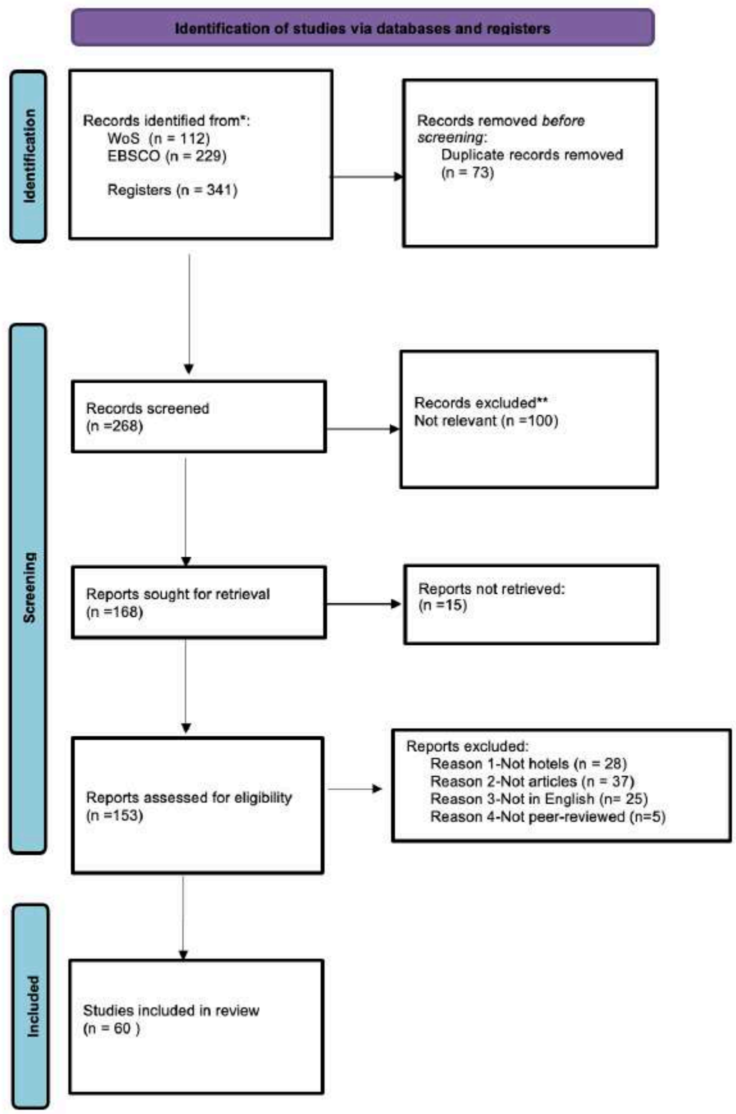

Fig. 1: PRISMA chart and data extraction

3 Results

In our systematic review, we analyzed 60 studies with a geographical spread, including 21 from the United States, seven from Taiwan, six from Spain, five from China, four spanning multiple countries, and others from a diverse range of countries, with one study not specifying its location. The aggregated findings from these studies are systematically presented in Figure 2 and Figure 3, which illustrate the theoretical and methodological landscapes of the reviewed literature, and Table 1, which provides a detailed summary of each study's key findings. These visual summaries facilitate a comparative analysis of the studies, highlighting prevalent themes, hotel strategies across different ownership structures, and the diverse outcomes of these strategies in global markets.

Journal names / source	Numbers of papers
Cornell Hospitality Quarterly	7
International Journal of Hospitality Management	7
International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	5
Tourism Economics	3
Tourism Management	3
International Journal of Tourism Research	2
Journal of Business Research	2
Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism	2
Tourism Management Perspectives	2
2014 IEEE 11th International Conference on e-Business Engineering	1
Advanced Science Letters	1
Business Research Quarterly	1
Competition & change	1
Current Issues in Tourism	1
E+M Ekonomie a Management	1
Empirical Economics	1
Indonesian Law Review	1
International Conference on Applied System Innovation	1
International Economic Review	1
International Journal of Revenue Management	1
Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research	1
Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights	1
Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management	1

Journal of organizational change management	1
Journal of Physics: Conference Series	1
Journal of Risk and Financial Management	1
Management International Review	1
Management Science	1
Managerial and Decision Economics	1
Organization Science	1
Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism	1
Strategic management Journal	1
Sustainability	1
The RAND Journal of Economics	1
The Service Industries Journal	1
Tourism Geographies	1

Fig. 2: Source of the gathered literature studied location and number of used in this study

Fig. 3: World map and countries where publication gathered

Table 1: Summary of the study by author, year, studied country, source and finding

No.	Authors	Year	Studied Country	Source	Finding
1	Yang, Yang; Mao, Zhenxing (Eddie)	2017	United States	Journal of Business Research	Performance spillover effects affect branded to independent hotels.
2	Liu, Peng; O'Neill, John W.	2022	United States	Cornell Hospitality Quarterly	Branded hotels have lower cash flow risk than independent ones.
3	Bianco, Simone; Singal, Manisha; Zach, Florian J.; Nicolau, Juan Luis	2023	United States	Tourism Management	Dual-branded hotels can thus achieve competitive advantage by exploiting superior financial resources.
4	Moreno-Perdigon, Maria C.; Guzman-Perez, Beatriz; Mesa, Teodoro Ravelo	2021	Spain	International Journal of Hospitality Management	Customer satisfaction depends on the services provided.
5	Maier, T.A.	2013	United States	International Journal of Revenue Management	Price-parity, content and reach across multiple distribution channels affects the RCO2 P index among both branded and independent properties.
6	Kim, Minsun; Tang, Chun-Hung (Hugo)	2021	United States	International Journal of Hospitality Management	Dual branding could lower revenue volatility and increase marketplace performance.
7	Lu, Yung-Hsiang; Chen, Ching-Fu	2012	Taiwan	Tourism Economics	The technology gap explains the differences in cost efficiencies between branded and independent hotels.

8	Forbes, Silke J.; Kosova, Renata	2022	United States	Management Science	Intense airline competition boosts hotel performance across all standard measures: price, occupancy rate, and revenue per available room.
9	Chung, W; Kalnins, A	2001	United States	Strategic management Journal	Chain hotels contribute to positive externalities. Independent hotels and smaller hotels gain the most from these externalities.
10	Lin, Yi-Hsing	2011	Taiwan	Cornell Hospitality Quarterly	The average cost efficiency of small-scale hotels is significantly higher than that of large-scale hotels.
11	Rahman, Imran; Reynolds, Dennis; Svaren, Stefani	2012	United States	International Journal of Hospitality Management	Chain hotels are stronger adopters of green practices than independent hotels.
12	Puciato, Daniel; Dziedzic, Ewa	2017	Poland	Tourism Economics	Potential investors were guided by: access to human resources and the land available for investment, the size of the tourism supply, the intensity of competition in the hotel sector, and incentives from local authorities.
13	Puciato, Daniel; Gawlik, Agnieszka; Goranczewski, Boleslaw; Olesniewicz, Piotr; Wos, Barbara; Jandova, Sona; Markiewicz-	2017	Poland	E+M Ekonomie a Management	The location factors for independent hotels depends on the communication availability, investment incentives, and tourist attractions. The location of large hotels is mainly related to land prices and the presence of anthropogenic tourist attractions.

	Patkowska, Julita; Soltysik, Mariusz				
14	Karhunen, Paivi; Ledyaeva, Svetlana	2021	Russia	Management International Review	First, the competitive edge of chain-afliated hotels largely arises from market-based advantage, but only in terms of cost advantage. Second, institutional advantage is more important determinant of performance for independent hotels.
15	Wang, Yao-Chin; Tsai, Yi-Lin; Fu, Rachel J. C.	2022	United States	International Journal of Hospitality Management	A hotel’s pipeline speed is negatively associated with the number of total pipeline rooms in the same market and in the same brand segment; the percentage of pipeline rooms under construction in the same market and in the same brand segment; and positively associated with the number of rooms of the property.
16	Khatter, Ajay; White, Leanne; Pyke, Joanne; McGrath, Michael	2021	Australia	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	Owners and shareholders are the biggest influencers as their investment.

17	Liu, Shan; Wang, Na; Gao, Baojun; Gallivan, Michael	2021	United States	Tourism Management	Rote responses only decrease the volume of subsequent positive reviews but have no influence on the volume of negative reviews for chain hotels than for independent ones.
18	Hollenbeck, Brett	2017	United States	The RAND Journal of Economics	Chain-affiliated firms receive no cost advantage relative to independent firms.
19	Yu, Ming-Miin; Chen, Li-Hsueh	2016	Taiwan	Cornell Hospitality Quarterly	Application of different technologies by hotels affects the productivity change.
20	Lanlan Su; Shihao Fang; Fan Lai; Congxi Cheng; Xiangyu Duan	2021	China	Journal of Physics: Conference Series	The development of hotel chains follows the growing marketing and technology. This increase marketing competition
21	Woo, Linda; Mun, Sung Gyun	2020	China	Tourism Management	Franchise hotels, are more likely to choose a location where the hotels from the same country of origin.
22	Suzuki, Junichi	2013	United States	International Economic Review	Imposing stringent regulation increases costs.
23	Lin, Shih-Chuan; Kim, Yoo Ri	2021	United States	Managerial and Decision Economics	When hotel ownership structure change from chain-affiliated to independent, the number of neighboring economy hotels increases.

24	Lee, Seul Ki; Jang, SooCheong (Shawn)	2017	United States	Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research	The effect of depreciation of older hotels may serve as a competitive advantage for new entrants with new facilities.
25	Chang, Hsueh-Feng; Wu, Shu-Hua; Chen, Joyce Hsiu-Yu; Ke, Chao-Hui	2021	Taiwan	Journal of Risk and Financial Management	Channel, target customers, customer relationship, key activities, revenue model, key partners, value proposition, key resources, and cost structure are sources of competitive advantage.
26	Destefanis, Alessandro; Neirotti, Paolo; Paolucci, Emilio; Raguseo, Elisabetta	2022	Italy	Current Issues in Tourism	The negative effect of Airbnb on the profitability growth of hotels is reduced when the hotels are located in attractive city zones.
27	Lee, Bo Youn; Park, So Young	2021	South Korea	Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism	The guests' perception on drivers of customer equity for loyalty development shifts over time.
28	Kim, Minsun; Tang, Chun-Hung; Roehl, Wesley S.	2018	United States	International Journal of Hospitality Management	Insufficient disclosure of the dual-branding status would negatively affect perceived fairness, which could negatively affect the company.
29	Hu, Jin-Li; Chiu, Chia-Ning; Shieh, Hwai-Shuh; Huang, Chia-Hui	2010	Taiwan	International Journal of Hospitality Management	Tourist hotels in Taiwan are on average operating at 91.15% cost efficiency.

30	Cho, Tsui-Yueh; Wang, Tsai-Yi	2018	Taiwan	Empirical Economics	The international chain hotel is significantly superior to independent hotels in meta-cost efficiency, metatechnical efficiency, and meta-allocative efficiency.
31	Yazici, Senem; Koseoglu, Mehmet Ali; Okumus, Fevzi	2016	Turkey	Journal of organizational change management	The findings revealed 16 important growth factors for hotels.
32	Dharmawan, Ni Ketut Supasti; Salain, Made Suksma Prinjandhini; Hallewell, Benjamin	2018	Indonesia	Indonesian Law Review	The model provisions of the local government regulation and self- regulation framework of hotel associations must be constructed to strengthen the local city hotels as chain hotels by implementing traditional values.
33	Hutagalung, Marion; Adiningrum, Tatum Syarifah	2015	Indonesia	Advanced Science Letters	The work environment affected employees' turnover was the work environment.
34	Kim, Yoo Ri; Lin, Shih-Chuan	2021	United States	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management	Hotel owners who (a) have a portfolio with a higher percent of chain-affiliated hotels, and (b) are located further from the neighboring hotels are more likely to benefit from brand diversification.
35	Such Devesa, Maria Jesus; Mendieta Penalver, Luis Felipe	2013	Spain	Tourism Economics	Independent properties must be more competitive if they are to survive in the medium and long terms.

36	Kahn, Matthew E.; Liu, Peter (Peng)	2016	United States	Cornell Hospitality Quarterly	Chain hotels have an advantage in retrieving data than individual ones, leading them toward a better cost-effective operation
37	Ivanova, Maya; Ivanov, Stanislav	2015	Bulgaria	Tourism Management Perspectives	The chain affiliation and location are the main accommodation establishments' characteristics shaping hotel managers' perceptions.
38	Atasoy, Burak; Turkay, Oguz; Sengul, Serkan	2022	Multiple	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights	Chain hotels announced regulations on existing reservations, potential customers, intermediary businesses, suppliers and employees by focusing on maintaining business reputation in the first phase of the pandemic. The hotel units seem to be more open to referrals on emergency measures from chain centers in this phase.
39	Carvell, Steven A.; Canina, Linda; Sturman, Michael C.	2016	United States	Cornell Hospitality Quarterly	There were no consistent advantages in all segments for either the affiliated hotels or the comparable unaffiliated properties.
40	Abaeian, Vahideh; Khong, Kok Wei; Yeoh, Ken Kyid; McCabe, Scott	2019	Malaysia	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	CSR is a dynamic concept involving complex struggles and tradeoffs between fulfilling business objectives, paying heed to personal ethical values and considering cultural norms when making decisions regarding the adoption of a range of environmental and social initiatives.

41	Chao-Yi Hsueh; Pei-Ming Chen; Kaung-hwa Chen	2017	N/A	International Conference on Applied System Innovation	We proposed five service dimensions by customers’ perception.
42	Fernandez-Barcala, Marta; Gonzalez-Diaz, Manuel; Lopez-Bayon, Susana	2021	Spain	Business Research Quarterly	Franchise status and management contracts (i.e., hybrids) enhance online ratings.
43	Enz, Cathy A.; Peiro-Signes, Angel; Segarra-Ona, Maria-del-Val	2014	United States	Cornell Hospitality Quarterly	Independent hotels took substantially longer than other new entrants to reach the RevPAR performance of existing hotels.
44	Prud'homme, Brigitte; Raymond, Louis	2013	Canada	International Journal of Hospitality Management	Customer satisfaction is positively influenced by the hotel’s adoption of SD practices.
45	Pereira-Moliner, Jorge; Font, Xavier; Molina-Azorin, Jose F.; Jose Tari, Juan; Lopez-Gamero, Maria D.; Pertusa-Ortega, Eva M.	2015	Spain	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	Proactive hotels have higher competitive advantage.

46	Claver-Cortes, Enrique; Pereira-Moliner, Jorge; Molina-Azorin, Jose F.	2009	Spain	The Service Industries Journal	The highest performance levels are achieved by larger-sized, chain-affiliated, and higher-category hotels as well as by establishments which base their competitive advantage on category and capacity or size and internal management
47	Vega-Vazquez, Manuela; Jose Cossio-Silva, Francisco; Revilla-Camacho, Maria-Angeles	2016	Spain	Journal of Business Research	This research shows the mediating role of market orientation (MO) in the link between entrepreneurial intention (EO) and business results. T
48	Qin, Jing; Qin, Yu; Liu, Chengwei	2021	China	Tourism Geographies	Hotel chains form different spatial distribution patterns, have one dominant market(s); and remain relatively stable.
49	Ting, Ping-Ho; Wang, Shu-Tai; Bau, Dong-Yih; Chiang, Miao-Ling	2013	Mixed	Cornell Hospitality Quarterly	The results of website evaluation modeling in Asia, Europe and Africa.
50	Matyakubov, Umidjon; Filimonau, Viachaslau; Ermolaev, Vladimir A.	2022	Uzbekistan	Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism	The study shows the importance of various stakeholders in encouraging hotels to save the environment.
51	Ozdemir, Ozgur; Dogru, Tarik; Kizildag, Murat; Mody,	2021	United States	Tourism Management Perspectives	The results showed that daily room OCC, ADR and RevPAR have plunged about 74%, 47% and 86%, respectively.

	Makarand; Suess, Courtney				
52	Lakhani, Tashlin; Ouyang, Can	2022	United States	Organization Science	Branded hotels prioritize cost reduction by underinvesting in human resource practices compared with independent hotels.
53	Zhang, Yang; Lee, Timothy J.; Xiong, Yu	2019	China	International Journal of Tourism Research	The study identified factors that influence investment decisions.
54	Hsueh, Chao-Yi; Chen, Kaung-hwa; Chen, Pei-Ming	2014	Taiwan	2014 IEEE 11th International Conference on e-Business Engineering	Technological innovation affects customer ratings.
55	Carlback, Mats	2012	Sweden	Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism	Marketing organisations and referral chains are the preferred options.
56	Fernandez-Robin, Cristobal; Soledad Celemin-Pedroche, Maria; Santander-Astorga, Paulina; Del Mar Alonso-Almeida, Maria	2019	Mixed	Sustainability	Hotel strategy depends on the environment in which the hotel operates, the size of the establishment,and the technology adopted and implemented by the hotel.
57	Balsiger, Philip; Jammet, Thomas;	2023	Switzerland	Competition & change	Independent hotels are less equipped to counter platform power.

	Cianferoni, Nicola; Surdez, Muriel				
58	Zhang Yiwen	2019	China	International Journal of Tourism Research	Job treatment contributes to employee satisfaction.
59	Waller, Gary; Abbasian, Saeid	2022	London	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	CMTs can be implemented to reduce crises' economic impacts.
60	Nazarian, Alireza; Zaeri, Ehsan; Foroudi, Pantea; Afrouzi, Amir Reza; Atkinson, Peter	2022	Mixed	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	Distributive justice has a significant relationship with the intention to leave in the USA and the UK (Anglo cluster).

3.1 Competitive advantages between branded and independent hotels

The literature review highlights the significance of ownership structure—distinguishing between branded and independent hotels—as an important factor influencing hotel performance. Branded hotels operate under a distinct framework where an investor owns the property and entrusts its management to a specific operator. This relationship is formalized through a Hotel Management Agreement (HMA), which delineates the operational responsibilities and is typically renewable every 10 to 15 years with mutual consent (O'Neill and Carlbäck, 2011). Such structures facilitate strategic market entry by leveraging brand equity and enhancing investor confidence through established operational standards and global recognition.

O'Neill and Xiao (2006) pointed that brand affiliation contributes value beyond conventional performance metrics like net operating income (NOI) and revenue per available room (RevPAR). This assertion is further supported by Lam and Law (2019), who emphasize the technological proclivity of branded hotels as a core competitive advantage. This technological orientation bolsters marketing efforts and significantly enhances customer service capabilities, setting a benchmark for operational excellence in the hospitality industry.

Conversely, independent hotels, often characterized by their smaller size and owner-directed management philosophy, prioritize direct customer interaction over technological innovation. This strategy, while seemingly less reliant on advanced technologies, offers a unique value proposition through personalized guest experiences (Haktanir and Harris, 2005). Such an approach can be particularly appealing to a market segment that values authenticity and personalized service over standardized offerings.

The absence of brand affiliation in independent hotels leads to challenges in attracting a mass customer base, potentially impacting performance levels. However, independent hotels' agility and personalized service model offer strategic opportunities for differentiation and niche market penetration. The comparative analysis between branded and independent hotels reveals significant competitive advantages shaped by ownership structures, technological adoption, and investment strategies. Branded hotels leverage their global recognition and technological advancements to secure a stable market position, whereas independent hotels offer unique guest experiences through personalized service.

3.2 Factors that differentiate branded and independent hotels' performance

Branded hotels, characterized by their association with established hotel chains, often enjoy enhanced market presence and operational efficiencies due to their brand reputation, extensive distribution networks, and sustainable operational practices (Hollenbeck, 2017). The value addition of branded hotels extends beyond mere physical attributes to encompass the entire brand experience, influencing customer perceptions, beliefs, and loyalty (Ben Aissa and Goaied, 2016). These elements collectively contribute to branded hotels' superior performance in competitive markets, as evidenced by their ability to secure higher brand loyalty and achieve cost efficiencies, thereby boosting revenue potentials and expanding market reach at reduced costs (O'Neill and Mattila, 2010).

Despite these advantages, brand diversification dynamics introduce complexity into branded hotels' performance outcomes. The principal-agent theory and transaction cost analysis suggest that diversifying into new markets might not always yield positive results, potentially diluting brand essence and operational focus, thus impacting performance negatively (Camisón et al., 2020). Conversely, empirical evidence indicates that hotels affiliated with well-known brands generally outperform independent counterparts, enjoying higher occupancy rates, revenue per available room (RevPAR), and overall profitability (Peiró-Signes et al., 2015). This trend, however, is not without exceptions. For instance, Japanese Ryokans—traditional independent hotels—demonstrate the potential to disrupt market dynamics and outperform branded hotels by offering unique, culturally rich lodging experiences that resonate with specific customer segments (Denis et al., 2002).

The performance differentiation between branded and independent hotels is a multifaceted issue influenced by brand reputation, operational efficiencies, market strategies, and ownership structures. While branded hotels generally enjoy competitive advantages due to their established brand equity and operational synergies, the effectiveness of brand diversification strategies requires careful consideration to avoid potential drawbacks. On the other hand, independent hotels may leverage their flexibility and unique offerings to carve niche markets and compete effectively against branded counterparts. The interplay between these factors underscores the importance of strategic planning and market positioning in maximizing hotel performance.

3.3 (RQ 1) What competitive advantage do branded hotels have over independent hotels?

3.3.1 Cost efficiency

Branded hotels demonstrate remarkable cost efficiency, leveraging economies of scale to reduce operational costs and enhance profitability. Studies from 1997 to 2010 in various contexts, including international tourism hotels in Taiwan, reveal that branded hotels exhibit a cost-efficiency rate of 91.15%, significantly higher than independent hotels (Hu et al., 2010; Lu and Chen, 2012). This efficiency allows branded hotels to allocate resources more effectively, investing in marketing, quality improvements, and customer service, further entrenching their competitive position.

3.3.2 Level of cooperation and crisis management techniques

Branded hotels benefit from more cooperation within their networks, adopting standardized, environmentally friendly practices and efficient crisis management techniques. During the COVID-19 pandemic, branded hotels utilized their extensive networks to share knowledge and implement effective crisis management strategies, ensuring business continuity and resilience (Waller and Abbasian, 2022). This collaborative approach and readiness to manage crises underscore the competitive advantages of branded hotels, enabling them to maintain and even enhance their market position during challenging times.

3.3.3 Technological innovation

Contrary to expectations, the analysis reveals no significant difference between branded and independent hotels regarding technological innovation effectiveness (Maier, 2013). However, branded hotels are more excel in utilizing technology for pricing parity and distribution channel optimization, contributing to a more cohesive and efficient online presence. This strategic use of technology supports branded hotels' competitive advantage, ensuring they meet consumer expectations across various platforms.

3.3.4 Change in market structure

The external market environment, including changes in airline competition and hotel ownership structures, is critical in shaping the competitive landscape. Increased airline competition has been found to improve hotel performance across various metrics, including price, occupancy, and revenue per available room (Forbes and Kosová, 2022). Moreover, shifts from independent to chain hotel ownership tend to increase the number of adjacent luxury hotels, indicating a strategic advantage for branded hotels in attracting higher-end market segments (Lin and Kim, 2021). The analysis confirms that branded hotels hold significant competitive advantages over independent hotels, driven by internal factors such as cost efficiency, crisis management, and strategic cooperation and external factors like adaptability to market structure changes. These advantages are not inherent but result from strategic choices and the effective utilization of brand resources.

3.4 (RQ 2) What are the performance differences between branded vs independent hotels?

3.4.1 Job satisfaction and turnover intention

Hutagalung and Adiningrum (2015) explored the correlation between job satisfaction and retirement intentions among employees at Arion Swiss-Belhotels in Jakarta and Bandung. Their study, surveying 240 employees across nine departments, revealed no significant differences in work environment perceptions. Similarly, Zhang (2019) investigated turnover at Rujia Chain Hotel, identifying low levels of interpersonal relations (0.0373) and employee satisfaction (0.0482), underscoring a need for managerial attention to improve workplace dynamics.

3.4.2 Customer satisfaction

Moreno-Perdigón et al. (2021) found no notable differences in overall customer satisfaction between independent and chain hotels, highlighting that smaller independent units (less than 20 rooms) outperform larger chains in "cost-effectiveness." Prud’homme and Raymond (2013) demonstrated that sustainable development practices positively impact customer satisfaction, with independent hotel patrons generally expressing higher satisfaction, particularly in 'gastronomy', '3R practices', 'reception and rooms', and 'environmental consideration'. This differentiation in customer priorities—'comfort' and 'sustainability-oriented' for independents vs. 'convenience' for branded establishments—suggests strategic avenues for competitive positioning.

3.4.3 Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR)

RevPAR remains a critical metric in hotel performance evaluation (Bianco et al., 2023; Yang & Mao, 2017; Ozdemir et al., 2021; Liu & O’Neill, 2022). Studies indicate that branded hotels, particularly those with fewer rooms, tend to perform better in RevPAR. However, market dynamics, such as the presence of large hotels in the same submarket, can negatively impact performance. Independent hotels, especially those under third-party contracts, have shown competitive RevPAR figures, suggesting that operational strategy significantly influences financial outcomes.

3.4.4 Average Daily Rate (ADR) and Gross Operating Profit per Available Room (GOPPAR)

While branded hotels often command higher ADRs, independent hotels in specific markets can outperform their branded counterparts (Carvell et al., 2016; Liu & O’Neill, 2022; Maier, 2013), indicating market-specific competitive advantages that may be leveraged through targeted strategies. Despite higher occupancy rates, branded hotels frequently report lower GOPPAR than independents (Kim & Tang, 2021; Liu & O’Neill, 2022), likely due to higher operating costs associated with brand standards. This underscores the importance of cost management in optimizing profitability.

3.5 (RQ 3) What strategic or market conditions prompt investors to reconsider their hotel's ownership structure, and how do these shifts potentially benefit or challenge their market positioning?

3.5.1 Market dynamics and ownership structure changes

Changes in the ownership structure within a market significantly influence market dynamics, affecting the distribution and classification of hotels. Transitioning from a chain to an independent hotel tends to increase the presence of economy hotels, whereas shifting from an independent to a chain hotel typically elevates the number of adjacent luxury accommodations. This phenomenon illustrates the strategic positioning adopted by branded hotels to capitalize on developed destinations, thereby enhancing their investment value and competitive stance. For instance, in Phuket, Thailand, several rebranding initiatives—such as transforming Merlin Beach Resort to Phuket Marriott Resort & Spa, Merlin Beach in 2016, and others—highlight the dynamic nature of hotel branding and its impact on market positioning.

3.5.2 Brand diversification

Brand diversification emerges as a strategic advantage for hotel owners with a substantial portfolio of branded properties. Hotels that adopt diversification strategies, especially those entering the market with brands spanning multiple economic segments, tend to outperform their less diversified counterparts. This approach effectively enables branded hotels to leverage their financial resources and market reach. A notable example is Asset World Corporation PLC (AWC) in Thailand, which has successfully navigated the hotel market by managing a diverse portfolio of brands, including Imperial Hotels and Resorts, and partnerships with international chains like Marriott International, InterContinental Hotels Group and Melia Hotels International. This strategy underscores the potential benefits of brand diversification in enhancing competitive advantage.

3.5.3 Cost reduction strategies during market shifts

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the vulnerability of the hospitality sector, with varying impacts across different hotel segments. Interestingly, some branded hotels have chosen to de-flag and operate independently as a cost-reduction strategy. This decision reflects the broader trend of reevaluation within the industry, where the traditional advantages of brand affiliation are weighed against independent operations' flexibility and potential cost savings. Instances such as the de-flagging of Centara Grand West Sands Resort & Villas Phuket to become Grand West in 2017 and Holiday Inn Ao Nang Beach Resort Krabi's transition to Holiday Ao Nang Beach Resort, Krabi in 2022 illustrate these strategic shifts. Such moves aim to mitigate financial pressures and realign hotel operations with emerging market realities.

4 Discussion

Our study has reviewed and highlighted the major components influencing the performance of branded and independent hotels. Branded hotels benefit from their extensive business infrastructure and capacity to attract a high volume of customers, making them advantageous in larger, more competitive markets. However, the significant operational and investment costs associated with branded hotels can reduce their appeal to investors. On the other hand, independent hotels excel in less competitive environments where they can leverage their operational flexibility and lower cost structures effectively. This market-specific suitability suggests that the strategic choice between branded and independent models depends on market characteristics and investment objectives.

Furthermore, our study has revealed that the ownership structure of a hotel property can be influenced by several key factors. Our third research question highlighted that each market has its own dynamics, which directly affect hotel performance. Some owning companies consider brand diversification as part of changing the ownership structure, which can lead to a higher degree of portfolio diversification.

Additionally, many owning companies focus on cost reduction when altering the ownership structure. Therefore, changes in ownership structure are closely associated with perspectives on business operations.

5 Limitation and future direction

The existing body of knowledge often compares branded and independent hotels within markets where they coexist. However, our study highlights that these two are distinct business entities. Each type of hotel performs better in different market environments. Generally, branded hotels thrive in popular destinations with high competitiveness and large numbers of tourists, leveraging their branding as a core aspect of their business model. Conversely, independent hotels, while capable of performing well in competitive markets, tend to dominate in less competitive destinations, such as second-tier cities. This interpretation of knowledge is limited by the scope of the existing body of knowledge on the markets studied. Future research should explore additional or unexplored destinations to broaden the body of knowledge.

Future research should also consider the distinct nature of different types of hotels. Variations in market size, competitiveness, and market mechanisms will impact hotel performance differently. Additionally, customer types should be a focus of future research. Since branded and independent hotels cater to different types of customers with varying expectations, it is crucial not to generalize customer perspectives. Understanding these nuances will provide deeper insights into the performance and strategic management of both branded and independent hotels.

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Enhancing Customer Experience Journey via Service Design: A Case Study of Aesthetics Clinic Businesses in the Cross-Border Zone of Chiang Rai, Thailand

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Abstract

This research explores the customer experience journey in the growing aesthetics clinic business sector of the Cross-Border Zone of Chiang Rai, Thailand. By utilizing the qualitative research methodology, the study uses purposive and snowball sampling techniques to identify key informants who are aesthetic doctors, nurses, support staff, and clinic business owners. Documentation research, semi-structured interviews, and participant observations were conducted to collect data and the data was analysed using content analysis. Results indicate three phases of the customer experience journey with 15 critical customer service touchpoints. The identified phases and touchpoints can be used by aesthetics clinic businesses or similar business establishments to enhance the customer experience through service design and innovations.

Keywords: customer experience journey, service design, aesthetics clinic businesses, Cross-Border Zone

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People have always wanted to look great throughout history. Fuelled by growing awareness, technology, and acceptance of aesthetics on social media, the medical-aesthetics business sector has received a surge in patient base and a notable expansion with as much as 14 percent growth annually from 2021 through 2026 (Jansen et al., 2024). The term Aesthetic Medicine refers to "all medical procedures that are aimed at improving the physical appearance and satisfaction of the patient, using non-invasive to minimally invasive cosmetic procedures" (American Academy of Aesthetic Medicine, n.d.). Thailand is one of the top destinations for medical tourism (the practice of patients travelling overseas for better medical treatment and relaxation) superseding its Asian neighbours Singapore and India, accounting for close to 90% of Asia's medical tourism market, growing at a yearly rate of approximately 16% (Thailand Incentive and Convention Association (TICA), n.d.). Despite its popularity and growth, a gap exists in the design of services during the customer experience journey provided by aesthetics clinic businesses to ensure continuous customer satisfaction, loyalty, and ultimately repeat visits.

Service Design is an approach that considers the experiences of everyone involved in the service process. It is continually evolving, and it lacks a rigid definition which would hinder its growth and development (Stickdorn et al., 2018). Buchanan (2001) agrees that defining service design within a specific field is outdated and inappropriate, as it does not align with its multidisciplinary nature, and so service design should be understood through multiple disciplines, reflecting its diverse applications and purposes (Buchanan, 2001; Lin et al., 2020; Stickdorn et al., 2018). Within the local context, Thailand Creative and Design Center (2015) views service design as a tool to organizational development with the aim to meet and even exceed customer expectations. The development of the service design concept has included various aspects, including service marketing, service engineering, service management, and service science. Consequently, the integration of all these aspects led to the term service design that considers all stakeholders, including staff, customers, and other related parties (TCDC, 2014). Both academic and agency perspectives agree that service design integrates various disciplines to solve problems, improve processes, and create innovations that add user value while ensuring efficiency and effectiveness for the organization and service designers. Customer service touchpoints are perceived as the influencing stage of customer satisfaction in the service design and so this study aims to explore customer service touchpoints in the aesthetics clinic businesses.

This study utilized a qualitative research methodology, specifically employing semi-structured in-depth interviews, with each interview lasting approximately an hour to gather crucial information and understand the actual context of the customer journey within the aesthetics clinic business. The study was conducted in the cross-border zone of Chiang Rai, Thailand, referring to three districts: Mae Sai District, Chiang Sean District, and Chiang Khong District. Aesthetics clinic businesses in this cross-border zone has been on the rise with increased demand from customers from neighbouring countries (i.e., Laos, Myanmar, and China). Deemed as the most appropriate methods to meet the study's objectives, the study used purposive and snowball sampling techniques to identify key informants who are aesthetic doctors, nurses, support staff, and clinic business owners (Neuman, 2006; Yin, 2013). The appropriate sample size for in-depth interviews typically ranges from 15 to 25 informants or until data saturation is reached (Chareanporn et al., 2020; Riley, 1995), and a total of 30 informants from aesthetics clinic professional groups in the cross-border zone have participated in this study. Documentation research, semi-structured interviews, and participant observations were conducted to collect data and the data was analysed using content analysis. Data analysis involved reviewing observation notes from each interview, categorizing issues into different themes, and using thematic analysis with the constant comparative method to identify and refine new categories. A cross-case analysis was conducted by comparing themes across multiple cases (Creswell & Plano, 2007; Edmonds & Kennedy, 2016) and the validity of the data was ensured by comparing interview statements with multiple data sources.

Results indicated three main phases of the customer experience journey: Phase 1) Pre-Aesthetics Clinic Services, Phase 2) In-Aesthetics Services, and Phase 3) Post-Aesthetics Services. Within these three phases, 15 critical customer service touchpoints exist with five touchpoints found in Phase 1, seven touchpoints found Phase 2, and three touchpoints found Phase 3. A summary is provided in Table 1. Service experiences are crucial components in service design. The research identified innovative opportunity points within the aesthetics clinic business by analysing the customer journey map and key service design innovations derived from patient demands and expectations. Analysing the three phases of aesthetics clinic, services revealed clear procedures for developing patient service touchpoint innovations. Mainly, service innovations are based on patient demand and expectations from the perspective of the aesthetics clinic professionals. Nevertheless, communication remains an area that can motivate and attract more customers to use the products and services of the aesthetics clinic. Therefore, the ability to cater to muti-languages (such as Chinese, Laos, English, Myanmar, and Local Myanmar languages such as Shan language) can help aesthetics clinic services run smoother operations and enhance customer appreciation. In conclusion, similar aesthetics clinic businesses can enhance the customer experience through service design with the 15 identified critical customer service touchpoints under three main phases of the customer experience journey to ensure continuous customer satisfaction, repeat visits, and a successful long-running business.

Table 1: The customer experience journey in aesthetics clinic businesses

Phase 1: Pre-Aesthetics Clinic Services
Touchpoint 1.1. Advertising
Touchpoint 1.2. Information Transactions
Touchpoint 1.3. Pre-Screening and Estimated Services and Cost
Touchpoint 1.4. Scheduling an Appointment with the Doctor
Touchpoint 1.5. Transportation Service Reserved
Phase 2: In-Aesthetics Services
Touchpoint 2.1. Medical Records and Registration
Touchpoint 2.2. Consultation and Diagnosis with The Doctor
Touchpoint 2.3. Appraisal of Products and Services:
Touchpoint 2.4. Consent and Agreement (Informed Consent)
Touchpoint 2.5. Treatment Execution
Touchpoint 2.6. Payment Settlement
Touchpoint 2.7. Scheduling the Follow-Up Appointment
Phase 3: Post-Aesthetics Services
Touchpoint 3.1. Aftercare Instructions
Touchpoint 3.2. Follow-Up Appointments
Touchpoint 3.3. Customer Feedback

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Session 8: Customer Perception and Human Resources in Hospitality (Postgraduate Research Session)

An Investigation of Demographics, Consumer Perceptions of Service Charges, Service Quality Expectations and Revisit Intentions

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Abstract

This research investigated the implementation of service charges in Thai restaurants, which are becoming more common in lieu of traditional tipping culture. The aim of the study was to evaluate the role of consumer perceptions of restaurant service charges in key outcomes like perceived service quality and revisit intentions and how consumer demographics (including age and gender) influences the perception of service charges perceived service quality. The study was designed as a quantitative consumer survey of Japanese restaurant consumers in Thailand aged 18 and over who had previously visited full-service Japanese restaurants. The sample was selected using online convenience sampling. Data was collected using an online questionnaire.

Keywords: service charges, customer perception, revisit intention, service quality

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1 Introduction

The research presented here was situated in Thailand's restaurant industry, specifically examining the replacement of tipping with service charges as a form of compensation for waitstaff. Thailand has a large and thriving restaurant and food service industry, driven by both the large tourism industry and the popularity of eating outside the home among Thai people (Mordor Intelligence, 2024). The value of the food service market in Thailand has been estimated at $32.85 billion in 2024, rising to $47.79 billion in 2029 (a compound annual growth rate of 7.78%) (Mordor Intelligence, 2024). According to a recent report, about 74.3% of food service outlets in Thailand are independent outlets (Mordor Intelligence, 2024), indicating that there is not a strong pressure of corporate standardization that drives the industry as in some other countries (Bujisic et al., 2013).

Hospitality customs vary significantly around the world, and tipping customs are one of their most variable aspects. Different countries may use tipping, service charges, both, or neither, and changing these embedded systems for compensation of hospitality service can be very difficult (Lynn & Brewster, 2018). However, cultural change in tipping practices does occur over time, as well as with changes in corporate structure of the food industry (Bujisic et al., 2013). Thailand, where this research is situated, has been slowly transitioning away from a purely tipping-based culture towards a hybrid culture, in which some restaurants use service charges to compensate service staff. Service charges, like tips, are discretionary charges, but they are typically calculated at a specified level and added to the bill rather than being charged separately (Sharma et al., 2022). Despite this slow transition, service charges are still relatively new.

The focus of this research was on investigating how consumers perceive service charges in a cultural environment where they are only a recent introduction. It is known that individual restaurants may struggle with implementing different service charging practices from the cultural norm (French & Butler, 2011), despite the overall long-term change in tipping practices (Bujisic et al., 2013). However, there has been very little research into tipping and/or service charge practices and how these practices influence consumer perceptions and preferences. While a few studies have been conducted in the area of tipping and pricing, these studies have mainly been conducted in the United States, which has its own unique tipping culture. No prior studies have been investigated in Thailand. Therefore, there is a very poor understanding in the literature of how Thai consumers view service charges or how this perception influences their response to the restaurant itself.

The aim of the study was to evaluate the role of consumer perceptions of restaurant service charges in key outcomes like perceived service quality and revisit intentions and how consumer demographics (age and gender) influences the perception of service charges perceived service quality. The literature review presented in the next section presents key findings and conceptual framework.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Key concepts and definition

2.1.1 Service charge

The service charge is an alternative form of voluntary compensation used in restaurants and other service settings (Lin & Namasivayam, 2011). The service charge is included as a line item in the customer's restaurant bill and is collected by and disposed of at management discretion (Lynn & Brewster, 2018). Lynn and Brewster (2018) identify service charges as one of three common alternatives for service compensation, along with tipping and inclusive pricing (which is typically higher than the alternative). There is a significant amount of cultural variation in service compensation strategies, and some places (including Thailand) have hybrid approaches, in which two or even three strategies are in use (Tam et al., 2014). Service compensation tends to be a strong cultural preference for both customers and waitstaff (Lin & Namasivayam, 2011), and as a result can significantly influence consumer preferences.

2.1.2 Consumer perceptions of the service charge

This research is not concerned with the mere existence of service charges, but how consumers perceive the service charge in the context of the restaurant. A consumer perception can be defined as the consumer's subjective view of a particular aspect of their consumer experience, including the cognitive and emotional response to the experience (East et al., 2017). In forming a consumer perception, the consumer receives external stimuli, then undergoes a cognitive process of judgment, in which their biases and prior perceptions also influence the outcome (Kenyon & Sen, 2015). In other words, a consumer perception is experienced both by the individual's experience and by their prior experiences and cognitive biases. The consumer perception of the service charge is therefore defined as the consumer's subjective view of the service charge, influenced both by the current experience of the service charge and their prior attitudes toward service charges in general.

2.1.3 Service quality expectations

Service quality is a subjective assessment by the customer that their expectations for the service experience have been met or exceeded (Torres, 2014). Service quality expectations have a subjective and indefinite element, with different customers having different expectations and different perceptions of how well the service met these expectations (East et al., 2017). These expectations are set based on prior experience and other factors such as personal preferences. While some service quality expectations may be similar, customers may vary quite a bit in their aesthetic and environmental expectations (for example décor and ambience perceptions) and the expectations for staff interaction (Mudie & Pirrie, 2012). The SERVPERF model of service quality expectation measures customer service quality perceptions based on dimensions of reliability, empathy, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness (the so-called RATER model)

(Cronin & Taylor, 1994). These dimensions evaluate how well the customer's experience matched or exceeded their expectations.

2.1.4 Revisit intentions

The revisit intention can be defined as the customer's willingness to revisit a service location where he or she has received service previously (Yan et al., 2015). The revisit intention is distinct from the visit intention (which is the customer's willingness to visit a location they have never been), in that it is heavily influenced by the customer's prior experience (Liu & Tse, 2018). For example, factors like the food quality, atmosphere, service quality, price, and other factors could influence the customer's revisit intention (Liu & Tse, 2018). This is in addition to factors such as external recommendations and marketing, which also influence the customer's initial visit intention for a location (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2016). Customer revisit intention is a particular concern in hospitality because of the importance of repeat customers and customer loyalty to sustain their business in the long term (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2016), which is why it was selected as the outcome of this study.

2.2 Prior studies and hypotheses

2.2.1 Demographics and perception of service charge

There are known differences between demographic groups in different consumer perceptions and behaviors, although these differences do not always occur and should not be essentialized or assumed (East et al., 2017). For example, the consumer lifecycle theory argues that there are differences between consumer age groups due to differences in consumer resources, needs, habits, and so on (East et al., 2017). There can also be differences between gender groups, although again these should not be assumed (East et al., 2017). However, the evidence for differences in perception of service charge and/or tipping between demographic groups is limited. One meta-analysis did find that there are differences in age groups and genders in tipping practices within US culture (Banks et al., 2018). For example, Banks et al. (2018) argued that women may tip more out of a sense of equity, but men may also tip more if the server is attractive. Thus, there is limited empirical evidence on differences in service charge perception, leaving a gap in knowledge. The first two hypotheses are formulated to address this gap:

Hypothesis 1: There are differences between genders (male and female) in perception of service charge.

Hypothesis 2: There are differences between age groups in perception of service charge.

2.2.2 Demographics and service quality expectation

Service quality expectations could also vary between consumers in different age and gender groups, as theoretically these are also cognitive attitudes that could be different (East et al., 2017). There is more empirical evidence on how demographic groups may vary in their service quality expectation, though not that much more. For example, a study among Malaysian casual dining consumers showed that women and older consumers had higher service quality expectations than men and younger consumers (Ahmad et al., 2015). At the same time, this relationship cannot be taken for granted. Another study, which was conducted in hotels, showed that consumers of different ages and genders had statistically similar service quality expectations (Tefera & Migiro, 2017). Therefore, this research contributes to a mixed literature, in which there are studies showing both significant differences and no significant differences. With these prior findings in mind, the third and fourth hypotheses are formulated as:

Hypothesis 3: There are differences between genders (male and female) in service quality expectation.

Hypothesis 4: There are differences between age groups in service quality expectation.

2.2.3 Perception of service charge and service quality expectation

Most of the evidence in the empirical literature on service quality expectations stems from investigation of tipping practices, and these studies have used a mixed set of theories and approaches to the question. One group of economic researchers found that tipping demands reduced the perceived price fairness of the service, which in turn led to the service being viewed as more expensive and as a consequence, customers having higher service quality expectations (Lynn & Wang, 2013). Another study has investigated the effect of replacing tipping systems with service charges (Lynn & Brewster, 2018). The authors found that when service charges were implemented, customers had increased service expectations, which ultimately led to a reduction in service quality perceptions and customer satisfaction. A second study has compared restaurants with service charges and tipping, finding that customers of restaurants with service charges have higher service quality expectations than those that use tipping (Lynn, 2018). Overall, these findings support the idea that service charges push up service quality expectations. However, there has not been a clear investigation of how the perception of the service charge influences customer expectations. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis addresses this gap:

Hypothesis 5: Perception of the service charge influences service quality expectation.

2.2.4 Perception of service charge, service quality expectation, and revisit intention

The final set of hypotheses concern the influence of service charge perceptions and service quality expectations on revisit intentions. Revisit intentions are formed based on multiple factors in the customer's prior experience (Liu & Tse, 2018). It is also established that it is not the price of the experience (for example the restaurant meal) per se that influences consumers, but their perception of what they received for what they paid (price justice) (Cakici et al., 2019). This is known to include their price and quality perceptions (Yan et al., 2015), which provides the basis for investigating this relationship. Yan et al. (2015), rather than surveying restaurant customers directly, used evidence collected from online reviews, finding that perceived service quality perceptions and expectations were a motivating factor in revisit intention. A study among Millennial consumers also found that high service quality expectations were associated with customer revisit intentions (Shapoval et al., 2018). These studies support the idea that both perception of prices and service quality expectations influence revisit intentions. However, research was not identified that investigated the specific question of service charges as the price component that could influence revisit intentions. In response to this literature gap, the final hypothesis is a two-part hypothesis addressing the effect of service charge perceptions and service quality expectations on revisit intention:

Hypothesis 6a: Perception of the service charge influences revisit intention.

Hypothesis 6b: Service quality expectation influences revisit intention.

3 Methodology

3.1 Population and sample

The population of interest was Thai restaurant consumers. There were two additional sampling frames applied, including that (a) the participant was at least 18 years of age and (b) they had recently eaten in a full-service Japanese restaurant. These sampling frames were used to ensure all participants were of legal age and had similar experiences and expectations for service. While the population size of sampling frame (b) could not be estimated, it could be estimated that the population size of (a) was around 50 million people. Therefore, the research used the sample size for infinite population:

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{E^2}$$

Where *n* is the sample size, *Z* is Z-score for the targeted confidence level, pq is the probability of responding to a question, and E is the targeted margin of error (Wilcox, 2017). This calculated resulted in a minimum sample of 385 members. Following the sample selection process defined below, the final sample included 392 members after removal of surveys that were substantially incomplete.

3.2 Instrument design

A questionnaire was designed based on previous instruments which have measured key constructs, including service charge perception (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001), service quality perception (Saneva & Chortoseva, 2018), and revisit intention (Pai et al., 2021). These items were structured as 5-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The questionnaire also collected demographic information (gender, age, education, and income) using categorical items. In a pilot test (n = 30), Cronbach's alpha was used to test the internal consistency of the constructs, with a minimum target of α = 0.700 (Iacobucci & Duhachek, 2003). A summary of the instrument is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of the research instrument

Construct	Items	Sample Item	Measurement	Sources	Alpha
Service charge perception	5	Service charge at the restaurant is reasonable.	Likert 1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree	Sweeney and Soutar (2001)	.890
Service Quality Perception	10	The restaurant has a menu that is easily readable.		Saneva and Chortoseva (2018)	.871
Revisit Intention	3	I will visit this restaurant again in the near future.		Pai et al. (2021)	.769

3.3 Data collection

Recruitment was conducted in groups across Facebook and Line, which are the two most popular social media sites in Thailand. The participants were recruited from special-interest groups and resident groups in several major Thai cities. Data was collected using an online data collection platform.

3.4 Data analysis

Data was analyzed in SPSS Version 28.0. The analysis included descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) for all Likert items, as well as for demographics and behavioral items (frequency tables) as is suitable given the item types (Holcomb, 2017). Inferential statistics were selected based on the hypothesis statement. Gender differences (hypotheses 1 and 3) were tested using independent t-test for difference in means, while age differences (hypotheses 2 and 4) were tested using one-way ANOVA, as these are suitable for evaluating mean differences between groups (Wilcox, 2017). The effect of service charge perception on service quality (hypothesis 5) was tested using simple linear regression, while the joint effect of service charge perception and service quality on revisit intention (hypothesis 6) was tested using multiple linear regression, as these tests are suitable for investigating causal relationships (Holmes et al., 2018).

4 Findings

4.1 Sample demographics and consumer behavior

The final sample included 392 participants, which was slightly higher than the minimum sample required per the sample calculations. Gender, age, education, and income levels were collected for demographic information (Table 2). There were slightly more female participants (52.6%) than male participants (47.4%). As it is known that women are somewhat more likely to respond to surveys than men (Guo et al., 2016), this was not a significant cause for concern. The respondents were relatively young, with 81.6% of the sample aged 18 to 40 years. The sample was also highly educated, with 84.7% of the sample holding a Bachelor's degree or higher. Finally, income was average, with 51% of the sample having incomes of between 15,001 and 35,000 baht per month. Overall, therefore, the sample can be characterized as aged 18 to 40, with a higher education and average income level.

Table 2: Summary of sample demographics

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	186	47.4
Female	206	52.6
Total	392	100.0
Age	Frequency	Percentage
18 to 20 years	44	11.2
21 to 30 years	146	37.2
31 to 40 years	130	33.2
41 to 50 years	24	6.1
51 to 60 years	30	7.7
Older than 60 years	18	4.6
Total	392	100.0
Education	Frequency	Percentage
Lower than Bachelor's degree	60	15.3
Bachelor's degree	244	62.2
Master's degree	75	19.2
Higher than Master's degree	13	3.3
Total	392	100.0
Income	Frequency	Percentage
15,000 baht or less	47	12.0
15,001 to 35,000 baht	200	51.0
35,001 to 55,000 baht	82	20.9
55,001 to 75,000 baht	57	14.5
More than 75,001 baht	6	1.6
Total	392	100.0

Respondents were asked several questions about their consumer behavior relating to restaurants (Table 3). Participants dined out relatively frequently, with most indicating that they ate in restaurants once a week (60.2%) or more frequently (29.1%). Participants mainly found out about restaurants they might like to visit from family (21.9%) or friends (64.5%). Participants were also habitual tippers, with most indicating they regularly tip (95.4%). However, tips were small, with participants typically leaving five percent (12.5%) or less (81.9%) and only a few participants leaving more than five percent (1%). Thus, tips were commonly given, but were relatively small.

Table 3: Summary of consumer behavior in restaurants

How often do you eat at restaurants?	Frequency	Percentage
Less than once per week	42	10.7
Once per week	236	60.2
More than once per week	114	29.1
Total	392	100.0
How do you find out about restaurants?	Frequency	Percentage
Social media Platform	53	13.6
Family	86	21.9
Friend	253	64.5
Total	392	100.0
Do you normally give tips to the staff?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	374	95.4
No	18	4.6
Total	392	100.0
How much do you normally tip the staff?	Frequency	Percentage
None	18	4.6
Less than 5% of the food cost	321	81.9
5 % of the food cost	49	12.5
More than 5% of the food cost	4	1.0
Total	392	100.0

4.2 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics of the questionnaire items are summarized in Table 4. Descriptive statistics indicated that the participants had weakly positive service charge perceptions (M = 3.38, SD = 1.257), as well as weakly positive service quality perceptions (M = 3.40, SD = 1.188). However, revisit intentions were lower than service charge perceptions and service quality perceptions (M = 3.33, SD = 1.225). These descriptive statistics did vary by item within the constructs. For example, participants had lower levels of agreement with “I perceive value of paying service charge at the restaurant” (M = 3.32, SD = 1.289) than “Service charge at the restaurant is reasonable” (M = 3.40, S.D. = 1.336). Overall, however, the descriptive statistics were consistent with the scale means, indicating it is likely that the individual items were measuring the same items.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics

Item	Mean	S.D.
1. Service charge at the restaurant is reasonable.	3.40	1.336
2. Service provides by the staffs offers value compared to service charge rate.	3.39	1.308
3. I can accept service charge policy of the restaurant.	3.40	1.299
4. I perceive value of paying service charge at the restaurant.	3.32	1.289
5. Staffs at the restaurant offers good service that suitable for service charge.	3.39	1.275
Overall Perception of service charge	*3.38*	*1.257*
6. The restaurant provides appropriate, decent and neatly dresses employees.	3.39	1.357
7. The restaurant has a menu that is easily readable.	3.49	1.303
8. During busy hours the restaurant also provide the services at the promised time.	3.38	1.305
9. The restaurant serves the food exactly as you have ordered it.	3.41	1.296
10. The food is nice and tasty.	3.43	1.271
11. Food serving at the restaurant is fresh.	3.36	1.260
12. The restaurant gives extra effort to handle special requests.	3.42	1.271
13. Food is served at an appropriate temperature.	3.34	1.288
14. Staffs are polite.	3.41	1.246
15. The restaurant has staff who are both able and willing to give information about menu items, their ingredients, and methods of preparation.	3.37	1.283
Overall Service quality expectation	*3.40*	*1.188*
16. I will visit this restaurant again in the near future.	3.34	1.298
17. I would positively recommend this restaurant to other people.	3.33	1.268
18. I would like to eat more often at the restaurant.	3.32	1.312
Overall Revisit	*3.33*	*1.225*

4.3 Hypothesis tests

A summary of the hypothesis tests is presented in Table 5. Each of these tests is discussed in the sections below. As Table 5 indicates, all the hypotheses were supported.

Table 5: Summary of hypothesis test outcomes

Hypothesis	Statement	Test Statistic	Sig.	Outcome
1	There are differences between genders (male and female) in perception of service charge.	t = 5.45	.000	Supported
2	There are differences between age groups in perception of service charge.	F = 6.429	.000	Supported
3	There are differences between genders (male and female) in service quality expectation.	t = 5.654	.000	Supported
4	There are differences between age groups in service quality expectation.	F = 7.536	.000	Supported
5	Perception of the service charge influences service quality expectation.	B = 0.891	.000	Supported
6a	Perception of the service charge influences revisit intention.	B = 0.474	.000	Supported
6b	Service quality expectation influences revisit intention.	B = .503	.000	Supported

Gender and perceptions of service charge and service quality (Hypotheses 1 and 3). An independent t-test for difference in means was used to investigate the effect of gender (male and female) on perceived service charge and perceived service quality. Results for both tests are shown in Table 6.

The first test showed that men (M = 3.73, S.D. = 1.203) had a higher mean perception of the service charge than women (M = 3.06, S.D. = 1.222). The t-test confirmed that this was a statistically significant difference ($t = 5.455$, $df = 390$, $p < .001$). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

The second test showed that men (M = 3.74, S.D. = 1.143) had a higher mean service quality expectation than women (M = 3.09, S.D. = 1.144). The t-test also confirmed that this was a statistically significant difference ($t = 5.647$, $df = 390$, $p < .001$). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was also supported.

Table 6: Independent t-tests for differences in means: Perception of service charge and service quality expectations by gender

Test 1: Perception of Service Charge	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.	Mean Difference	Std .Error Difference
Equal variances assumed	1.108	.293	5.455	390	.000	.669	.123
Equal variances not assumed			5.459	387.074	.000	.669	.123
Descriptive Statistics (Perception of Service Charge)							
Gender	N		Mean		S.D.		S.E. Mean
Male	186		3.73		1.203		.088
Female	206		3.06		1.222		.085
Test 2: Service Quality Expectation	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.	Mean Difference	Std .Error Difference
Equal variances assumed	.654	.419	5.647	390	.000	.653	.116
Equal variances not assumed			5.647	386.009	.000	.653	.116
Descriptive Statistics (Service Quality Expectation)							
Gender	N		Mean		S.D.		S.E. Mean
Male	186		3.74		1.143		.084
Female	206		3.09		1.144		.080

Age and perceptions of service charge and service quality (Hypotheses 2 and 4). One-way ANOVA was used to investigate differences in perceptions of the service charge and service quality expectations between age groups. Results for these tests are summarized in Table 7.

The ANOVA test showed that younger age groups (18-20 years: M = 3.70, SD = 1.159; 21-30 years: M = 3.47, SD = 1.231; 31-40 years M = 3.51, SD = 1.269) had significantly higher service charge perceptions than older age groups (51-60 years: M = 2.82, SD = 1.196; 60+ years M= 2.09, SD = 0.835) (F = 6.429, p < .001). The 41-50 years age group (M = 3.25, SD = 1.171) did not have a significant difference with either older or younger groups. Therefore, this supported Hypothesis 2.

Younger age groups (18-20 years: M = 3.59, SD = 1.078; 21-30 years: M = 3.53, SD = 1.162; 31-40 years: M = 3.52, SD = 1.164) also had significantly higher mean service quality perceptions than older age groups (51-60 years: M = 2.84, SD = 1.192; 60+ years: M = 2.03, SD = .776) (F = 7.536, p < .001). Once again, the 41 to 50 years age group (M = 3.31, SD = 1.154) did not have a significant mean difference from younger or older groups. This outcome supported Hypothesis 4.

While the statistical tests did show mean differences between age groups, it is worth noting that the older age groups were smaller than the younger age groups; there were only a total of 48 people, or 12% of the sample, in the 51 to 60 and older than 60 years age groups. One-way ANOVA is robust to unequal sample sizes in situations where variances are equal (Wilcox, 2017). In these cases, it can be seen that the standard deviation (the measure of variance used) is similar in the 51 to 60 years age group as to the younger age groups, but the variance among the older than 60 years age group is somewhat lower, which is expected given the very small sample size. Therefore, this finding needs more investigation to determine whether there are robust age differences in perception of service charge and service quality expectations.

Table 7: One-way ANOVA: Perception of service charge and service quality expectations by age

Descriptive Statistics: Perception of Service Charge	N	Mean	Std .Deviation	Std .Error
18 to 20 years	44	3.70	1.159	.175
21 to 30 years	146	3.47	1.231	.102
31 to 40 years	130	3.51	1.269	.111
41 to 50 years	24	3.25	1.171	.239
51 to 60 years	30	2.82	1.196	.218
Older than 60 years	18	2.09	.835	.197
Total	392	3.38	1.257	.063
ANOVA				
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F (Sig)

Between Groups	47.460	5	9.492	6.429 (.000)
Within Groups	569.912	386	1.476	
Total	617.373	391		

Descriptive Statistics: Service Quality Expectations	N	Mean	Std .Deviation	Std .Error
18 to 20 years	44	3.59	1.078	.163
21 to 30 years	146	3.53	1.162	.096
31 to 40 years	130	3.52	1.164	.102
41 to 50 years	24	3.31	1.154	.236
51 to 60 years	30	2.84	1.192	.218
Older than 60 years	18	2.03	.776	.183
Total	392	3.40	1.188	.060

ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F (Sig)
Between Groups	49.067	5	9.813	7.536 (.000)
Within Groups	502.643	386	1.302	
Total	551.710	391		

Service charge perceptions and service quality expectations (Hypothesis 5). In order to test Hypothesis 5, simple linear regression was used. The outcomes are summarized in Table 8. The results indicated that the model was significant ($F = 3079.001$, $p = .000$). Furthermore, it was highly predictive (R-square = .888), indicating that 88.8% of variance in service quality expectations was predicted by variance in service charge perceptions. The regression test indicated that perception of the service charge had a positive influence on service quality expectations ($\beta = 0.891$, $t = 55.489$, $p < .000$). Therefore, Hypothesis 5 was supported.

Table 8: Simple linear regression: Service charge perception and service quality expectation

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std .Error of the Estimate
.942	.888	.887	.399
F	Sig		
3079.001	.000		
	B.	S.E.	t (p)
(Constant)	.388	.058	6.712 (.000)
Perception of Service Charge	.891	.016	55.489 (.000)

Service charge perceptions, service quality expectations, and revisit intention (Hypothesis 6). Multiple linear regression was used to investigate the joint effect of service charge perceptions and service quality expectations on revisit intention. Results are shown in Table 9. The ANOVA test indicated that this was a significant model ($F = 2296.098$, $p = .000$). Furthermore, the model was highly predictive (R-squared = .922), indicating that 92.2% of variance in revisit intention could be predicted through variance in the two predictors.

The regression test also showed that showed that service charge perception ($\beta = .474$, $t = 11.518$, $p < .001$) and service quality expectations ($\beta = .503$, $t = 11.539$, $p < .001$) both had a significant and positive effect on revisit intention for the restaurant. Therefore, both Hypothesis 6a and Hypothesis 6b were supported.

Table 9: Multiple linear regression: Service charge perception, service quality expectation and revisit intention

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std .Error of the Estimate
.960	.922	.922	.343
F	Sig		
2296.098	.000		
	B.	S.E.	t

			(p)
(Constant)	.016	.053	.297 (0.767)
Perception of Service Charge	.474	.041	11.518 (0.000)
Service Quality Expectation	.503	.044	11.539 (0.000)

5 Discussions

The tests of the first set of hypotheses (including Hypotheses 1 and 3) found that men had a higher perception of the service charge than women, indicating that they were more accepting or positive about it. At the same time, however, men also had a higher service quality expectation. This finding was consistent with the general statement that men and women have different consumer perceptions and behaviors (East et al., 2017). However, it was contrary to findings from the United States, which showed women typically had higher service quality expectations (Banks et al., 2018). This is likely due to the significant cultural differences between countries, but it is unclear which cultural differences drive this. There are notable differences in gendered values and norms in Thailand compared to the United States, with Thai culture focusing more on caring and consensus than on high demand for success and competence (Hofstede Insights, 2024), which could be one factor in the different perceptions. However, it could also be differences in early socialization of members of different genders, or another factor. Studies such as Ahmed et al. (2015), which have investigated demographic differences in service expectations, have not undertaken an effort to explain why these differences may occur. This is in common with the general literature on consumer behavior, which typically acknowledges gender differences but does not seek to explain them (East et al., 2017). This is something which has been noted previously as being poorly explained and needing more research (Meyers-Levy & Loken, 2015), and it is something which should be explored in more detail.

The second set of hypotheses (including Hypotheses 2 and 4) found that younger people (18 to 40) were both more positive about the service charge and had higher mean service quality expectations than older people (age 51 and over). This is consistent with general consumer lifecycle theories, which argue that consumers in different age groups have different habits and needs (East et al., 2017). However, the findings contradict an earlier study which indicated that older consumers had higher service quality expectations than younger consumers (Ahmad et al., 2015). This may be due to differences in cultural patterns and long-term change in service expectations and tipping practice (Bujisic et al., 2013). As noted previously, Thailand has not previously had a service charge culture, instead having a small tipping culture. Historically, there has been limited research into the behavior of older consumers, but studies have suggested that older consumers are typically more resistant to change (Hettich et al., 2018). Thus, the reason for this may simply be not those older consumers dislike service charges as such, but that they are less willing to change their dining and payment preferences in general.

The test of Hypothesis 5 showed that perceptions of the service charge influenced service quality expectations. In other words, customers that positively accepted the service charge also had higher service quality expectations. This finding is consistent with the findings of Lynn and Wang (2013), who found that consumers who accepted higher prices for food also had higher service expectations. It is also consistent with the findings of Lynn and Webster (2018), who found that when service charges were implemented, customer service expectations increased. Therefore, the study supports a general position that the service charge is perceived as a higher price, therefore contributing to an expectation for higher service.

The test of Hypothesis 6 showed that there were positive effect of service charge perceptions and service quality expectations on revisit intention. This indicates that the more positively the customer felt about the service charge and the higher their service quality expectations, the more likely they were to return. This finding was consistent with the study of Yan et al. (2015), who found a link between service quality expectations and revisit intention. A similar finding was found by Shapoval et al. (2018), further supporting the relationship. The study builds on these results by showing that customers with higher perceptions of the service charge were also more likely to return.

There are some unanswered questions that remain within this research. For example, is the situation different in other cuisines compared to Japanese restaurants? Japan itself has historically been a zero-tipping culture, but this has not translated to an expected difference in service quality expectations or other perceptions compared to the United States (a high-tipping culture) (Cho, 2006). Furthermore, Japanese restaurants in Thailand have in the researcher's observation adopted local tipping customs, including the slow transition to service charges. However, whether different types of restaurants would have different consumer responses, for example restaurants that were perceived as more casual versus those perceived as more upscale, has not been investigated in detail in the literature.

6 Conclusions and implications

This study investigated the role of demographics, service charge perceptions, service quality expectations on revisit intention in the case of Japanese restaurants in Thailand. This research was undertaken to better understand consumer perceptions of service compensation in a cultural environment that was shifting from a custom of small optional tips to service charges.

The findings showed that male consumers and younger consumers (aged 18 to 40) had more positive perceptions of the service charge, as well as higher customer service expectations than female consumers and older consumers (aged 51 and above). The findings also showed that service charge perceptions influenced service quality expectations. This indicates that customers who view service charges more positively also have higher expectations for customer service. Furthermore, the findings showed that service charge perceptions and service quality perceptions both affected revisit intention.

The main theoretical implication of this study is that consumers will be influenced in their revisit intention by the service charge, a finding which has not been shown directly previously. Specifically, customers that view service charges more positively also have higher service quality expectations, and both of these factors drive up revisit intention. These factors have rarely been investigated together, making this finding a novel contribution to the research.

In practical terms, the findings suggest that proprietors may want to investigate consumer preferences before implementing a service charge, especially given how much resistance there can be to implementation of service charges or other changes to common tipping practice. For example, a restaurant with a mostly younger male customer base may be able to implement service charges easily, while one with mostly older female consumers may face more resistance. Additionally, restaurant proprietors need to be aware that service charges increase service quality expectations, so they may need to improve their service to appeal to consumers.

There are some limitations to the study that should be addressed. The questionnaire was self-reported and post-hoc, and therefore actual consumer responses could vary if investigated closer to the restaurant experience. The study also investigated only a few factors in consumer revisit intentions for restaurants, while there could be a wide array of possible factors. This limitation was necessary as there can only be so many factors included in a study, but there is still the possibility that there are more influential factors. The research also did not assess the influence of sexual orientation and gender identity. Therefore, identification as LGBTQ+ could influence the outcomes in a way that was not detected. Additionally, unequal sample sizes of younger and older participants may threaten the validity of the ANOVA findings related to perception of service charge and service charge expectations, especially for the oldest age group.

Research using analysis of online reviews or more widespread consumer research into tipping practices and perceptions is recommended to address these limitations. This particularly includes more nuanced investigation of gender and sexual orientation differences and generational differences in service charge perceptions. There are also some additional research opportunities, particularly relating to consumer acceptance of service charges and general studies on tipping outside the United States, where most studies have been conducted. Such studies would contribute to a better understanding of how consumers perceive tipping, service charges, and other alternative service compensation structures and how they respond.

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Impact of Workplace Fun on Job Satisfaction and Job Performance: A Case Study of the Hotel Industry in Myanmar

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of workplace fun on job satisfaction and job performance among hotel employees in Myanmar, using six dimensions of workplace fun: fun activities, co-worker socialization, manager support for fun, appropriateness, salience, and perceived consequences. A quantitative research design was employed, collecting data from 284 hotel employees in Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw, and Mandalay. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that certain aspects of workplace fun, particularly manager support for fun and perceived consequences, significantly enhance both job satisfaction and job performance. Fun activities significantly improve job satisfaction but do not directly impact job performance. Interestingly, perceptions of appropriateness impacting job performance suggest that when participants view fun activities as immature and unprofessional, and there is no clear distinction between work and fun time, job performance can be affected. Nonetheless, the findings underscore the importance of fostering a balanced and culturally appropriate fun work environment to boost employee morale and productivity in Myanmar's hotel industry.

Keywords: workplace fun, job satisfaction, job performance, Myanmar's hotel industry

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The modern work environment is experiencing significant transformations influenced by evolving organizational dynamics and workforce expectations. Workplace fun has gained prominence as a key factor for enhancing employee commitment, passion, and effectiveness. According to In et al., (2010), creating a more relaxed work atmosphere can yield benefits for both employees and organizations. Patel et al., (2013) highlight that workplace fun is not only desirable but also essential for relieving the burdens of daily work life, contributing to a sense of cheerfulness and happiness.

The concept of workplace fun, though straightforward, has profound implications for employee motivation and productivity. Ford et al., (2003) assert that when employees experience fun in their professional duties, their motivation and productivity levels are elevated. Furthermore, Patel et al., (2013) found that an employee's satisfaction with their job directly influences their overall effectiveness. The influence of workplace fun extends beyond individual well-being; it also shapes team dynamics, organizational culture, and ultimately the competitive edge of an organization.

Fun is a multidimensional and universally relatable human phenomenon deeply ingrained in psychology. McManus et al., (2010) explain that 'fun' encompasses a wide range of activities from moments of joy to meaningful encounters, involving cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components. Fun activities can elicit positive emotions like happiness and contentment, serving as crucial sources of psychological well-being. Despite the increasing interest in workplace fun, limited research exists on its effects in specific industries and cultural contexts. Choi et al., (2011) noted that employees in the hospitality industry face unprecedented stress and burnout due to rising customer expectations and global competition.

In Myanmar, the hotel industry presents a unique context for studying workplace fun. Yangon, Mandalay, and Nay Pyi Taw, as major tourist destinations, represent the diverse economic and cultural landscapes of Myanmar. Yangon, the largest city and former capital, is the primary gateway for international tourists and a hub of economic activity. Mandalay, rich in cultural heritage, attracts visitors interested in Myanmar's traditional sites. Nay Pyi Taw, the administrative capital, is growing in prominence as a central point for government and international conferences. The inclusion of these cities provides a comprehensive overview of Myanmar's hospitality industry, ensuring the broad applicability of the study's findings across the country's tourism sector.

The hotel industry in Myanmar has seen significant growth with the rise in tourist numbers, aligning with the country's thriving tourism sector. This growth brings challenges such as infrastructure development, human resource management, and maintaining service excellence. Human resource management is critical, with the hotel employees needing to deliver outstanding hospitality and establish positive connections with guests from various backgrounds. As noted earlier, employees in the hotel industry face high levels of stress and burnout. The Happy Planet Index (HPI) rankings for Myanmar from 2020 to 2023 further highlight the traditional, serious work environment prevalent in the country.

Implementing workplace fun initiatives could be a potential solution to aid hotel employees in navigating these challenges. By cultivating a positive and resilient professional environment, these initiatives can promote employees' adaptability to changing circumstances while ensuring high service standards. Workplace fun can serve as a valuable mechanism for alleviating stress and exhaustion, ultimately contributing to employee well-being and the overall success of the industry.

1.2 Hotel industry in Myanmar

The hotels and tourism sector is a significant contributor to Myanmar's economy. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (2022), this sector contributed 7.6% to the global GDP and provided 295 million jobs. In Myanmar, tourism and hospitality are key economic drivers, offering creative jobs and being a main source of foreign exchange earnings. Despite setbacks due to political conflicts and the COVID-19 pandemic, the sector has shown resilience. In 2022, Myanmar received 1.33 million tourists, contributing 2.1% to the country's GDP and supporting 0.95 million jobs.

The Ministry of Hotels and Tourism (2022) reported an increase in licensed hotels, motels, and guesthouses from 1,704 in 2018 to 2,331 in 2022, with available rooms rising from 68,167 to 94,860. The growing number of hotels highlights the sector's expansion but also intensifies talent competition. Implementing workplace fun can help alleviate psychological tensions due to external factors like political unrest and the lingering impacts of the pandemic. Such initiatives are crucial for maintaining employee morale and productivity, ensuring the industry's resilience.

Workplace fun benefits the hotel industry by creating a positive environment for employees, helping to maintain high service quality. The implementation of workplace fun activities can act as a protective measure against stress, fostering a collaborative and favorable professional atmosphere. This approach is necessary to sustain and enhance the industry's resilience, supporting the well-being of the workforce.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Understanding the impact of workplace fun on job satisfaction and performance is crucial for Myanmar's hospitality industry. Given the hospitality industry's reliance on employee job satisfaction and performance, this research is vital. It seeks to identify effective strategies for improving employee outcomes in the unique context of Myanmar's hotel industry. The findings will provide valuable insights for hotel managers and stakeholders, informing human resource management practices to improve employee satisfaction, performance, and resilience. Due to this reason, this current study aims to investigate the impact of workplace fun on job satisfaction and performance among hotel employees in Myanmar.

2 Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to explore the complex relationship between workplace fun, job satisfaction, and job performance. The subsequent sections will examine the concept of workplace fun, analyzing its constituents and importance in contemporary organizational settings. This paper will then investigate the impact of workplace fun on job satisfaction, examining empirical evidence and intervening factors that clarify the interplay between these two constructs. Subsequently, the focus will shift to the effect of workplace fun on job performance, unraveling the mechanisms through which workplace fun initiatives contribute to improved outcomes in the workplace.

2.1 Definition of Workplace Fun

Workplace fun refers to employees' pleasurable experiences when participating in activities unrelated to work, characterized by positive social interaction. These activities can be organized within the workplace and beyond its boundaries. Ford et al., (2003) described workplace fun as an environment designed to foster fun activities that positively affect attitudes and productivity, succinctly phrasing it as “a work environment that makes people smile.” McDowell (2004) defined it as “engaging in activities not specifically related to the job that are enjoyable, amusing, or playful.”

Employees may have distinct viewpoints regarding the importance of fun within an organizational setting. Some may perceive it as a favorable enhancement, while others may view it as inappropriate during work hours. Aldag et al., (2001) noted that certain groups might consider fun an indispensable element of the workplace environment, leading to varied individual attitudes towards workplace fun.

In recent years, researchers have increasingly focused on the importance of fun in the workplace due to its potential benefits for employees and businesses (Becker and Tews, 2016; Owler et al., 2010; Plester and Hutchison, 2016). For instance, Karl et al., (2005) explored attitudes toward workplace fun across different sectors and found no significant variations, although there were notable disparities in company-wide outings and specific fun activities. Similarly, Karl et al., (2006) highlighted that job satisfaction was more strongly influenced by workplace fun among employees who highly value fun, and these employees believed their organizations delivered better customer service.

Tews et al., (2013) demonstrated that fun activities positively influenced performance and that managerial support for fun decreased turnover rates. In another study, Tews et al., (2014) found that fun activities, co-worker socializing, and managerial support were crucial in fostering strong work relationships and enhancing employee retention. Chan et al., (2016) investigated the relationship between workplace fun, trust in management, and job satisfaction, finding that employees who experienced a high degree of fun at work also reported higher levels of trust in management and job satisfaction. Udin et al., (2019) highlighted that while fun at work did not directly impact employee performance, it had a significant indirect effect through job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Kumar et al., (2018) and Chen et al., (2019) found that a positive attitude towards workplace fun enhanced job satisfaction and performance.

Drawing on the previous studies, workplace fun is measured by various dimensions. Tews et al., (2014) emphasized three elements of fun specifically related to the social experience of work: fun activities, co-worker socializing, and manager support for fun. According to Tews et al., (2013), fun activities include productivity contests, social gatherings, team-building exercises, and celebrations of work accomplishments and personal milestones. Co-worker socialization involves friendly and outgoing interactions among colleagues, playing a crucial role in the overall work experience (Chiaburu and Harrison, 2008). Manager support for fun refers to how managers encourage employees to have fun while fulfilling their job responsibilities (Tews et al., 2014).

Other studies have utilized similar components to measure workplace fun, incorporating variables such as appropriateness, salience, and perceived consequences of fun activities (Karl et al., 2005; Chen et al., 2019; Kumar et al., 2018). These components are essential for assessing the impact of fun on job satisfaction and performance. The review and expanded theoretical perspective by Michel et al., (2019) added personal freedoms and fun job responsibilities to measure fun in the workplace.

Incorporating the findings from various studies, this research will employ a conceptual framework that includes six vital indicators to assess workplace fun: fun activities, co-worker socialization, manager support for fun, appropriateness, salience, and perceived consequences. These indicators are suitable for the Myanmar hotel industry context and are frequently examined in literature for their significant correlations with job satisfaction and performance outcomes.

2.2 Workplace Fun and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a concept extensively investigated in management research due to its potential impact on performance and other workplace attitudes (Katebi et al., 2022). Bhatti et al., (2019) defined job satisfaction as the positive affective condition experienced by employees, encompassing emotions such as happiness, optimism, enthusiasm, love, and passion for their occupation. These favorable emotional states generally arise from employees' encounters within their professional environment (Loan, 2020; Oluwatayo & Adetoro, 2020).

Confidence and a positive fun mood experienced during work can serve as indicators for predicting an individual's level of satisfaction with their job (Fisher, 2000; Ilies & Judge, 2004). Various studies have examined the relationship between workplace fun and job satisfaction. For instance, Edosomwan (2022) investigated how workplace fun influences job satisfaction among university administrative staff, using perceived organizational support (POS) as a moderating variable. The findings indicated that while workplace fun positively impacts job satisfaction, POS did not affect the relationship between workplace fun and job satisfaction.

Ching et al., (2010) examined the relationship between workplace fun and job satisfaction, using employees' attitudes toward fun as a moderator. They found that individuals who experienced higher degrees of workplace fun exhibited heightened job satisfaction. Conversely, Shabir et al., (2023) found that workplace fun had a more significant impact on task performance than on job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior, analyzing these effects without using any mediator.

2.3 Workplace Fun and Job Performance

Job performance refers to the level of quality and quantity attained by individuals or groups upon completing tasks (Schermerhorn, 1989). Munchinsky (2003) described job performance as the range of behaviors exhibited by employees that can be assessed, monitored, and evaluated individually.

Viswesvaran and Ones (2000) defined job performance as the actions and results that employees undertake or achieve, which are interconnected with and contribute to the goals of the organization.

Von Oech (1982) posited that a working environment characterized by enjoyment and amusement is more productive than a routine environment. Numerous studies support this statement, suggesting that workplace fun enhances employee performance. However, empirical evidence is still needed to confirm this notion. Erin Fluegge-Woolf (2014) analyzed the correlation between workplace fun and three elements of job performance: task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and creative performance. The results showed that fun at work was positively directly related to organizational citizenship behavior and indirectly related to both task performance and creative performance, using positive affect and engagement as mediators. Chi et al., (2023) explored the impacts of perceived justice and workplace fun on innovative work behavior and job performance of university lecturers in Ho Chi Minh City, finding that workplace fun significantly affects job performance.

The existing body of research underscores the intricate nature of the connection between workplace fun and job performance, encompassing both direct and indirect consequences. It also highlights the significance of variables such as job satisfaction and positive affect as potential mediators within this association.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

From the above literature analysis, this study conducts the following conceptual framework (Figure 1). The framework includes six components of workplace fun: fun activities, co-worker socialization, manager support for fun, appropriateness, salience, and perceived consequences.

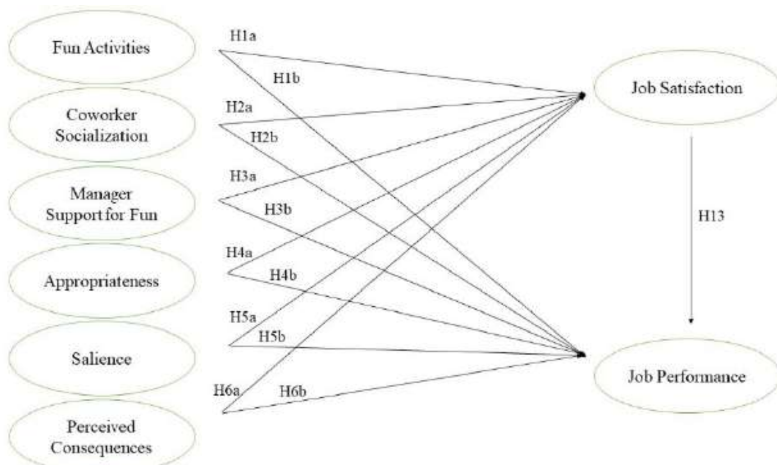

Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework – with details of the “Workplace Fun” construct

Hypothesis 1 (H1a). Fun activities have a positive effect on Job Satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2 (H1b). Fun activities have a positive effect on job performance.

Hypothesis 3 (H2a). Co-worker socialization has a positive effect on job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4 (H2b). Co-worker socialization has a positive effect on job performance.

Hypothesis 5 (H3a). Manager support for fun has a positive effect on job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 6 (H3b). Manager support for fun has a positive effect on job performance.

Hypothesis 7 (H4a). Appropriateness has a positive effect on job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 8 (H4b). Appropriateness has a positive effect on job performance.

Hypothesis 9 (H5a). Salience has a positive effect on job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 10 (H5b). Salience has a positive effect on job performance.

Hypothesis 11 (H6a). Perceived consequences have a positive effect on job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 12 (H6b). Perceived consequences have a positive effect on job performance.

Hypothesis 13. Job satisfaction has a positive effect on job performance.

3 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the relationships between workplace fun, job satisfaction, and job performance in the hotel industry in Myanmar. Quantitative analysis is chosen for its ability to measure variables numerically and statistically analyze data, making it suitable for examining the impact of fun activities, co-worker socialization, manager support for fun, appropriateness, salience, and perceived consequences on job satisfaction and performance.

The survey research strategy is selected due to its efficiency and practicality in gathering data. Questionnaires are distributed to hotel employees in Yangon, Mandalay, and Nay Pyi Taw through their human resource departments. This method ensures a streamlined and effective data collection process, providing valuable insights for Myanmar hotel managers and industry stakeholders.

3.2 Study Setting, Population, and Sample

The research focuses on employees working in hotels located in Yangon, Mandalay, and Nay Pyi Taw. The survey was conducted in Nay Pyi Taw, along with Yangon and Mandalay, due to several strategic reasons. Nay Pyi Taw, as the administrative capital, hosts numerous national, regional, and international conferences, making it a growing hub for hospitality services. This city was chosen to capture data from employees in a rapidly developing hospitality environment, which may present unique insights into workplace dynamics. While Bagan and Inle are renowned holiday destinations, the focus on Nay Pyi Taw, along with Yangon and Mandalay, provided a broader spectrum of the hotel industry's diverse economic and cultural landscapes in Myanmar. According to the 2014 Myanmar Census, there are 962,720 employees in accommodation and food service activities, forming the study's target population. Following the 10 times rule (Barclay et al., 1995), the minimum sample size is calculated to be 60. However, to ensure statistical adequacy, a sample size of 284 participants is selected for this study. Participants include hotel employees from the operating staff such as receptionists, room attendants, waiters and waitresses, and chefs, chosen using a purposive sampling technique. This approach ensures a diverse and representative sample of the hotel workforce.

3.3 PLS-SEM as the selected tool for Analysis

Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) is selected for statistical analysis due to its robustness in handling complex models with multiple constructs and its flexibility with data that do not follow a normal distribution. PLS-SEM is particularly advantageous for this study as it allows for the examination of both reflective and formative measurement models. The "ADANCO" software was used to construct and analyze the relationships between the computational constructs.

3.4 The survey questionnaire, reliability, and validity

The questionnaire is designed in three parts: introduction, respondent demographics, and questionnaire items. In the introduction part, the researcher explained the study's goal and ensured respondents the confidentiality of their responses. The demographic section collects information about gender, age, education level, hotel department, position, and years of experience in the hotel industry.

The third part includes 48 items adapted after the pilot testing with 50 samples, covering Fun Activities (6 items from Tews et al., 2014), Co-worker Socialization (4 items from McDowell, 2004), Manager Support for Fun (5 items from Shanock et al., 2006), Appropriateness (4 items), Salience (5 items), Perceived Consequences (8 items), Job Satisfaction (3 items from Egan et al., 2004), and Job Performance (11 items from Bussaparoek, 2013). The items for measuring Appropriateness, Salience, and Perceived Consequences were adapted from Aldag and Sherony (2001). In this study, each questionnaire item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Never/Strongly Disagree; 5=All the time/Strongly Agree) and Cronbach's alpha was utilized to test reliability (Gliner et al., 2011). During the pilot test, Cronbach's alpha values above 0.7 indicate good reliability. To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, two experts reviewed it, assessing the clarity and readability of the content.

During the analysis, certain items were removed from the original 48 items. The primary reason for the removal was low factor loading, which indicates that these items did not significantly contribute to the relevant construct and the total number of items that have been retained for the measurement model. The updated 30 items are bellowed the Table 1.

Table 1: Constructs and scale items

Constructs and scale items	Likert Scale 1-5					Author(s)
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All the time	
Fun Activities (FA)						Tews et al., (2014)
1. Festivities during holidays and other special times	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Parties for personal milestones	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Parties for work achievements	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Team Building Activities	1	2	3	4	5	
5. Other Social Event	1	2	3	4	5	
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Disagree	
Co-worker Socialization (CWS)						McDowell (2004)
1. My coworkers and I share stories with each other	1	2	3	4	5	
2. My coworkers and I joke around each other	1	2	3	4	5	
3. My coworkers and I socialize at work	1	2	3	4	5	

4. My coworkers and I socialize outside of work	1	2	3	4	5	
Manager Support for Fun (MSF)						Shanock and Eisenberger (2006)
1. My managers encourage employees to have fun on the job	1	2	3	4	5	
2. My managers emphasize employees fun in the workplace	1	2	3	4	5	
3. My managers try to make my work fun	1	2	3	4	5	
4. My managers care about employees having fun on the job	1	2	3	4	5	
5. My managers allow employees to play around on the job	1	2	3	4	5	
Appropriateness						Aldag and Sherony (2001)
1. Joking, laughing, or having a “playful attitude” while on the job is immature and unprofessional.	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Work hours are the time to work and non-work hours are the time to have fun.	1	2	3	4	5	
Saliences						
1. Having fun at work is very important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	
2. I prefer to work with people who like to have fun.	1	2	3	4	5	
Perceived Consequences (PC)						
1. Having fun at work can enhance interpersonal relations and teamwork.	1	2	3	4	5	

2. Fun at work can help reduce stress and tensions.	1	2	3	4	5	
3. When work is fun, employees work harder and longer.	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Employees with a healthy sense of humor tend to work well with others.	1	2	3	4	5	
Job Satisfaction (JS)						Egan et al., (2004)
1. Overall, I am satisfied with my job.	1	2	3	4	5	
2. In general, I enjoy working at my current job.	1	2	3	4	5	
3. I am generally satisfied with the kind of work I do on my job.	1	2	3	4	5	
Job Performance (JP)						Bussaparoek (2013)
1. I am capable of completing my job when I have a limited time.	1	2	3	4	5	
2. I work until reaching the final goal.	1	2	3	4	5	
3. I am generally successful in dealing with unexpected events (disturbances, crises, and stagnations) in my job.	1	2	3	4	5	
4. I am doing well in adjusting to change and develop myself through my job.	1	2	3	4	5	
5. I can come up with an idea to improve my job to be done.	1	2	3	4	5	

Moreover, this study and survey received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and adhered to research ethics standards. To protect participants, anonymized data collection is employed, allowing respondents the freedom to withdraw from the survey at any time. Participant responses are recorded confidentially and will only be accessible to the principal investigator, and analyzed in aggregate form without disclosing any personal information. Post-project completion, the data will be securely stored in password-protected computer files, accessible only by the principal investigator for potential further study.

4 Result and Analysis

4.1 Descriptive profile of the target respondents

The survey involved a total of 284 hotel employees from various departments in Yangon, Mandalay, and Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. The socio-demographic profile of the respondents is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Descriptive profile of respondents

Variables	Categories	Respondents (n=284)	%
Residence	Yangon	150	52.8
	Mandalay	100	35.2
	Nay Pyi Taw	34	12
Gender	Male	130	45.8
	Female	154	54.2
Age	18-20	40	14.1
	21-30	110	38.7
	31-40	80	28.2
	41-50	34	12
	51-60	20	7.0
Educational Level	High School	40	14.1
	Bachelor’s Degree	190	67
	Master’s Degree	40	14.1
	Doctorate Degree	14	4.8
Department	Front Desk	70	24.6

	Housekeeping	60	21.1
	Bell-boy	30	10.6
	F&B	80	28.2
	Others	44	15.5
Positional Level	Entry Level	120	42.3
	Supervisor Level	90	31.7
	Manager Level	60	21.1
	Others	14	4.9
Years of Exp.	1-5 years	100	35.2
	6-10 years	80	28.2
	11-15 years	60	21.1
	16-20 years	30	10.6
	21-25 years	10	3.5
	Above 25 years	4	1.4

f= frequency, n= number of samples

4.2 The evaluation of overall model fit

To evaluate the overall model fit, the researcher used ADANCO software, which employs various fit indices to determine the adequacy of the proposal model. The index used in this evaluation is the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), d_{ULS}, and d_G. These indices help to assess how well the theoretical model matches the empirical data.

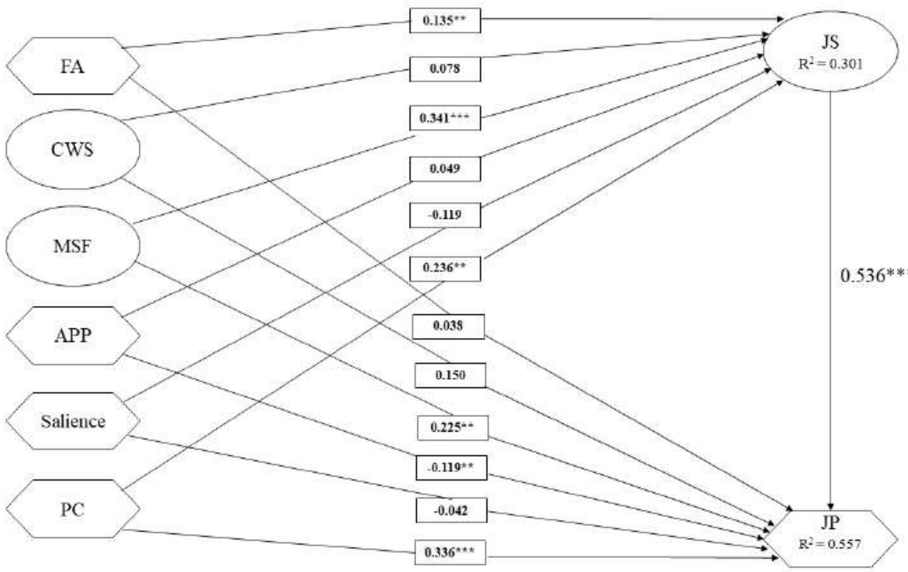

Figure 2: Overall model

The final overall model of this research is illustrated in Figure 2. A model is generally considered a good fit if the SRMR is less than 0.08 (Byrne, 1998). In this research analysis, both the saturated and estimated models showed SRMR values well within acceptable limits, indicating a good fit.

Table 3: Goodness of Fit (saturated model)

Fit Index	Value	HI95	HI99
SRMR	0.0344	0.0350	0.0392
d_{ULS}	0.2278	0.3704	0.4826
d_G	0.3417	0.4044	0.4518

Table 4: Goodness of Fit (estimated model)

Fit Index	Value	HI95	HI99
SRMR	0.0631	0.0562	0.631
d_{ULS}	1.8507	1.4708	1.8520
d_G	0.6581	0.5041	0.6035

Overall, the goodness of fit indices suggests that the proposed model fits the data well, supporting the theoretical relationships among the constructs. The low SRMR, d_{ULS}, and d_G values indicate that the model adequately captures the underlying structure of the data, making it a reliable representation of the relationships being studied.

4.3 Evaluation of the Measurement Model

The measurement model was evaluated to assess the reliability and validity of the constructs. The evaluation involved examining composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion.

4.3.1 Reliability and validity

Composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha were calculated to assess the internal consistency of the constructs. Both CR and Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70 indicate acceptable reliability.

Table 5: Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha

Construct	Dijkstra-Henseler's rho (ρA)	Jöreskog's rho (ρC)	Cronbach's alpha(α)
CWS	0.8066	0.7988	0.7951
MSF	0.8733	0.8385	0.8095
JS	0.8129	0.8082	0.8085

All constructs exhibited Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values above the threshold of 0.70, indicating good internal consistency and reliability.

4.3.2 Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

The AVE values were calculated to assess the convergent validity of the constructs. AVE values above 0.50 indicate that the constructs explain more than half of the variance of their indicators.

Table 6: Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Construct	AVE
CWS	0.5005
MSF	0.5244
JS	0.5852

All constructs had AVE values greater than 0.50, confirming adequate convergent validity.

4.3.3 Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which compares the square root of the AVE values with the correlations between constructs. For discriminant validity to be established, the square root of the AVE of each construct should be greater than the correlations with other constructs.

Table 7: Fornell-Larcker criterion

Construct	CWS	MSF	JS
CWS	0.707		
MSF	0.508	0.724	
JS	0.362	0.515	0.765

The diagonal elements represent the square root of the AVE, while the off-diagonal elements represent the correlations between constructs. The square root of the AVE for each construct is greater than the inter-construct correlations, indicating good discriminant validity.

4.4 Evaluation of the structural model

The structural model was evaluated to examine the relationships between constructs in the model, including the significance and strength of these relationships. This evaluation includes the analysis of path coefficients, the significance of the paths, the explanatory power of the model through R-squared values, and an assessment of multicollinearity using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF).

4.4.1 Path coefficients and significance

The path coefficients represent the strength and direction of the relationships between the constructs. The significance of these coefficients is determined using t-values and p-values.

Table 8: Path coefficients and significance

Hypothesis	Effect	Original	Standard bootstrap results		
		Coefficient	Standard error	t-value	p-value (1-sided)
H1	FA → JS	0.1348	0.0753	1.7889	0.0369
H2	FA → JP	0.0378	0.0660	0.5732	0.2833

H3	CWS → JS	0.0781	0.1196	0.6531	0.2569
H4	CWS → JP	0.1497	0.0974	1.5372	0.0622
H5	MSF → JS	0.3411	0.0791	4.3136	0.0000
H6	MSF → JP	0.2253	0.0749	3.0083	0.0013
H7	Appropriateness → JS	0.0489	0.0700	0.6974	0.2428
H8	Appropriateness → JP	-0.1192	0.0620	-1.9231	0.0273
H9	Salience → JS	-0.1189	0.0851	-1.3975	0.0812
H10	Salience → JP	-0.0416	0.0574	-0.7245	0.2344
H11	PC → JS	0.2357	0.0946	2.5117	0.0060
H12	PC → JP	0.3362	0.0839	4.0088	0.0000
H13	JS → JP	0.5359	0.0710	7.5462	0.0000

FA=Fun Activities; CWS=Co-worker Socialization; MSF=Manager Support for Fun, PC= Perceived Consequences; JS=Job Satisfaction; JP=Job Performance

The path coefficients in Table 8 indicate that fun activities (FA) have a statistically significant positive impact on job satisfaction (JS) ($\beta = 0.1348$, $p = 0.0369$) but not on job performance (JP) ($\beta = 0.0378$, $p = 0.2833$). Co-worker socialization (CWS) does not have a statistically significant impact on job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.0781$, $p = 0.2569$) or job performance ($\beta = 0.1497$, $p = 0.0622$), although it is close to the threshold for significance and may suggest a trend. Manager support for fun (MSF) has a statistically significant positive impact on both job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.3411$, $p < 0.001$) and job performance ($\beta = 0.2253$, $p = 0.0013$). Appropriateness does not significantly impact job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.0489$, $p = 0.2428$) but has a statistically significant negative impact on job performance ($\beta = -0.1192$, $p = 0.0273$). Salience does not significantly impact job satisfaction ($\beta = -0.1189$, $p = 0.0812$) or job performance ($\beta = -0.0416$, $p = 0.2344$). Perceived consequences (PC) have a statistically significant positive impact on both job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.2357$, $p = 0.0060$) and job performance ($\beta = 0.3362$, $p < 0.001$). Finally, job satisfaction significantly impacts job performance ($\beta = 0.5359$, $p < 0.001$).

4.4.2 R-Squared Values

The R-squared (R^2) value represents the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables. Higher R-squared values indicate greater explanatory power of the model.

Table 9: R-squared values

Construct	R^2
Job Satisfaction	0.42
Job Performance	0.53

The R-squared value for job satisfaction is 0.42, indicating that 42% of the variance in job satisfaction can be explained by the independent variables. The R-squared value for job performance is 0.53, indicating that 53% of the variance in job performance can be explained by the independent variables.

4.4.3 Multicollinearity and VIF

Multicollinearity among predictor constructs was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). A VIF value above 5 indicates high multicollinearity, which could affect the reliability of the model. In this study, all VIF values were well below the threshold of 5, indicating no significant multicollinearity issues. Specifically, VIF values ranged from 1.08 to 1.40 for key constructs, confirming that multicollinearity does not adversely affect the model's stability and reliability.

5 Discussions

This study investigates the impact of workplace fun on job satisfaction and job performance among hotel employees in Myanmar, utilizing six dimensions of workplace fun: fun activities, co-worker socialization, manager support for fun, appropriateness, salience, and perceived consequences. The analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with data collected from 284 hotel employees across Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw, and Mandalay.

The study finds that fun activities, such as social gatherings, team-building exercises, and celebrations, were found to significantly enhance job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.1348$, $p = 0.0369$). This finding aligns with previous research indicating that engaging employees in enjoyable activities fosters a positive work environment, leading to higher levels of job satisfaction. However, the direct impact on job performance was not significant ($\beta = 0.0378$, $p = 0.2833$), suggesting that while fun activities improve morale and satisfaction, they may not directly translate into improved performance metrics.

Manager support for fun was identified as a crucial factor influencing both job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.3411$, $p < 0.001$) and job performance ($\beta = 0.2253$, $p = 0.0013$). This finding underscores the importance of managerial involvement in promoting a fun and engaging work environment. Managers who actively support and participate in fun activities create a positive atmosphere that can boost employee morale, satisfaction, and productivity. On the other hand, perceived consequences of workplace fun activities, such as improved relationships, reduced stress, and increased motivation, significantly impact both job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.2357$, $p = 0.0060$) and job performance ($\beta = 0.3362$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that employees who perceive positive outcomes from fun activities are more likely to experience higher job satisfaction and performance.

Moreover, the reverse scale of appropriateness has a significant negative impact on job performance ($\beta = -0.1192$, $p = 0.0273$). This suggests that employees who have a more positive attitude towards joking, laughing, or having a playful attitude at work (higher scores on the reversed appropriateness scale) tend to have lower job performance. Such perceptions can create a more serious and less engaging work environment, potentially reducing opportunities for team bonding, stress relief, and overall motivation. Employees who strongly agree with statements like "joking, laughing, or having a 'playful attitude' while on the job is immature and unprofessional" or "work hours are the time to work and non-work hours are the time to have fun" may not engage in workplace fun activities. This underscores the importance of addressing cultural and professional norms to create an environment where fun activities are seen as beneficial rather than inappropriate.

Lastly, the strong positive impact of job satisfaction on job performance ($\beta = 0.5359$, $p < 0.001$) highlights the interconnectedness of these constructs. Satisfied employees are more motivated, engaged, and likely to perform better, supporting the notion that enhancing job satisfaction is key to improving overall job performance.

From the findings, the lack of a direct impact of fun activities on job performance in Myanmar's hotel industry may be due to the structured nature of hotel jobs, which involve routine tasks and rigid schedules, limiting the immediate influence of fun activities on performance. Additionally, cultural factors in Myanmar may lead employees to separate work and leisure, viewing fun activities as secondary to their primary responsibilities. The developing state of the hospitality industry in Myanmar, with its emphasis on meeting operational standards and customer service, may also prioritize job performance metrics over the benefits of fun activities.

6 Conclusion, limitation, and future research

6.1 Conclusion

This study suggests that certain aspects of workplace fun significantly enhance job satisfaction and job performance among hotel employees in Myanmar. Key dimensions of workplace fun, including fun activities, manager support for fun, and perceived consequences, contribute positively to employee outcomes. However, not all dimensions of workplace fun were found to be significant. The findings underscore the importance of fostering a fun and engaging work environment to boost employee morale and productivity in the hospitality industry. This study contributes to the workplace fun literature by enhancing the body of knowledge from the hotel industry and from the Myanmar context. The practical implications also benefit the hotel industry in Myanmar; by promoting fun activities and supportive leadership, hotel managers can create a positive atmosphere that enhances job satisfaction and performance. These insights are valuable for developing effective human resource management practices aimed at improving employee well-being and organizational success. Future research could explore other dimensions of workplace fun and their impact on employee outcomes to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

6.2 Limitations

Although this study has done a lot of literature reading and combing, and also combined with the tourist attraction research scenarios to carry out scientific and rigorous questionnaire design and distribution and recovery, there are still some limitations. Firstly, the use of a cross-sectional design restricts the ability to establish causality between workplace fun and employee outcomes, as it captures data at a single point in time rather than over an extended period. Additionally, the findings are culturally specific to the hotel industry in Myanmar, which may limit their generalizability to other contexts or industries. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported data could introduce response biases, potentially affecting the accuracy and reliability of the results, as participants may provide socially desirable answers rather than their true experiences.

6.3 Future research

Future research should employ longitudinal designs to investigate the long-term effects of workplace fun on job satisfaction and performance. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the causal relationships and the sustainability of the effects over time.

Moreover, since the study is conducted using Myanmar's context, studies of hotel employees in different cultural settings are suggested to validate and expand upon the findings of this study. This would enhance the generalizability of the results and provide insights into how workplace fun can be effectively implemented in diverse organizational environments.

By addressing these limitations and pursuing future research directions, a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of workplace fun on employee outcomes can be achieved, ultimately contributing to the development of effective strategies for enhancing employee satisfaction and performance in various organizational contexts.

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Factors Influencing Crew Satisfaction Onboard Ocean-Going Cruise Ships

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Abstract
The cruise industry is a unique industry forecasted to grow exponentially. With an increasing need for crew members, and an intense focus on improving guest service standards, cruise ship companies are poised to look more carefully into crew member satisfaction. This paper will investigate what are some of the factors that influence crew member satisfaction through a sequential mixed method approach; by conducting interviews with a snowball sample of crew members, and later testing the factors identified through a larger online survey.

Keywords: employee satisfaction, crew members, cruise industry, motivation

1 Introduction

The cruise industry tourism is a US$30 billion industry (Statista, 2024), that had enjoyed incredible growth before Covid-19 (Ariza-Montes, Radic, Arjona-Fuentes, Han, & Law, 2021). At its peak, it employed 225,000 crew members (CLIA, 2020) across nearly 300 large vessels worldwide (CLIA, 2023). The industry is now expected to get an exponential growth in Asia (Baker, 2016).

The steady increase in competition has led to an increasing emphasis on onboard services (Risitano, Sorrentino, & Quintano, 2017). As a result, crew satisfaction and engagement have become priorities due to their pivotal role in shaping guest experiences. Studies have shown a strong correlation between crew satisfaction and guest satisfaction (Gibson, Lim, & Holmes, 2016; Larsen, Marnburg, & Øgaard, 2012; Sturman & Ford, 2011; Testa, Skaruppa, & Pietrzak, 1998). This trend is observed across the entire hospitality industry, as all sectors face increasing pressure to recruit and retain top talent in an increasingly competitive market (Ariza-Montes, & al., 2021; Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin, & Michaels III, 1998; Gibson, 2008; Testa, Williams, & Pietrzak, 1998).

Despite having one of the highest burnouts and turnover rates among all industries (Statista, 2019), the cruise sector maintains a retention rate of over 80%, according to CLIA (2020). However, this figure is debated in the literature (Radic, 2017b; Vlad, Tajiri, Damaschin, & Law, 2019). Cruise ship crews often work contracts lasting several months, during which they are separated from their families and confined on board (Gibson, 2012; Radic, 2017a). Some crew members describe this experience as 'being imprisoned' (Dennett, Cameron, Bamford, & Jenkins, 2014). The work environment is both paramilitary and culturally diverse (Gibson, 2012), making onboard work more of a 'lifestyle' than a job (Mancini, 2004). Strong camaraderie among crew members adds to the uniqueness and 'peculiarity' of the industry (Ariza-Montes et al., 2021; Dennett et al., 2014).

Lastly, Covid-19 exposed vulnerabilities in cruise ship companies' human resources strategies, revealing gaps in addressing crew welfare and resilience (Radic, Lück, Ariza-Montes, & Han, 2020). This may have negatively affected the 'highly satisfied employees' mentioned by CLIA (2020), underscoring the need for a comprehensive investigation into crew satisfaction dynamics.

This paper firstly will ask what factors motivate crew members, and then will ask how motivated crew members and which factors are have a higher impact on crew member's morale. Answering these questions will help build up on the scare literature available so far, while also addressing such discrepancies mentioned by industry reports and literature.

2 Literature review

Various frameworks have been used to analyse motivation within the industry (Gibson, 2008), but none can be accurately applied to cruise ship life (Dennett et al., 2014). These models either focus on the job itself (Hu, Zhao, & Carter, 2003; Lee, Back, & Chan, 2015; Radic, 2017b; Radic, Arjona-Fuentes, Ariza-Montes, Han, & Law, 2020; Sirgy, Efraty, Lee, & Siegel, 2001; Testa, Williams, & Pietrzak, 1998) or on specific factors experienced by crew members (Bardelle & Lashley, 2015; Diadori, 2014; Gibson & Perkins, 2015; Radic, 2018; Radic, Ariza-Montes, Hernandez-Perlines, & Giorgi, 2020). Most frameworks fail to account for the fact that crew members engage not only with their work but also during their free time (Bolt & Lashley, 2015; Radic, 2017a). Quality of Work Life (QWL) is a concept used by researchers to study different perspectives on work and its impact on employees (Lee, Back, & Chan, 2015; Sirgy et al., 2001). It is defined as the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of various needs that employees experience through their participation in the workplace (Sirgy et al., 2001). Herzberg conducted research based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and observed that some needs generate dissatisfaction when unmet but do not create satisfaction when fulfilled. He termed these 'hygiene' or 'dissatisfiers.' Other needs, which create satisfaction when fulfilled, were named 'motivators' or 'satisfiers' (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). There appears to be a correlation between the two theories. All the hygiene factors identified by Herzberg's theory are found at the base of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, while the motivators are located at the top of the pyramid (Pardee, 1990).. Further studies later noted that some factors may take a more hybrid form, causing dissatisfaction when lacking, but providing motivation if provided in a more efficient way depending on the context (Herzberg, 2003; Sirgy et al, 2001). Lastly, according to Sirgy et al (2001), the sum of the satisfaction from the fulfilment of employees needs while at work go towards the measurement of QWL.

Based on the literature available the following factors have been so far identified.

Physiological Needs. These needs are highlighted by the Maritime Labor Convention (ILO, 2006), and the compulsory regulations on minimum rest hours for crew members.

Health and Safety Needs. Working on ships is considered as high-risk occupation, covered by international safety regulations S.O.L.A.S. (IMO, 1974). Research has noted a link between unsafe working conditions and negative crew engagement (Radic, 2018), as well as the effect of available health insurance (Sirgy et al., 2001).

Economic and Family Needs. Pay is an important employment factor (Darma Oka & Sumawidari, 2018), but on ships, crew members look at their earnings as 'saving money' (Ariza-Montes et al., 2021; Gibson, 2012; Mancini, 2004). Furthermore, unlike land-based jobs, crew members spend a lot of time away from their families, hence homesickness can affect crew satisfaction (Bardelle & Lashley, 2015).

Social Needs. Crews are heterogeneous and multicultural (Gibson, 2012), and while there is a strong hierarchy in place (Gibson, 2012; Radic, 2017a) there is also a strong sense of 'camaraderie' which is not found in other industries (Gibson, 2008). This is important as these extended social interactions seems to be a positive influence to crew satisfactions (Gibson & Perkins, 2015), and take place both on and off-duty (Gibson & Perkins, 2015). Sirgy et al. (2001) also include leisure time under social needs. Gibson (2012) and Mancini (2004) mentions that 'travelling' and seeing the world is also an important factor encouraging crew members to work on cruise ships. Lastly, while cruise ships are getting larger, offering wider choice of activities to its guests (Castillo-Manzano & López-Valpuesta, 2018), living conditions for crew members are still limited (Bolt & Lashley, 2015).

Esteem Needs. By esteem needs it refers to the recognition and appreciation of one's work within and outside of the company (Larsen, Marnburg, & Øgaard, 2012; Sirgy et al., 2001), and this could be achieved through appraisals (Gibson & Walters, 2012).

Actualization Needs. Career growth is an example of actualization need being successfully satisfied on board of P&O cruise ships (Gibson & Walters, 2012).

Satisfaction of Knowledge Needs. According to Diadori (2014) Learning and on-board training does not seem to impact crew satisfaction directly, but can have a positive effect on other aspects, such as safety, communication between crew members, indirectly impacting crew satisfaction. However, with training and learning, crew member master their jobs, decreasing stress (Kusuma & Susilowati, 2020) and offsetting the sense of overwhelming experience for new seafarer (Gibson, 2012). Company communications and culture also play a role in satisfying knowledge needs (Vlad, Tajiri, Damaschin, & Law, 2019)

Satisfaction of Aesthetic Needs. Sirgy et al. (2001) have identified as the freedom to be creative at work.

Other factors. Testa, Williams, & Pietrzak (1998) mention that the ship design has a direct effect on Job Satisfaction, and this can take different forms, such as recreational facilities (social needs), as well as crew members resting space (affecting physiological needs).

3 Research methodology

This paper will take a sequential mixed method approach. Given the limited literature on the topic (Hu, Zhao, & Carter, 2003), the peculiarity of the industry (Radic, 2017a), and the recent pandemic (Radic, Lück, Ariza-Montes et al., 2020) there is a possibility that not all factors influencing crew members satisfaction on board of ships may have been yet identified in the literature. Hence an initial qualitative data collection will be conducted by means of interviews with a smaller snowball sample of crew members to identify different factors that may influence crew members satisfaction.

Questions will be mostly open ended in nature and will try to probe into the positive and negative experiences crew members live while working on board.

The data collected will then be compared with the factors identified in the literature, and an online questionnaire will be prepared, asking crew members how the various factor influence their satisfaction regarding their work on board of ships.

These will mostly be 5- or 7-point Likert scales questions, asking respondents to score how motivated they are at their current work, and how are the various factors handled by the company they work for.

4 Expected results and limitations

This research will add to the lack of body of literature by confirming or refuting existing factors influencing crew members satisfaction, while attempting to bring in additional factors that may not have been identified before. Furthermore, it maybe possible to note any difference in motivating factors following the Covid-19 pandemic. This can be useful to cruise ship companies as well as hotels and resort who need to provide accommodation to their staff (like on remote islands).

The expected results will add to the little body of the literature so far available and help build better models to study this 'heterotopia' as defined by the French philosopher Foucalt (1986).

Research within this industry is by no means easy, as most of previous research has focused on small samples and on qualitative data collections (Ariza-Montes et al., 2021) often collected from crew members on a specific ship (Bardelle & Lashley, 2015; Bolt & Lashley, 2015), or a cruise company (Diadori, 2014; Gibson, 2008), as it is generally difficult to collect data from cruise ships (Dennett et al., 2014), a difficulty that can be partially overcome with previous working experience on board of cruise ships (Ariza-Montes et al., 2021).

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Investigating the Selection Criteria Adopted by Generation Y and Generation Z Customers of Serviced Apartments: The Case of Bangkok, Thailand

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Abstract

Despite the comprehending attributes desired by target customers, and the online channels' high potential of becoming promising marketing channel for Generation Y and Generation Z, previous research that could guide practitioners in hospitality industry has been scarce. Thus, this research aims to 1) identify attributes desired by serviced apartments target customers, when selecting their accommodation; and 2) investigate if the difference between Generation Y and Generation Z target customers exists, in terms of serviced apartments selection criteria; and 3) explore if the identified attributes have been communicated in serviced apartments' promotional campaigns shown on online communication channels. The mixed methods design comprising a questionnaire survey conducted with 400 Thai Generation Y and Generation Z target customers of serviced apartments, and a content analysis method performed with promotional and advertising campaigns of 50 serviced apartments being active in Bangkok, are selected. This research would be able to provide the practitioners with a new strategy in order to attract customers with the right attributes via the right channel.

Keywords: serviced-apartment, utilitarian value, hedonic value, selection criteria

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1 Introduction

Serviced apartments have grown in popularity over the years. By definition, serviced apartments are fully-furnished property with full facilities (SuiteHub, 2021). Customers have been shifting their interest from other kinds of accommodation to serviced apartments significantly. Due to the intense competition, the businesses are forced to come up with better marketing strategies (Akarathammachote, 1998) that can present various product attributes which are considered to be important for each target group. In order to communicate the attributes to the right target, they need to portray their property correctly through the fit media. Communication between businesses and customers are considered to be vital in order for business to achieve the set goal (Akarathammachote, 1998). Advertisement can create the right perception to the right target that the accommodation would like to attract (Nitkitsomboon, 2013).

Scholars suggested that utilitarian and hedonic values are considered the main attributes sought by customers. According to Lu, Liu, and Fang (2016), these values would be able to clarify the customers' actions accurately. Normally the customers will base their decision on these values (Acosta, 2017). This research would be able to provide the practitioners with a new strategy in order to attract customers with the right attributes via the right channel.

Among all existing generations of customers, Generation Y and Generation Z should be prioritized by travel-related and hospitality businesses. Throughout the 21st century, Generation Y has gained control of the workforce (Mendler, 2017) while Generation Z that shares the greatest proportion of the world population, despite starting to enter the workforce, gives high importance to travel, like their preceding generation (Generation Y) (Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries, 2024). Furthermore, as both generations heavily use online channels to influence their decision and to purchase products (Agrawal, 2022), it cannot be denied that they become the important target of travel-related and hospitality businesses that aims to promote their products/services via online channels. This is also applied to serviced apartment businesses as digital marketing (i.e., social media and website marketing) is deemed effective for the promotion of luxury apartments (Sanduapama & Karunarathne, 2023). Despite the aforementioned need for comprehending attributes desired by target customers, and the online channels' high potential of becoming promising marketing channel, previous research that could guide practitioners in hospitality industry has been scarce. This is shown in very few numbers of previous studies focusing on serviced apartments' selection criteria (i.e., Chaterjee et al., 2019; Phadungyat, 2008; Tran & Filimonau, 2020). Moreover, among the relevant previous research, the two highly potential generations of target customers (i.e., Generation Y and Generation Z) have not been specifically emphasized. The need for specifically investigate these two generations in details is supported with the notion that Generation Y's and Generation Z's characteristics should not be comprehended in the same way (Kim et al., 2020).

To address the previously mentioned gap, this research aims to 1) identify attributes desired by serviced apartments target customers, when selecting their accommodation; and 2) investigate if the difference between Generation Y and Generation Z target customers exists, in terms of serviced apartments selection criteria; and 3) explore if the identified attributes have been communicated in serviced apartments' promotional campaigns shown on online communication channels.

2 Literature Review

Criteria Selection for Serviced Apartments

Utilitarian values

Under the utilitarian value; location, price, facilities, and products are the main drives that motivates the consumers. According to Phadungyat (2008), Smith and Pinkerton (2020), Singla and Bendigiri (2019), and Deepeka and Narayanan (2018), location of the serviced apartment should be close to their workplace, easily accessible, convenient to travel, and safe. The second most important factor which is the price (Foxley, 2001; Koeri, 2016; Gunasekaran & Anandkumar, 2012. The importance of the price has been emphasized as well as the deposit amount in order to rent. The following factor refers to the serviced apartment's facilities which are available for the customers to utilize on the premises. High-speed internet has shown to be the most important facility that was required the most by the customers (Phadungyat, 2008). Smith and Pinkerton (2020) has stated that safety and security facilities such as hallway lights and keycard systems are the important facilities, along with washing machines, cable, fitness, and private bathroom. Last utilitarian factor is the product. Mentioning by Foxley (2001) that the serviced apartment has the ability to provide the ease and flexibility of the contract, thus, customers can feel at ease when they want to prolong or shorten their stays.

Hedonic values

The hedonic value consists of many motivational factors which are in regard to the service, brand, and flexibility and comfort. Phadungyat (2008), Smith and Pinkerton (2020), and Deepeka and Narayanan (2018) had found that customers prioritize the service first which is associated with the staff and management team. They should be friendly and accommodating. All of which is the reflection of the serviced apartments' value. Following by the second most important aspect which is the brand. Customers would usually lean towards international brands more due to the credibility and the quality they held (Phadungyat, 2008; Koeri, 2016). Foxley (2001) and Gunasekaran and Anandkumar (2012) have mentioned another factor which is Flexibility and Comfort. They stated that customers would want to stay in a homely serviced apartment. Furthermore, customers value the ability of serviced apartments to provide the sense of privacy, security, different experience, locality of the environment, flexibility of the stay, and friendly atmosphere.

Referring to the aforementioned possible impacts of utilitarian and hedonic values that could be posed on positive customer perceptions and behaviors (e.g., preferences, satisfaction, purchasing decision), the following hypotheses are stated.

H1. Utilitarian values positively affect intent to purchase serviced apartments services.

H2. Hedonic values positively affect intent to purchase serviced apartments services.

Furthermore, due to the possible differences between the consumption behaviors of Generation Y and Generation Z (Agrawal, 2022), *H3.* is formulated as shown below.

H3. There exists the difference between the attributes of serviced apartments desired by Generation Y and by Generation Z.

3 Methods

The selected study setting is Bangkok, Thailand in which the growing rate of serviced apartments is evident such as 23,733 serviced apartment units in 2022 and the occupancy rate of 85.97% reported in 2019 (Hollis, 2020). The mixed methods design will be adopted to pursue all research objectives. First, quantitative research will be used to address the first research objective identifying serviced apartments attributes desired by target customers. The questionnaire survey will be conducted with the convenience sampling technique. The selected sample comprising anyone with Thai nationality and being in Generation Y or Generation Z (born between 1981-2012) who intends to consume serviced apartments services, can be approached at public spaces in Bangkok such as universities, offices, and public transportation systems. The sample size of 400 respondents is adopted as it satisfies the suggested sample size for the structural equation modelling method with a complex model (Hair et al., 2014). The measurement items are derived from Suttichit (2022) in which there are four latent variables categorized into utilitarian and hedonic values, namely, utilitarian function, utilitarian condition, hedonic emotion and hedonic epistemicity are measured with 22 items, and 5 items measuring intention.

The gathered data will be analyzed with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis in which the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) will be conducted to establish measurement model validity, will be followed with the path analysis to test hypotheses (Hair et al., 2014). To pursue the second research objective (*H3.*), the multigroup invariance using AMOS program is applied in order to compare differences across groups (Byrne, 2004) of the two generations.

The qualitative approach is employed to address the third research objective through the content analysis method. All promotional and advertising campaigns and information pieces posted on all available online channels, for the purpose of promoting at least 50 selected serviced apartments in Bangkok, will be collected. The sample size of 50 serviced apartments are selected to allow data saturation in which there has not been any new theme emerging (Creswell, 2012) to be fulfilled. The content will be analyzed if any subtypes of utilitarian and hedonic values are mentioned in the content used to promote serviced apartments to their target customers.

4 Expected contributions

This research aims to theoretically contribute to the body of knowledge by validating the relationship among utilitarian and hedonic values and customer behavioral intention could be applied in the context of serviced apartments. Although serviced apartments are included in the hospitality sector in which its consumer research has been intensive, the context of serviced apartments is considered understudied due to very few numbers of relevant research. In terms of practical contributions, practitioners who are responsible for promoting serviced apartments could be guided with the desirable attributes that their target customers seek when selecting serviced apartments. Hence, the suitable attributes could be emphasized in their promotional and advertising campaigns, if they are currently missing or are deemphasized. Moreover, different attributes that could be communicated in order to better attract Generation Y and Generation Z customers, could be suggested if the difference between the two generations emerges from the findings.

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Session 9: Tourist Perception and Cultural Tourism (Postgraduate Research Session)

An Investigation of Cultural Tourism Attraction from the Tourist Perspective: The Case of Splendid China Folk Village, Shenzhen, China

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Abstract

This research investigated whether servicescape, authenticity, service quality, experiential value which are perceived as crucial components have positive effects on the satisfaction, overall experiential value and loyalty towards the Splendid China Folk Village. After established research procedures, a quantitative method was conducted using data from the participation of 250 people who visited the Splendid China Folk Village in the past two years. Online questionnaire was used to collect data, while partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was used for data analysis. This study concluded that servicescape, service quality, functional value and emotional value of Splendid China Folk Village have positive effects on satisfaction and overall experiential value. Satisfaction and overall experiential value have positive effects on loyalty. The research enriches the literature of domestic cultural theme park research along with provide useful contribution for cultural theme park management.

Keywords: Splendid China Folk Village, servicescape, service quality, authenticity, experiential value, satisfaction

1 Introduction

1.1 Research background

Splendid China Folk Village is located in Shenzhen, a significant tourism hub located in Guangdong Province, China. Shenzhen has gained prominence as a notable tourist destination in China, as demonstrated by its inclusion in the list of top 10 cities with the world's largest tourism markets in 2017. Splendid China Folk Village is the first theme park in China (Zhu et al.,2020). It is one of the scenic parks with the highest number of recreated scenes in the world. Reflecting Chinese history, culture, art and ancient architecture, it is the world's largest authentic miniature landscape (Kim,2021). It is the first choice for tourists from home and abroad to experience Chinese culture. Furthermore, Splendid China Folk Village has also become one of Shenzhen's landmarks. Since the opening of the Splendid China Folk Village in Shenzhen, there has been a wave of theme park construction in the country.

However, with the ageing of facilities and the reduction of innovation, the development of theme parks at the current stage faces new challenges (Chen et al.,2021). In the current development of Shenzhen folk culture tourism, folk tourism development enterprises pay too much attention to the market benefits of tourism development, without in-depth exploration of the connotation of folk culture. To satisfy the needs of some tourists, many tourism companies have lost the mystery and characteristics of folk tourism activities. As people's travelling time increases and live media develops, people gradually lose interest in this cultural theme and miniature landscape after seeing the native landscape. In addition, there are problems such as lack of freshness, immobilization of attraction and ageing of landscape in scenic spots, so many tourists go once, and the urge to visit a second time decreases (Wang, 2013).

In these recent years,the Shenzhen government has a plan to develop Shenzhen's tourism industry to an internationally advanced level by 2025 and to build Shenzhen into a cultural centre that serves the whole country and faces the world (Shenzhen Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television, Tourism and Sports, 2022).

In this context, the Splendid China Folk Village, as a cultural theme park that has won many awards in Shenzhen, should follow the government's footsteps, improve the current situation and strictly enforce the management of the scenic area. However, there are few studies on the Splendid China Folk Village, and so far there are no studies on visitor satisfaction, loyalty and overall experiential value of the Splendid China Folk Village to provide a better insight on how visitors or customers perceive the place. Although there are a number of studies that use the complementary concepts of servicescape, authenticity, service quality, and consumption values to investigate factors that promote satisfaction, loyalty and the overall experiential values to tourists, none of which has investigated particularly in the context of the cultural theme park. Most of the studies about this attraction focus on the impact of folk culture and park planning, therefore cannot provide a better understanding of tourists' current perceptions of the scenic spot and the specific current operation of the scenic spot. This study will fill this gap by investigating the level of tourists' perceptions of various consumption criteria after visiting the Splendid China Folk Village. This study also provides direction for improvements to the place.

The study using servicescape, authenticity, service quality and values is not new, but they may be used separately, or, if combined, used in other contexts (different regions, different tourism attractions or activities). Many studies on servicescape have been conducted in the context of hotels, restaurants, hospitals and so on (Rosenbaum & Massiah, 2011; Lin, 2004), investigating their impact on service quality or customer satisfaction. Tourism authenticity research is often linked to stage performances and heritage tourism research to examine its impact on cultural tourism consumption. The quality of service has been widely researched and applied in a variety of industries and scenarios. To investigate the impact of experiential value on satisfaction, several studies have been conducted. At present, there are no studies that simultaneously look at servicescape, authenticity, service quality, experiential value, satisfaction and loyalty to understand tourists' perceptions of scenic spots. As they are perceived as important components to promote the attraction of cultural theme parks, this study aims to fill this gap and to investigate the influence of different dimensions on visitor satisfaction, loyalty and overall experiential values.

1.2 Research Objective

The research objective is to investigate whether servicescape, authenticity, service quality, and experiential value have positive effects on the satisfaction, loyalty and overall experiential value of visitors.

2 Literature review

Following the research objective, the selected concepts are elaborated in this section:

2.1 Servicescape

Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) established an extended servicescape framework, noting that servicescape includes not only the controllable elements of managers, but also the uncontrollable elements of management, such as social, symbolic, and natural elements.

This study mainly discusses the servicescape of Splendid China Folk Village and adopts the extended servicescape framework proposed by Rosenbaum. Splendid China Folk Village is mostly an artificial theme park. So natural dimension is not taken as the main research objects. In this study, servicescape are classified into three dimensions: physical dimension, social dimension and socially-symbolic dimension. Since the socially-symbolic dimension has some overlapping concepts with epistemic value and authenticity, this study characterised this dimension of the servicescape in the latter two variables.

Based on a comprehensive review of the literature related to the servicescape, specifically Hightower (1997), Lee et al. (2019), Situmorang (2018), and other related scholars, it can be inferred that the servicescape significantly enhances tourist satisfaction. Furthermore, Li (2006), Sun (2020) and Wu and Liang's (2009) discovered that servicescape influences the customer's different experiential value. Based on the above findings, this study puts forward the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 (H1a). Servicescape has a positive effect on tourist satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2 (H1b). Servicescape has a positive effect on overall experiential value.

2.2 SERVQUAL model

Scholars have done a lot of studies on measuring service quality in companies using the SERVQUAL model. Of these, the most widely used is probably the "SERVQUAL" model developed and improved by Parasuraman and colleagues (Kouthouris & Alexandris,2005). It is a customer rating system for perceived service quality. The SERVQUAL model, which consists of 22 items representing five dimensions (reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles), has been used to measure service quality in different service environments (Parasuraman et al.,1985,1994). The SERVQUAL model has good adaptability in evaluating tourism service quality through the research of these scholars on the application and improvement of the SERVQUAL model in the tourism industry. It gives a theoretical basis for applying the model in this paper. As the tangibles dimension has already been discussed in Servicescape, this paper focused on reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

Regarding the relationship between service quality and tourist satisfaction, Kassim and Asiah (2010), Ramanathan and Ramanathan (2016) and Tsang et al. (2012) used the SERVQUAL model and found that service quality has a significant positive impact on visitor satisfaction. In addition, LIN et al.(2020) found that service quality has a significant positive effect on experiential value.

By reviewing the above, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3 (H2a). Service quality has a positive effect on tourist satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4 (H2b). Service quality has a positive effect on overall experiential value.

2.3 Authenticity

Ever since Boorstin (1961) began researching authenticity in tourism in 1961, tourism, experience and authenticity have been intertwined. As research on the theory of authenticity has deepened, the academic community has divided authenticity into four schools of thought with different views: objectivism authenticity (MacCannell, 1973), constructivism authenticity (Hughes, 1995), postmodernism authenticity (Eco, 1986), existentialism Authenticity (Wang, 1999).

As for the research on the issue of authenticity, from different perspectives, there will be their preferred views. Since tourists' perceptions of the authenticity of the Splendid China Folk Village are the research objective of this paper, Wang's perspective is the most appropriate for this study.Therefore, the view of existentialism authenticity is adopted in this research. Wang (1999) focuses on the actual state of existence of tourists as tourism subjects, emphasises the feelings of tourism subjects, and proposes that the authenticity of existence is based on the activity itself rather than the tourism object. Tourists usually like to seek authenticity in other "times" and other "places" far away from their daily lives. The more different the culture, the more it stimulates the desire to see the authenticity (Li & Zhang, 2012). Splendid China Folk Village guides visitors to experience the authenticity of the place through specific symbols of the original ethnic culture that can be easily associated with the visitors, such as ethnic costumes, ethnic rituals, ethnic totems and so on. However, the research subject of this study is still the tourist, and this study is more concerned with the tourist's perception of the scenic spot rather than whether the scenic spot itself is authentic. The research focus of this paper is more on the subject's perception of the authenticity of the object (that is, the tourist's perception of the authenticity of the Splendid China Folk Village) and the coordination between planning and authenticity of the Splendid China Folk Village.

Regarding the relationship between authenticity and satisfaction, Gao & Ling (2007), Liang & Wu (2020) found that the higher the tourists' perceived rating of authenticity, the higher their satisfaction with the tourist destination. In addition, Jiang (2019) uncovered a noteworthy impact of a tourist's perception of authenticity on the experiential value within the setting of historic towns. By reviewing the above, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 5 (H3a). Authenticity has a positive effect on tourist satisfaction.

Hypothesis 6 (H3b). Authenticity has a positive effect on overall experiential value.

2.4 Experiential value

Due to different research perspectives, the categorisation of value dimensions is also different. In this paper, the dimensions of tourism experiential value have been categorised into three dimensions of functional, emotional and epistemic value, referring to Sheth et al.'s (1991) categorisation of value, as these selected values mostly reflect the experiential values generated from visiting the Splendid China Folk Village.

Based on the collation of experiential value-related literature in this study, from McIntosh and Thyne (2005), Liu (2012), Prebensen et al. (2013), Ma & Zhang (2017) show that the overall experiential value of different dimensions of value experiences for tourists varies across scenarios. Therefore, this study hypothesises that the value of different dimensions of experience has a positive effect on the overall experiential value in Splendid China Folk Village. From the results of Taylor et al. (2018) and Prebensen et al. (2016), the experiential value has a positive impact on tourists' satisfaction and loyalty. By reviewing the above, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 7 (H4a). Functional value has a positive effect on tourist satisfaction.

Hypothesis 8 (H4b). Functional value has a positive effect on overall experiential value.

Hypothesis 9 (H5a). Emotional value has a positive effect on tourist satisfaction.

Hypothesis 10 (H5b). Emotional value has a positive effect on overall experiential value.

Hypothesis 11 (H6a). Epistemic value has a positive effect on tourist satisfaction.

Hypothesis 12 (H6b). Epistemic value has a positive effect on overall experiential value.

Hypothesis 13 (H7). Overall experiential value has a positive effect on tourists' loyalty.

2.5 Tourist satisfaction

By using Pizam et al. (1978), Beard and Ragheb (1980), Cronin and Taylor (1994), Oliver (1999) and others definition of satisfaction, this paper defines satisfaction as the process of comparing tourists' pre-trip expectations with their post-trip experience perception of tourist attractions, related infrastructure, management service level and environmental atmosphere. If the pre-trip expectation is higher than the post-trip experience perception, it means that tourists are not satisfied. On the contrary, it means that tourists are more satisfied.

2.6 Tourist loyalty

By using Jacoby and Chestnut (1978), Oppermann (1999), Shao (2005) and others definition of loyalty, this study argues that tourist loyalty is often expressed as behavioural and attitudinal loyalty of tourists after visiting scenic spots, the formation of certain preferences for scenic spots and the products and services they offer, and behavioural and attitudinal loyalty to the same tourist destinations for repeated visits, word-of-mouth recommendations and the tendency to repeat their visits.

Kozak and Rimmington (2000), Cheng & Sun (2012), She et al. (2016) and others found that tourist satisfaction positively influences tourist loyalty. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

Hypothesis 15 (H8). Tourist satisfaction has a positive effect on tourist loyalty.

2.7 Conceptual framework

On the basis of the foregoing, the study proposes the following conceptual model (Figure 1).

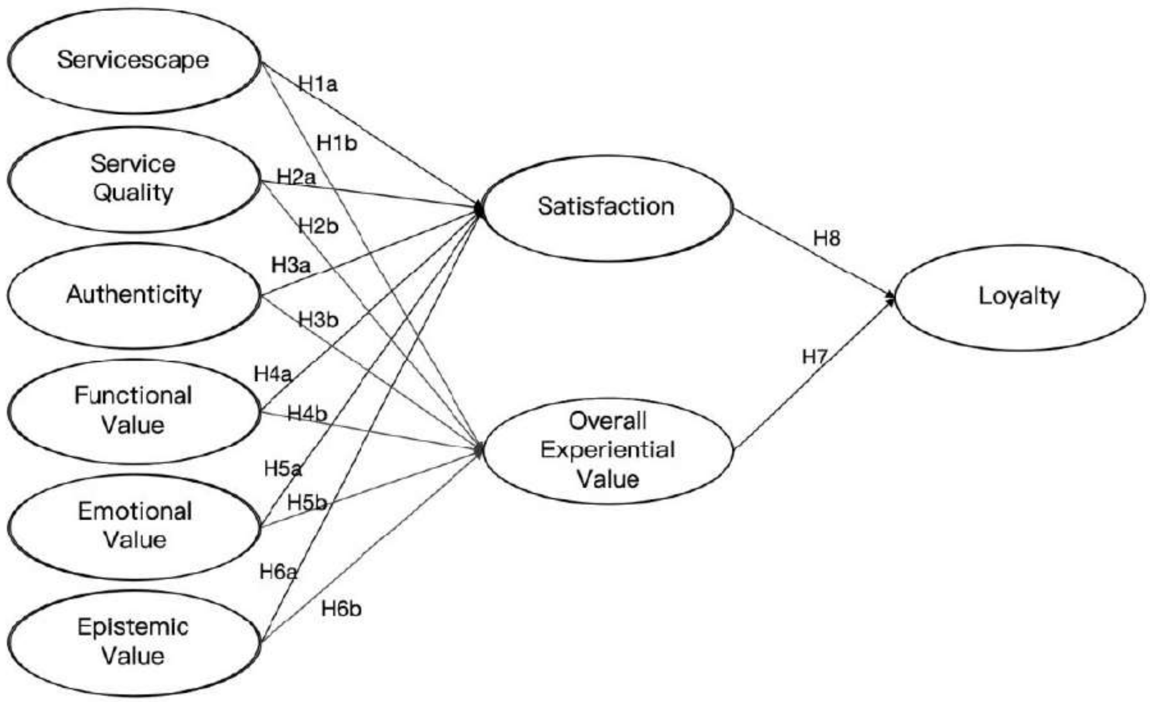

Fig. 1: Conceptual framework

3 Research methodology

3.1 Research design

This study applied a quantitative research design. It is characterised by the study of the relationship between variables through numerical measurement and statistical analysis. This fits with the objective of this study. Considering the factors of time, place and efficiency, this study uses online questionnaire snowball sampling to collect data. According to the often-cited 10 times rule (Barclay et al. 1995), the sample size for this study is therefore at least 50. As a result of the data collection, the total number of respondents was 286. A total of 36 responses were then eliminated due to irrelevance, e.g. answering only one question. Subsequently, the number accepted for analysis was 250.

3.2 PLS-SEM as the selected tool for analysis

Due to the multivariate data to be analysed and the fact that this study involves both a reflective construct and a formative contract, this study used partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) for statistical analysis. The analytical software called "ADANCO (Version 2.3.3)" was used to construct the relationships between the computational constructs. ADANCO is a software for composite-base, structural equation modelling and confirmatory composite analysis. It implements several limited - information estimators, such as PLS-SEM.

3.3 The survey questionnaire, reliability and validity

In this study, the questionnaire was translated into Chinese first. The translated questionnaire was pilot-tested with 50 observations. Based on these respondents' recommendations, some words have been adjusted. After the Pilot test, the researcher partially adapted the questionnaire. There are a total of 9 items: servicescapes (5 items), service quality (5 items), authenticity (3 items), functional value (3 items), emotional value (2 items), epistemic value (2 items), overall experiential value (1 item), tourist satisfaction (1 item), tourist loyalty (1 item). Each item is measured on a 5-point Likert scale, where 5 is 'strongly agree' and 1 is 'strongly disagree'. For the one-item construct, the study ensures that the concrete meaning is represented and clearly reflects the construct, following the requirements under the doubly concrete construct condition (Rossiter, 2011). In this study, a Likert scale was applied to each item of the test, so Cronbach's alpha was used as the reliability test method (Gliner et al., 2011). In the pilot test, Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.8 - 0.9, which means that the reliability is good. Two experts were invited to assess the validity of the questionnaire, which was tested by reviewing the clarity and readability of the content.

In addition, this research and survey were approved by the IRB committee and complied with the research ethics standard. In order to ensure that participants are protected in the study, this study used anonymised data collection and the respondents are free to quit the survey anytime. Data provided by participants will be recorded in the questionnaire by staff and kept confidential. All data will be accessible only to the Principal Investigator and analyzed in aggregate format. None of the personal information will be disclosed. After project completion, data will be kept for further study and in computer files that require a password, which is accessed by the Principal Investigator only.

4 Results

In this section, the researcher will describe in detail the target group that participated in the survey, the assessment measurement model and the structural model. In addition, this section will answer the research questions posed.

4.1 Descriptive profile of the target respondents

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic profile of the survey participants.

Table 1: Descriptive profile of the target respondents

Variables	Categories	Respondents （n=250）	
		f	%
Residence	Shenzhen	150	0.60
	Other parts of China	100	0.40
	Other Countries	0	0.0
Gender	Male	103	40.9
	Female	147	59.1
	Other	0	0.0
Age	Under 16 y.o.	8	3.15
	16-35y.o.	159	63.6
	36-55y.o.	74	29.7
	55+ y.o.	9	3.5
Family status	Single	77	30.8
	Married	135	54.2
	Prefer not to say	38	15.0
Education	Up to high school	75	30.0
	Graduate	140	56.0
	Postgraduate	31	12.6
	Higher degree (PhD)	4	1.4
Monthly income (RMB)	Below 5000	74	29.4
	5000-12000	120	47.9
	12000-15000	32	12.9

	15000 and over	24	9.8
Way of travel	Single	36	14.3
	With Friends、Classmates and colleagues	102	40.9
	With Family and Relatives	68	27.3
	With tourist groups	27	10.9
	Group activities organized by companies, schools, etc	17	6.6

f = frequency; n = number of samples

4.2 The evaluation of overall model fit

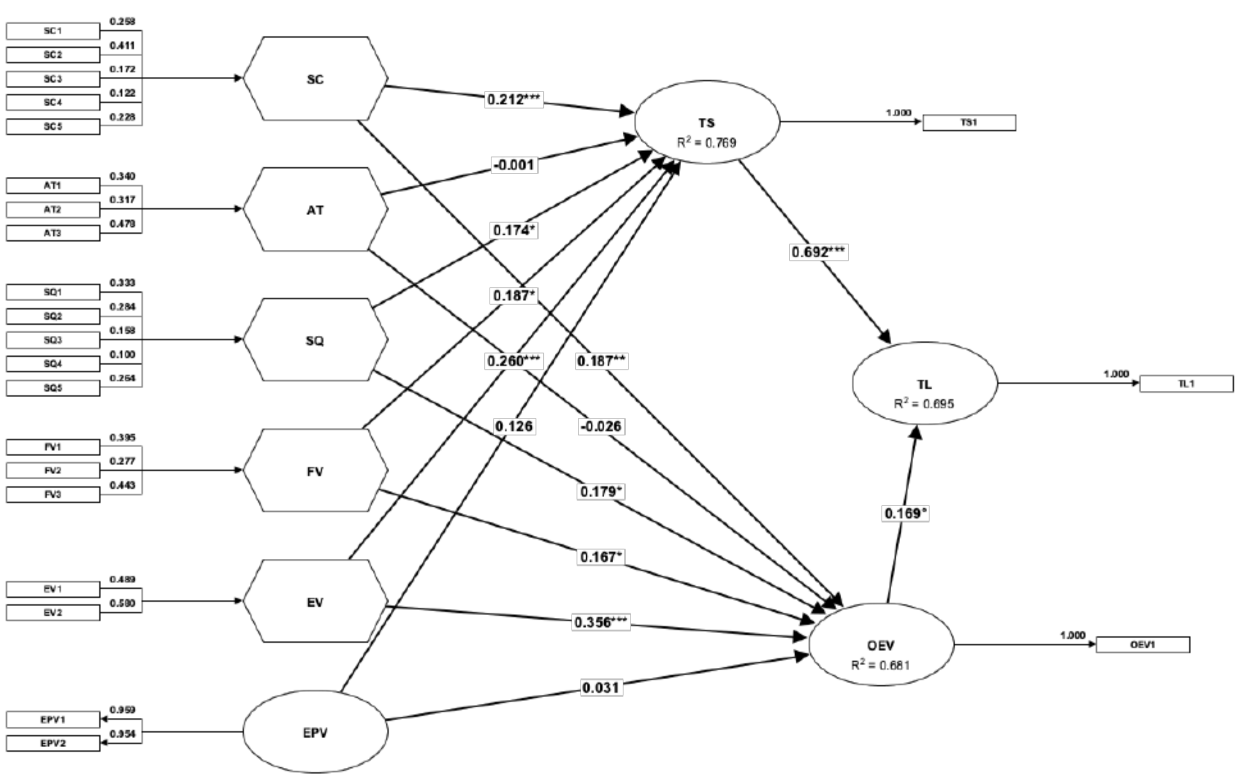

Fig. 2: Overall model

The final Overall Model of this study is shown in Figure 2. In general, SRMR<0.05 indicate an acceptable fit (Byrne, 1998). As can be seen, by Table 2 and Table 3, the SRMRs are all less than 0.05. And all difference values are lower than their corresponding HI99 values (Henseler et al., 2014). Therefore, the model is well-fitted.

Table 2: Goodness of model fit (saturated model)

	Value	HI95	HI99
SRMR	0.0287	0.0366	0.0418
d_{ULS}	0.2278	0.3704	0.4826
d_G	0.3417	0.4044	0.4518

Table 3 Goodness of model fit (estimated model)

	Value	HI95	HI99
SRMR	0.0344	0.0350	0.0392
d_{ULS}	0.3270	0.3379	0.4248
d_G	0.4029	0.4089	0.4532

4.3 Evaluation of the Measurement Model

Table 4: Mean, SD, loading, Cronbach's alpha and AVE

Factor	Mean	SD	Loading
Servicescape (SC)(Cronbach's alpha = 0.89 ; AVE = 0.69 ; Mean=4.12)			
SC1. I feel this place is well-organized and tidy.	4.17	0.89	0.87

SC2. The design appeals to my sense of aesthetics.	4.16	0.93	0.89
SC3. The infrastructure here is in good shape.	4.08	0.93	0.83
SC4. It is very easy to read the available information in this attraction (e.g. signage, information about the sites).	4.17	0.95	0.78
SC5. The number of visitors in this area seems just right.	4.01	0.95	0.74
Service Quality (SQ)(Cronbach's alpha = 0.92 ; AVE = 0.76 ; Mean=4.06)			
SQ1. I think the park can deliver all the services as promised.	4.08	0.87	0.89
SQ2. I think the park is able to resolve tourists requests promptly and appropriately.	4.02	0.93	0.89
SQ3. I think the staff service here is prompt.	4.10	0.88	0.85
SQ4. I think the staff here are warm, patient, friendly and respectful.	4.12	0.89	0.83
SQ5. I think the staff here are aware of the special needs of individual tourists and help them.	4.04	0.94	0.87
Authenticity (AT)(Cronbach's alpha = 0.86 ; AVE = 0.78 ; Mean=3.95)			
AT1. Viewing the miniature landscapes in the park felt like exploring a local attraction.	3.84	0.98	0.87
AT2. Watching the performance make me feel really engaging.	3.96	0.99	0.87

AT3. I really feel the charm of ethnic artefacts here.	4.04	0.94	0.89
Functional Value (FV)(Cronbach's alpha = 0.87 ; AVE = 0.80 ; Mean=4.04)			
FV1. The scenery here is well worth seeing.	4.19	0.87	0.90
FV2. The entertainment facilities here are worth experiencing.	4.03	0.96	0.86
FV3. The price of the ticket is worth buying.	3.92	0.98	0.91
Emotional Value (EV)(Cronbach's = 0.86 ; AVE = 0.87; Mean=4.09)			
EV1. I've forgotten my daily chores and worries during my time at the Splendid China Folk Village.	4.08	0.98	0.92
EV2. This trip made me feel closer to the other tourists travelling with me.	4.10	0.94	0.95
Epistemic Value (EPV)(Cronbach's = 0.90 ; AVE = 0.83 ; Mean=4.11)			
EPV1. I was able to have good understand about the culture of different ethnic groups through this trip.	4.08	0.97	0.96
EPV2. The ethnic artefacts here made me learn more about different ethnic groups.	4.12	0.96	0.95
Overall Experiential Value (OEV)			
OEV1. The tour was a wonderful experience.	4.25	0.84	1.00

Tourists Satisfaction (TS)			
TS1. I'm generally satisfied with my visit here.	4.25	0.89	1.00
Tourists Loyalty (TL)			
TL1. I would recommend the place to my friends.	4.15	0.91	1.00

SD = standard deviation, AVE = average variance extracted

For the measurement model evaluation, Table 4 also shows the construct reliability and convergent validity of this study. The values of Cronbach's alpha were 0.89(SC), 0.92(SQ), 0.86(AT), 0.87(FV), 0.86(EV), 0.90(EPV) which were above 0.6 and below 0.95 (Hwang et al., 2023). This indicates that the internal consistency of the measurement model was of good reliability. The average variance extracted (AVE) were 0.69(SC), 0.76(SQ), 0.78(AT), 0.80(FV), 0.87(EV), 0.83(EPV) were higher than 0.5 and loadings were greater than 0.708 indicating good convergent validity of the measurement model (Hair et al., 2017). Regarding the discriminant validity, the Fornell-Larcker criterion focuses on the correlation coefficients between the square root of the average variance extracted and other variables of the measurement model. Specifically, if the square root of the average variance extracted is greater than the correlation coefficient between the construct and any other constructs, it indicates that the measurement model has good discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). HTMT is an estimation of inter-structural correlation, and there is some controversy about the exact threshold level of HTMT value, this study refers to a threshold of 0.85 (e.g., Clark & Watson, 1995; Kline, 2015). HTMT$\leq$0.85 indicates good discriminant validity. The measurement model has good discriminant validity. The next step is to assess the collinearity within the set of indicators using the variance inflation factor (VIF) (Hwang et al., 2023). VIF < 5 indicates good Collinearity among indicators (Leruksa et al., 2023).

Table 5: Discriminant validity: Fornell-Larcker criterion

Construct	SC	AT	SQ	FV	EV	EPV	OEV	TS	TL
SC									
AT	0.6124								
SQ	0.6370	0.6720							
FV	0.6382	0.6534	0.6616						
EV	0.5891	0.6647	0.6373	0.6785					
EPV	0.5727	0.5554	0.6337	0.6727	0.6014	0.9152			
OEV	0.5465	0.5116	0.5645	0.5766	0.6125	0.5017	1.0000		
TS	0.6310	0.5846	0.6436	0.6633	0.6603	0.6069	0.6474	1.0000	
TL	0.5064	0.5645	0.5565	0.6249	0.5950	0.5496	0.5265	0.6852	1.0000

Squared correlations; AVE in the diagonal.

4.4 Evaluation of the structural model

After evaluating the measurement model, the next step is to evaluate the structural model. From Table 6, it can be seen from the path coefficient result. For factors that affect tourist satisfaction (TS), the results from Table 6 reveal that servicescape (SC, β = 0.21, p-value = 0.000), service quality (SQ, β = 0.17; p-value = 0.017), functional value (FV, β = 0.19, p-value = 0.018) and emotional value (EV, β = 0.26, p-value = 0.000) show positive significant impact on TS. These support hypotheses H1a, H2a, H4a and H5a.

For overall emotional value (OEV), the results from Table 4.9 reveal that servicescape (SC, β = 0.19, p-value = 0.004), service quality (SQ, β = 0.18; p-value = 0.013), functional value (FV, β = 0.17, p-value = 0.021) and emotional value (EV, β = 0.24, p-value = 0.000) show positive significant impact on OVE. These support hypotheses H1b, H2b, H4b and H5b.

For tourist loyalty (TL), the results from Table 4.9 reveal that overall emotional value (OEV, β = 0.17, p-value = 0.039), tourist satisfaction (TS, β = 0.69; p-value = 0.000), show positive significant impact on OVE. These support hypotheses H7, H8.

In conclusion, based on the above results, hypotheses H1a, H1b, H2a, H2b, H4a, H4b, H5a, H5b, H7 and H8 proposed in this study are supported, however, hypotheses H3a, H3b, H6a and H6b have no significant positive correlation.

In addition, for the evaluation of the R^2 level, as shown in Figure 2 above, the R^2 value on the dimension of overall experiential value is 0.681, and the R^2 value on the dimension of loyalty is 0.695, which is at the moderate level, as the value is between 0.75 and 0.50. The R^2 value on the dimension of satisfaction is 0.769, and as the value is greater than 0.75, it is at the substantial level.

Table 6: Total effects inference

Effect	Original coefficient	Standard bootstrap results		
		Standard error	t-value	p-value (1-sided)
SC →OEV	0.19	0.071	2.64	0.004
SC →TS	0.21	0.064	3.33	0.000
SC →TL	0.18	0.048	3.69	0.000
AT →OEV	-0.03	0.097	-0.26	0.395
AT →TS	-0.00	0.081	-0.01	0.496
AT →TL	-0.01	0.063	-0.08	0.469
SQ →OEV	0.18	0.080	2.23	0.013
SQ →TS	0.17	0.083	2.11	0.017
SQ →TL	0.15	0.062	2.43	0.007
FV →OEV	0.17	0.082	2.04	0.021
FV →TS	0.19	0.089	2.10	0.018
FV →TL	0.16	0.067	2.35	0.009
EV →OEV	0.36	0.086	4.14	0.000
EV →TS	0.26	0.068	3.82	0.000

EV →TL	0.24	0.053	4.53	0.000
EPV →OEV	0.03	0.084	0.36	0.358
EPV →TS	0.13	0.079	1.58	0.057
EPV →TL	0.09	0.059	1.55	0.061
OEV →TL	0.17	0.096	1.77	0.039
TS →TL	0.69	0.087	7.99	0.000

4.5 Answers of the research objective

The results show that servicescape, service quality, functional value and emotional value have positive effects on satisfaction and overall experiential value. Overall experiential value and satisfaction have a positive effect on loyalty. Epistemic value and authenticity have no positive effects on the satisfaction and overall experiential value of visitors. And the results also show that emotional value (EV →OEV, β = 0.36, t = 4.14; EV →TS, β = 0.26, t = 3.82) had the largest direct effect on tourist satisfaction and overall experiential value.

5 Discussions

This study empirically shows that servicescapes positively and significantly affect tourists' overall experiential value and satisfaction to Splendid China Folk Village. When Splendid China Folk Village creates a good servicescape atmosphere that is clean and hygienic, with a very nice layout, very good infrastructure, clear signage, and the right number of tourists, tourists' overall experiential value and satisfaction with the attraction will also be high. This finding is consistent with the results of Wu & Liang's (2009) study on the servicescape of restaurants, which found that the servicescape has a positive impact on the overall experiential value of tourists, and Situmorang's (2018) study on the servicescape of Serdang Bedagai, Bali Lestari Beach, which found that the servicescape has a positive impact on the satisfaction of tourists.

This study also empirically demonstrates that service quality positively and significantly influences tourists' overall experiential value and satisfaction to Splendid China Folk Village. When the service quality of the attraction is higher, the overall experiential value and satisfaction of tourists are higher. As in this study, Splendid China Folk Village staff service in a timely manner, warmth, patience, and helping tourists with special needs positively affects tourist satisfaction and overall experiential value. This result is consistent with Ryu & Han's (2010) findings that service quality has a significant positive effect on tourists' experiential value. It is also consistent with the results in Tsang et al.'s (2012) study of Hong Kong Disneyland's services, which showed that service quality significantly affects tourist satisfaction.

Furthermore, the existing body of research on the factors that influence experiential value is still in its infancy. It is possible that the influence on visitor experiential value is not consistent across different types of destinations. This study demonstrates that the functional value of the Splendid China Folk Village positively and significantly influences the overall experiential value, aligning with the findings of Liu (2012), namely that factors such as the level of service provided by staff, infrastructure, and the quality of the tourism environment influence the tourist experiential value. And emotional value positively affects overall experiential value and satisfaction to Splendid China Folk Village. This is in line with the findings of Wu & Liang (2009) on luxury hotel restaurants, which suggest that the experiential value of a restaurant may have a direct and positive effect on customer satisfaction.

However, the influence of epistemic value on the overall experiential value and satisfaction is not shown in Splendid China Folk Village. This result is consistent with the findings of Ma & Zhang (2017), who conducted a survey study on tourists who had stayed in B&Bs. Ma & Zhang (2017) found that interactive behaviours such as friendly exchanges and helping tourists had a significant effect on experiential value, and that tourists' epistemic value had no significant effect on experiential value during tourism, but emotional value and social value did. These findings are consistent with the hypothesis that affective values have a positive and significant effect on overall experiential value, while cognitive values do not have a significant effect on overall experiential value.

Furthermore, the study revealed that both the overall experiential value and satisfaction levels exert a positive influence on tourist loyalty. This result is consistent with the findings of Taylor et al. (2018) who found that the higher the value of the tourists' experience, the higher the satisfaction with the destination and the higher the word-of-mouth recommendation and willingness to pay for the destination.

Although higher visitor experiential value is associated with higher satisfaction and loyalty, not every experiential value dimension significantly affects visitor satisfaction and loyalty. The data analysis indicates that the epistemic value (e.g. knowledge about the culture) of Splendid China Folk Village has no significant impact on overall experiential value and tourist satisfaction. This suggests that, compared to functional and emotional value, epistemic value has no significant impact on overall experiential value and tourist satisfaction.

In addition to the inconsistency between the results of epistemic value and the proposed hypotheses, this study also found that the hypotheses about authenticity were also inconsistent with the results of the study. This study empirically demonstrates that authenticity does not have a positive and significant effect on visitor satisfaction and overall experiential value to Splendid China Folk Village. This is contrary to previous hypotheses. Possible reasons for the inconsistency of the results of authenticity and epistemic value with the assumptions may be as follows：

Rather than the authenticity and epistemic value of Splendid China Folk Village, the tourists who participated in the survey are more likely to enjoy the servicescape, the service quality of Splendid China

Folk Village, and the functional value and emotional value of visiting Splendid China Folk Village. An increasing in the level of servicescape, service quality, functional value and emotional value will lead to an increase in visitor satisfaction and overall experience.

In addition, this study suggests that emotional value may have the greatest direct effect on tourist satisfaction and overall experiential value. This implies that tourists who responded to the questionnaire may have been more influenced by the emotional aspects of the questionnaire than by the authenticity and epistemic value of Splendid China Folk Village. The effect of authenticity and epistemic value on these tourists is not enough to influence their satisfaction and overall experiential value of Splendid China Folk Village.

6 Contributions, limitation and future research

6.1 Theoretical contribution

This study aims to accumulate more contributions to academia and related industries. Based on the literature review, this study designed the conceptual framework model by drawing on the theories of servicescape, service quality, authenticity, experiential value, satisfaction and loyalty. The model is then tested empirically. The factors affecting experiential value, satisfaction and loyalty are analysed in depth by statistical methods. The main contributions of this paper are as follows.

Due to that, this research significantly enriches the theoretical understanding of domestic cultural theme parks by presenting a comprehensive conceptual framework emphasizing the pivotal roles of services and experiential components in elucidating positive psychological outcomes. Serving as a decent theoretical foundation, this framework provides valuable insights for the study of culture theme parks research in general, and for Splendid China Folk Village in particular.

6.2 Practical contribution

According to the results of the study, improving servicescape, service quality, functional value and emotional value is conducive to improving the satisfaction and overall experiential value of tourists. The researcher proposes the following targeted optimisation strategies based on the mean scores of the dimensions obtained and the dimensions that have a significant correlation with the tourists' overall value perception, tourists' satisfaction and loyalty. The optimisation strategies are expected to improve the overall experiential value, satisfaction and loyalty of visitors to Splendid China Folk Village to a certain extent.

The research shows that servicescape has a significant correlation with the overall experiential value and satisfaction of tourists, and has a pivotal role. The managers of Splendid China Folk Village should consider dispersing the crowds moderately. Firstly, Splendid China Folk Village can reasonably arrange the number of performance schedules and increase the number of performances appropriately according to the historical traffic data. At the same time, the park can consider adding more park performances and other activities to achieve the purpose of diversion. Improve the overall performance of the park's performing arts, while increasing publicity and guidance so that visitors can follow their own needs, avoid interruptions and complete the park in an orderly manner. In addition, for performances where the number of performances cannot be increased, the Park should appropriately increase the number of supporting facilities, such as adding more rest areas and providing small-scale recreational activities in the rest areas.

In addition, service quality is the most intuitive feeling that a park gives to its visitors, which can directly affect their experience. However, the mean scores of "I think the park can resolve tourists requests promptly and appropriately." and "I think the staff here are aware of the special needs of individual tourists and help them." are not high. Splendid China Folk Village managers and staff should respond to visitor requests in a more timely and appropriate manner. For example, a relevant networking platform can be provided to facilitate timely response to tourists' needs, and timely assistance to tourists in dealing with related issues. At the same time, it is also necessary to improve the initiative of staff service, so that the staff take the initiative to provide tourists with diversified and personalised services and leave a good impression on tourists through meticulous and caring services.

In addition, regarding experiential value, to increase visitor satisfaction, Splendid China Folk Village can take appropriate measures such as discounting the ticket price or giving away free tickets by participating in activities through online platforms or other means, and also differentiate the ticket price in low and high season to stimulate consumption.

Through the above suggestions, the researcher hopes that Splendid China Folk Village can make full use of its resource advantages, respond to the market demand and actively carry out marketing innovation, to increase the profitability of the product and at the same time increase the rate of repeat visits by tourists. In addition, 60% of the tourists in this study are local Shenzhen tourists. Therefore, the researcher hopes to build a good brand image, attract more potential tourists and retain more local tourists through improvement strategies.

This study provided some suggestions for the management and sustainable development of Splendid China Folk Village, which have certain reference significance for the management and development of Splendid China Folk Village, and also have certain positive significance for the enhancement of the service quality of Splendid China Folk Village.

6.3 Limitation

Although this study has done a lot of literature reading and combing, and also combined with the tourist attraction research scenarios to carry out scientific and rigorous questionnaire design and distribution and recovery, there are still some limitations.

Firstly, the sample size of the study was relatively small. Due to time constraints, only 250 questionnaires were collected for this study. Although the researchers collected the data through online WeChat and Weibo, snowball sampling was used for data collection. The questionnaires were first distributed to several respondents who already knew each other, and then, these people distributed the questionnaires to their respective acquaintances, who may share common interests that may influence the survey results. If there is more time to collect more questionnaires, the findings will be more representative of reality.

Secondly, the sampling technique. This study mainly uses a non-probability sampling method. Non-probability sampling relies heavily on the convenience or subjective judgement of the researcher to select the sample, it was not feasible to exclude the potential subjectivity of the sampler and to control and objectively measure the representativeness of the sample. Therefore, the representativeness and generalisability of the results may be limited. Only non-probability sampling was employed in this study. If multiple sampling methods are used, the results of the study may be better able to infer the characteristics of the whole population.

6.4 Future Research

As the current study only investigated Splendid China Folk Village, future research should focus on other cultural theme parks to test the model. In addition, in the future, Splendid China Folk Village can be used as a background to further investigate tourists' specific opinions and suggestions about the scenic spot, which in turn can contribute to the management and improvement of the scenic spot. In addition, the research on tourist satisfaction and loyalty is constantly improving and developing, and more variables with potential research space should be introduced into the model afterwards so that the research can be useful in both theory and practice.

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Community Empowerment and Ethnic Tourism in Bahnar Ethnic Community, Central Highlands, Vietnam

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Abstract

Ethnic tourism is a major driver of development in many minority communities in Vietnam. Assessing the community's empowerment and their direct involvement in tourism planning is crucial. An Empowerment and Sustainable Development Framework, including economic, psychological, social, political, cultural and environmental empowerment dimensions, was applied to study ethnic tourism in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. The study combined quantitative and qualitative research methods, involving 275 Bahnar people in Kon Tum province for the quantitative method while 15 Bahnar people joined a focus-group interview to explore their deeper perceptions of these dimensions. Findings highlighted cultural empowerment was the most crucial factor, while economic dimension was the least influential on the community's perceptions in ethnic tourism. The "main six dimensions" and "enabling dimensions" of the applied framework offered in-depth explanations of the empowerment in the community and provided insights in tourism planning and management for the Bahnar community and other similar communities in Vietnam.

Keywords: local stakeholders' empowerment, ethnic tourism, Vietnam, sustainable tourism

1 Introduction

Tourism has been increasing remarkably around the world for the past decades. Amongst many attractive tourism destinations in Southeast Asia, Vietnam is a promising land with the magnificent natural landscapes and resources, together with the diversity of food, unique traditions and culture of 54 different ethnic groups living in various geographical terrains throughout the country. In 2019, Vietnam's tourism industry witnessed the sharp rise of tourist arrivals with 18 million international visitors and 85 million domestic visitors, accounting for 9.2% of Vietnam's GDP (Tổng cục Du lịch, 2020). Ethnic tourism stands out as one of the most attractive phenomena to both inbound and outbound tourists when coming to Vietnam.

Ethnic tourism, as a new "fresh wind" (Bott, 2018), is considered an escape for travellers who like to be in more authentic and real experiences of indigenous' culture (Thuy and Santasombat, 2012). The development of ethnic tourism brings benefits to both ethnic groups and tourism promotion of the country (Yang and Wall, 2009), and the need for sustainabilit6.5y of ethnic tourism is getting more concerning than ever due to the high volume of inbound and outbound tourist arrivals to indigenous destinations. Nevertheless, some researchers claim the development of tourism brings some severe issues relating to the environment and the quality of life of the local people such as the high pressure on the environment causing imbalance of natural resources and ecological system (Thuy and Santasombat, 2012; Adbullah et al., 2020). Therefore, the need for sustainable tourism development is vital. Scheyvens (1999) suggested that when the role of the local community together with their need, and their concern are promoted, sustainability appears, which is also in line with the impact of resident empowerment in supporting tourism development (Joo et. al., 2019).

Resident empowerment and their participation are argued as a crucial factor for the success of tourism development among researchers (Cole, 2006; Scheyvens, 1999; Boley and McGehee, 2014; Sutawa, 2012). Failure to do so can cause negative consequences and prevent the long-term sustainability of the tourism community. For instance, the community tourism model in My Son and Tra Nhieu at Quang Nam province was considered to have "die young" due to the unequal benefits for residents within these communities (People's Committee of Quang Nam, n.d.). Their discouragement in tourism caused the remarkable decrease in the tourism quality. The lack of resident empowerment in the decision-making process also led to the shutdown ethnic tourism within De Ktu ethnic village in Gia Lai province (Dau roi lang, 2017). This problem is also found in some ethnic communities in SaPa due to the limitation of residents in tourism planning and decision-making process (Nguyen et al., 2020; Truong et al., 2014).

Although the challenge of sustainability has been concerned by many researchers and organizations, there is still a lack of research on the distribution of residents' empowerment and its important roles in the sustainable development of ethnic tourism (Maruyama et al., 2016; Scheyvens and van der Watt, 2021).

The absence of resident empowerment persists in many communities that participate in tourism in Vietnam. Therefore, this study aims to enhance the understanding of this topic, using the Bahnar community as a case study. This study seeks to answer the following two research questions:

- What are the perceptions of residents of the Bahnar ethnic community on the empowerment in relation to the tourism contribution to the community?
- What factors influence the varying perceptions of the Bahnar ethnic community towards dimensions of empowerment in relation to tourism contribution?

The study examines six forms of empowerment within the tourism community: economic, psychological, social, political, environmental, and cultural and their interaction with other enabling condition factors in relation to sustainability and ethnic tourism.

2 Literature review

2.1 An overview of ethnic tourism

Many researchers have explained ethnic tourism as the combination of ethnicity and tourism (Henderson, 2013; Smith, 2001), in which indigenous people promote their unique identity and culture to the world while strengthening their economy and the quality of life (Grunewald, 2006). This form of tourism offers visitors a new authentic experience in remote regions, but also a means of supporting the preservation of the local culture and the development of facilities within the local communities (Thuy and Santasombat, 2012; Yang and Wall, 2009). To achieve successful ethnic tourism, the engagement of ethnic groups in tourism-related activities is crucial and the appearance of empowerment is a tenet for the success of sustainable tourism (Joo, 2019; Ramos, 2014; Strzelecka, 2017; Yang and Wall, 2008; Joo et. al., 2019) as it explains residents' attitudes and participation in sustainable tourism development (Maruyama et. al., 2016; Boley and McGehee, 2014; Strzelecka et. al., 2017; Boley et. al., 2018; Shariffuddin and Azinuddin, 2016). Moreover, empowerment transfers the power to the powerless to become the powerful (Gallant, et. al., 1985). It improves the wellbeing of the disadvantaged people in society (Scheyvens and van der Watt, 2021) in terms of psychological, social and political power (Ramos and Prideaux, 2014).

However, ethnic tourism communities may face the possible negative effects of tourism on ethnic communities' culture, environment and society. Traditional festivals are an example. These are occasions celebrated at a scheduled time in a year; however, some celebrations turn into re-created products to satisfy tourists' interest which may become a performance more than a tradition (Thuy and Santasombat, 2012; Smith, 2001; Henderson, 2013; Thuy and Santasombat, 2012) leading to the risk of cultural erosion and unnecessary changes in ethnic value and features. Therefore, to gain the balance between serving the needs of the present while preserving for the future (Creaco et. al., 2003; Vuong, 2019), three core aspects - environment, economic and socio-culture (Phan and Khin, 2015; UNWTO, 2011; APEC, 2014) should be considered. Moreover, empowering residents is crucial in order to obtain sustainable tourism as the development of tourism should relate to the economic enhancement, cultural preservation and environment respected by both visitors and residents in the community (Vuong, 2019) as well as developing the local community's ability (Sutawa, 2012).

2.2 The empowerment and sustainable development framework

Empowerment is considered a multidimensional concept (Cole, 2006; Boley et. al., 2014; Scheyvens, 1999; Tian et. al., 2021) which suggests that discussing empowerment requires considering different dimensions to understand its impact on individuals and their community (Boley et. al., 2014; Scheyvens, 1999). Empowerment is an effort to help people in the local community overcome their lack of power (Sutawa, 2012) to have capability to make decisions or gain control over their concerns and others' action (Tian et. al, 2014; Joo et. al., 2019), shifting the powerless to the powerful position (Scheyvens, 2002; Tian et. al, 2021) to serve as the prominent factor for sustainable tourism development (Joo et. al., 2019).

This study adapts the Empowerment and Sustainable Development Framework (Scheyvens and van der Watt, 2021), shown in Figure1, which aims to immerse empowerment into sustainable development via the combination of three circles: outer circle - natural environment factors; smaller circle - seven enabling factors; center circle - six empowerment dimensions. First, the outer circle indicates that residents within the tourism community may gain empowerment when tourism cares about their environmental surroundings without causing any harm to their life. The second circle with seven enabling conditions in which politics may enable or disable the development process of tourism and the local community, while laws and policies should support residents' benefits of the community; governance with its regulation and mechanisms encourage the interaction between residents from the tourism community and other enabling factors in the tourism system; social capital refers to the link between people inside and outside the community in supporting tourism and enables the locals to overcome challenges from tourism (Stronza and Gordillo, 2008); customary practice occurs when residents run their tourism business confidently or join into tourism activities proudly while introducing their ethnicity and culture to tourists; the last four enabling factors are market access, credit access, business training and linkages which help residents start their business (Scheyvens and van der Watt, 2021).

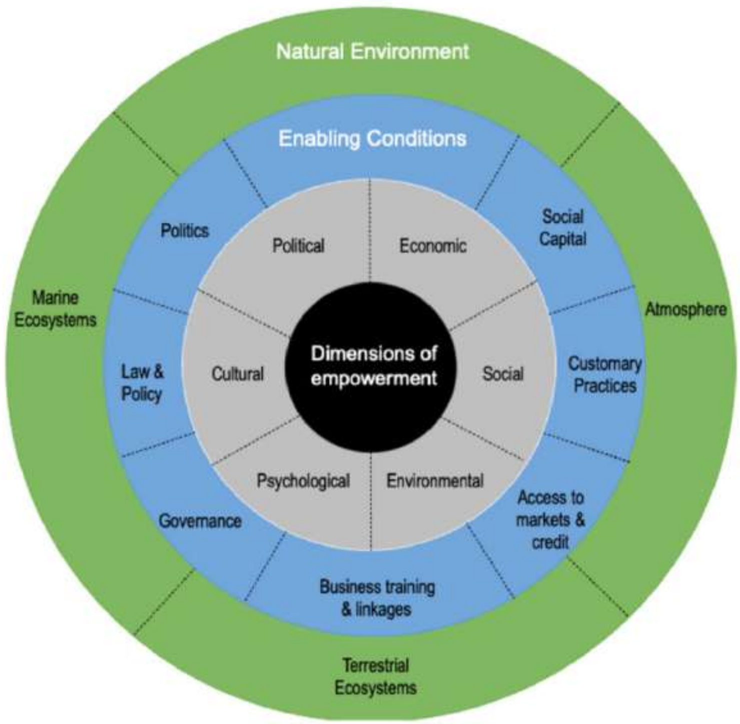

Fig. 1: The empowerment and sustainable development framework.
Source: Scheyvens and van der Watt (2021)

Regarding six empowerment dimensions, **economic benefits from tourism** has been proven through numerous studies in motivating residents to support the local community tourism development (Boley et al., 2018; Strzelecka et al., 2016; Strzelecka et al.,2017; Scheyvens and van der Watt, 2021) especially with more job opportunities and other economic benefits from tourism-related activities, contributing to greater and stable income as well as some improved infrastructure and other visible improvement in the local community (Scheyvens, 1999; Tian et al., 2021; Scheyvens and van der att, 2021; Joo et. al., 2019). Nevertheless, benefit-sharing and the equal distribution of economic benefits is still an issue when a small portion of income directly benefits the community and its residents wherein the majority is in the hands of more empowerment outsiders (Tian et al.,2021; Scheyvens and van der Watt, 2021).

Second, **psychological empowerment** occurs when individuals experience a sense of pride in their identity and culture while participating and interacting with tourists in tourism activities (Scheyvens and van der Watt, 2021; Scheyvens, 1999; Ramos and Prideaux, 2014; Yeager et. al., 2020), especially when they notice the outsiders' respect towards their natural resources, tradition, and culture (Scheyvens and van der Watt, 2021; Joo et. al., 2019). A number of researchers have highlighted the significant impact of psychological factors on residents' attitudes on the development of sustainable tourism. Studies by Schevens and van der Watt (2021), Tian, Stoffelen and Vanclay (2021), Boley and McGehee (2014) have shown when tourists appreciate the local's traditional features, their cultural characteristics as well as natural resources, it boosts residents' confidence and pride in themselves. This, together with economic benefits, has directly linked the local's positive attitudes to tourism (Boley et al., 2014) and as a significant predictor of residents' involvement in tourism planning and development (Lv et al., 2019). Residents not only value their community more but also take greater responsibility for tourism sustainable development (Boley and McGehee, 2014; Boley et al., 2014; Tian et al., 2021; Maruyama et al., 2016).

Next, **social empowerment** appears when residents within the community have opportunities to gather and work together for the sake of tourism. Their bonds are strengthened by sharing the same common goal of presenting their culture to tourists and feeling more connected to one another (Di Castri, 2004 as cited in Boley and McGehee, 2014; Joo et. al., 2019), leading to the stronger social cohesion within the community (Scheyvens, 1999; Scheyvens and van der Watt, 2021). It goes without saying that communities with strong collaboration tend to develop better than ones without cohesion (Boley and McGehee, 2014). When community cohesion is reinforced, social empowerment follows (Scheyvens and van der Watt, 2021). Consequently, the existence of social empowerment through strong bonds among residents and their connection to destinations are linked to the sustainable development within these communities (Than et al., 2020) because individuals are able to showcase their capabilities for tourism development (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Fourth, residents achieve **political empowerment** when they can express their opinions, raise questions and make decisions about tourism development and management within their communities (Scheyvens, 1999; Strzelecka et al., 2017; Scheyvens and van der Watt, 2021; Joo et. al., 2019). Political empowerment goes beyond the ability to vote or participation process but about having a platform where people can voice their interest, concern and ideas regarding tourism issues equally which directly impact their lives (Boley and McGehee, 2014; Scheyvens and van der Watt, 2021). In the research on a Nepal community empowerment, Winker (2014) emphasized the importance of being able to raise voice and actively participate in decision-making to prevent discrimination within their community. Also, it is considered as the strongest predictor of residents' involvement (Cole, 2006; Swarbrooke,1999; Timothy,2007) even more important than emotional solidarity factor (Aleshinloye et al., 2021).

Fifth, residents' cultural awareness, ethnic identity and community pride are strengthened as they experience tourists respecting their heritage; **cultural empowerment** comes along (Besculides et al., 2002; Scheyvens and van der Watt, 2021). The Cajun people in Esman's 1984 research is an example of the fruitful result of the increasing pride resulting in more activities and practices to attract tourists. However, sustainable development may lead to cultural degradation regarding assimilation, xenophobia and commercialization as cultural and traditional features are often transformed into tourism products to meet tourism demands (Thuy and Santasombat, 2012; Besculides et al., 2002). Therefore, giving cultural empowerment is essential for the locals to gain more control over cultural characteristics to display while being more proactive in preserving their culture.

The final dimension is **environmental empowerment** focusing on promoting and safeguarding the environment for sustainable development because it involves traditional practice, social adaptation and methods to take over control in protecting and preserving the local ecosystem (Ramoz and Prideaux, 2014; Tuan and Rajagopal, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2022). In Mendoza-Ramos's wheel of empowerment (2014), environmental empowerment is a key indicator of biodiversity conservation, environmental education programs, rehabilitation programs, conservation research and environmental management activities. These factors influence the community's ability to protect and preserve their ecosystem (Scheyvens and van der Watt, 2021).

Basing on the framework of Scheyvens and van der Watt (2021), the study identifies the paucity in empowerment research in the ehtnic community in Vietnam. Therefore, it aims to investigate the perception of people from the Bahnar community towards empowerment in relation with sustainable development by identifying whether that the perception from the six empowerment dimensions is different from neutral perception. Therefore, the following hypothesis (H1) is raised as follows.

H1: The mean resident perception on the six empowerment dimensions (*economic benefits, psychological, social, political, cultural and environmental*) significantly differs from the neutral value of 3.

Moreover, as the differences of the six empowerment dimensions could be found across the different demographic or socio-economic groups, this research aims to unearth those dimensions and hence the following hypothesis is raised:

H2: There are significant differences in resident perceptions of the six dimensions of empowerment (*economic benefits, psychological, social, political, cultural and environmental*) across different demographic or socio-economic groups.

3 Research methodology

This study investigates the residents' empowerment using Kon Tum province as a key context of the study. Kon Tum province, located in the northern part of Vietnam's Central Highlands, is known as the Indochina T-Junction due to its western border with Laos and Cambodia. It is home to 25 ethnic groups, with the Bahnar ethnic group making up 11.94% of the population. The statistic shows the steadily increasing number of tourists, with international tourists rising from 78,911 in 2015 to 185,000 in 2019, and domestic tourists increasing from 159,239 to 277,000 in the same period (VNAT, 2019). Local authority is focusing on developing tourism by investigating and establishing training programs for four chosen ethnic villages to conduct ethnic tourism. Kon Ko Tu village was chosen for this study owing to its reputation and unique characteristics for tourism. A convenient sampling method was used, with a questionnaire survey translated into the Bahnar language, and the locals aged 18 and older living in the village were asked to participate in.

This study applies mix-research methodology, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to achieve a deep understanding and interpretation of the answers of the research questions. Specifically, this study used a survey with closed-ended questions as an instrument to collect data. Closed-ended questions, as noted by Creswell (2002), provide given response options that make it easier for participants to reply to sensitive questions and more helpful to data coding and analysis. Then, descriptive and inferential statistics were analysed using one sample t-test and an independent sample t-test. To gain a detailed understanding of the participants' perspective on the six empowerment dimensions, the study conducted semi-structured interviews to gather participants' opinions to deepen insights. The responses from the interviews were analysed under the content analysis and thematic analysis.

3.1 Survey questionnaire construction

The survey consisted of three main parts in which purpose and instruction were presented in the first part. The second section included nine closed-ended questions to gather respondents' demographic information and help them feel at ease completing the form (Creswell, 2002). The third part, namely "empowerment questions", involved different items for six smaller constructs related to economic, psychological, social, political, cultural and environmental empowerment and measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Items for psychological, social, political and economic empowerment were adapted from Scheyvens (2014) and Boley et al. (2014) while cultural and environmental empowerment items were based on a literature review and featured markers from the Empowerment and Sustainable Development Framework. The questions were translated from English into Vietnamese and then to Bahnar language by a Bahnar translator.

The study used Cochran's formula (1977) for finite population to calculate the sample size. The formula is shown below:

$n = n_0/(1+(n_0-1)/N)$

where

N = population

n_0 = initial sample size calculated from $n_0 = z^2 * p * (1-p)/e^2$

Z = the z-score (1.96 is used for 95% confidence level)

P = the estimated proportion of the population (default at 0.5)

E = the marginal of error (set at 0.05)

With an initial sample size (n_0) of 384 calculated using Cochran's formula, and considering the population of Kon Ko Tu village is 725, the adjusted sample size that is suitable for this research is 252. Hence the 275 usable respondents received from the questionnaire are adequate for this research.

3.2 Interview construction

The study used focus group interviews with open-ended questions. Fifteen participants from Kon Ko Tu village who answered the questionnaire were intentionally selected based on their diverse backgrounds to join the interview. The group included farmers, business owners, different living locations and those with or without involving in tourism-related jobs, varied lengths of residence in the community with different educational backgrounds.

The fifteen interviewees were divided into three groups of five participants each. The face-to-face in a focus-group interview took place in the village elder's house in the evening. The researcher, also as the interviewer, prepared a checklist with two sections of open-ended questions to guide the discussion and gather in-depth data. One section covered personal information and one covered their perspectives on the six empowerment dimensions. Each participant was informed about the purpose of the interview and explanations to assure their personal identities. The interviewer used a smartphone to record the interviews and took notes on participants' responses. Each interview session lasted between 45 to 60 minutes. A Bahnar translator presented to assist with any language issues.

4 Result

4.1 The degree of agreement of six empowerment dimensions

Table 1: The overall mean score of six empowerment dimensions

Empowerment dimension	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Economic Benefits from tourism	275	2.60	.65
Psychological Empowerment	275	3.50	.68
Social Empowerment	275	3.43	.73

Political Empowerment	275	3.23	.75
Cultural Empowerment	275	3.56	.80
Environmental Empowerment	275	3.44	.86

Table 1 shows the overall mean score of agreement levels of 275 participants towards each empowerment dimension. Cultural and psychological empowerment are valued as the highest agreement level. Whereas, economic benefits received the least agreement. To test H1, each empowerment dimension was tested to find the differences with significant between each dimension compared to the neutral view of resident perception by conducting one-sample t-test analysis in SPSS. The result from one-sample t-test (compared with the neutral score of 3) supports that residents have more favourable perception towards psychological, social, political, cultural and environmental empowerment dimensions and the economic benefits from tourism received the least favourable perception with significant (p= 0.000), as shown in table 2.

Table 2: One-sample t-test with the neutral score of 3

	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Economic Benefits from tourism	2.6091	.65024	-9.969	274	.000
Psychological Empowerment	3.5069	.68588	12.256	274	.000
Social Empowerment	3.4315	.73691	9.711	274	.000
Political Empowerment	3.2327	.75752	5.095	274	.000
Cultural Empowerment	3.5609	.80269	11.588	274	.000

Environment Empowerment	3.4448	.86362	8.542	274	.000

Cultural empowerment and **psychological empowerment** (M=3.56, SD= 0.80; M= 3.50, SD= 0.68 respectively) with t= 11.588, p = 0.000 for the cultural and t = 12.256, p= 0.000 for psychological empowerment are the two highest agreed perception amongst six dimensions. The item "increase the amount of Bahnar being spoken among Bahnar people" was the highest agreed item (M=3.72, SD=1.097) in cultural empowerment construct while "make me proud to be a Bahnar person" (M=3.67, SD=0.870) and "make me feel special because people travel to see my village's unique features" (M=3.60, SD=0.888) are the top agreed regarding psychological empowerment construct. It indicates that residents seem aware of their specialty and pride in their culture when recognizing tourists' interest and respect towards their culture (Scheyvens and van der Watt, 2021; van der Watt, 2021; Scheyvens and Biddulph, 2017), leading to the enhancement of residents' self-esteem and confidence (Scheyvens, 1999; Ramos and Prideaux, 2013).

"In the past, I did not want to speak my language because when I spoke Bahnar, I felt like Kinh people looked down on me as a jungle person, but now I feel proud of being a Bahnar and I feel proud of my language too." [Interview 9, female, 25]

However, residents do not have much motivation of sharing it to the outsiders as the lowest mean score item in psychological construct is "reminds me that I have a unique culture to share with visitors" (M=3.30, SD=0.854), and the need to "preserve the Bahnar traditions which have been passed down" was the lowest mean score (M=3.33, SD=0.980) in terms of cultural empowerment construct.

Environmental empowerment and **social empowerment** are also higher than the neutral perception, indicating that residents also have favourable perception towards these two dimensions with M= 3.44, SD= 0.86, t= 8.542, p= 0.000 and M= 3.43, SD= 0.73, t= 9.711, p= 0.000 respectively. The presence of tourists serves as a reminder of the village's unique features, increasing their awareness about environmental pollution shown in the highest perceived item "bring balance between nature and community development" (M=3.65, SD=1.170). Interviewees noted efforts to keep the nearby river clean for tourism purposes, highlighting a shift away from past habits of littering.

"We are trying to keep the river behind our village clean and not smelly because tourists love to go there to take photos and have a small party there" [Interview 13, male, 36].

However, there is a lack of a proper waste management and government support within the Kon Ko Tu village. The residents have to bring the trash to a distant collection point or they have to burn the trash themselves. This inconsistency in environmental protection efforts underscores ongoing challenges, shown in "promote sustainable consumption of natural resources" was the lowest (M=3.34, SD=0.970)

Also, tourism-related activities promote active engagement among residents through the highest agreed item "Provides ways for me to get involved in my community" (M=3.56, SD=0.977).

"I run my homestay but if tourists want to hear Cong music, I will ask for the help from the Cong band of the village to play and pay them fairly. I give them all of the money that tourists pay for the performance without keeping any money for myself because that is the way we help each other. [Interview 1, femal, 30].

"My family makes and sells brocade fabric, Gui, Bau as souvenirs to tourists but normally tourists do not know to come to my house but other village members will guide them to my house to buy. I feel like everyone in the village takes care of one another and we feel more connected to our village." [Interview 8, female, 50].

The lack of community spirit within the community through the lowest scored item "fosters a sense of community spirit within me" (M=3.24, SD=0.928) is due to the shortage of job opportunities from tourism activities to the residents in the community.

Regarding **political empowerment** construct (M=3.23; SD=0.75), it indicates that the residents have favourable perception than neutral viewpoint with t= 5.095, p= 0.000. The highest perceived item "I have access to the decision-making process when it comes to tourism in the Bahnar community" (M=3.32, SD=0.909) and the lowest perceived item "I have a voice in Bahnar community tourism development decisions" (M=3.00, SD=0.848) show that residents felt they had opportunities to be involved in the decision-making process due to their weekly meetings amongst the village members with the elder. Yet the platform for expressing concerns and opinions on tourism development to the authority is limited for them.

"I do not think we really have a voice to the outsiders. I was very upset when some tourists went into my homestay to take photos and used toilet rooms without my permission. I told the tour guide but things did not change." [Interview 1, female, 30].

Economic benefits from tourism got the least favourable perception among six dimensions (M=2.60, SD= 0.65) with t= -9.969, p= 0.000. "My family's economic future depends upon tourism in the Bahnar community" was the highest score item (M=2.83, SD=0.985), indicating that residents seem aware of the important role of economic benefits from tourism as well as its impacts towards their future income.

"We are trying to tell everyone to keep the river clean and the village clean so that it can attract more tourists to our village" [Interview 13, male, 36]

However, not many village members benefit economically from tourism, shown in the top lowest mean score of the item "a portion of my income is tied to tourism in the Bahnar community" (M=2.35, SD=0.761). The reasons lie in the lack of employment in terms of tourism-related activities and the low volume of tourist arrivals.

4.2 The influences of resident location, occupation over six empowerment dimensions

To address H2, independent t-test is employed to compare the differences amongst socio-demographic groups and the results clearly revealed the two key groups of occupation in the Kon Ko Tu village to show significant difference in their perception. The results indicate that occupation significantly influences how village members perceive cultural empowerment and psychological empowerment through tourism. Specifically, business owners (M=4.07, SD=0.730) showed higher agreement scores compared to farmers (M=3.55, SD=0.878) on items "provide a stronger sense of ethnic identity within the Bahnar culture and community" (t(243)=-2.177, p=.030) and "increase pride in the Bahnar culture" (t=(243)=-2.045, p=.042), indicating that business owners perceive tourism empowering culturally than farmers do. Similarly, they tend to be prouder of their ethnic identity than farmers, contributing to stronger perspective on psychological empowerment shown in the item "make me proud to be a Bahnar person" (t(243)=-2.449, p=0.015). In social empowerment, the result from t-test revealed a significant difference (t(243)= -2.203, p=.029) in "provide ways for me to get involved in my community", suggesting that business owners gain more social empowerment when they have opportunities to be more involved in the community through tourism activities, compared to farmers. Turning to political empowerment, the results an independent sample t-test showed a significant difference (t(243)=-2.780, p=.006) in the item "I have a voice in Bahnar community tourism development decisions" between business owners (M=3.57, SD=.202) and farmers (M=2.93, SD=.055), meaning business owners perceive themselves as having more political empowerment about the tourism development within their community more than those who are farmers. Regarding economic benefits, comparing mean scores between participants living inside (M=2.97, SD=.999) and participants living outside tourists attraction (M=2.68, SD=.977) indicated a statistically significant difference (t(245)=2.142, p=.033). It suggests that people living nearby tourist attractions gain greater financial benefits from tourism. "tourism in the Bahnar community helps me pay my bills", business owners scored higher than farmers (M=2.48, SD=0.828), t(243)=-2.863, p=.005; the item "a portion of my income is tied to tourism in the Bahnar community" business owners scored significantly higher than farmers (M=2.27, SD=0.745), t(243)= -2.527, p=.012; the item "I would economically benefit from more tourism development in the Bahnar community" (t(243)= -2.238, p=-.026).

5 Discussion and implications

The results highlight the impact of tourism on cultural empowerment and psychological empowerment within the local community as well as suggest some implications for tourism sustainable development.

The residents perceived strongly about **cultural empowerment** through tourism as it increases not only the willingness to speak their mother tongue language but also their pride about their unique cultural features and their ethnic identity. This is similar to the case of residents in Bilit village. The presence of tourists raised the higher awareness of the locals about their specialty and uniqueness (Kunjuraman, 2020). Also, residents in Xishuangbanna, China perceived the value of their language as a means of preserving their ethnic identity and maintaining their authentic life (Yang and Wall, 2008). Furthermore, the study highlights the significant differences between different occupation in cultural empowerment. Business owners, for instance, felt prouder in being Bahnar than those who were farmers. This finding suggests the importance of being engaged and job opportunities in tourism-related activities because it may contribute to economic benefits and a stronger sense of identity and cultural pride within the community. This underscores the relationship between economic factors and cultural preservation as well.

The study revealed important insights of how individuals perceive **psychological empowerment** and aspects in contributing to tourism-related activities. The findings show the importance of being recognized and respected by tourists in boosting residents' pride and confidence which contributes to enhance their psychological empowerment through tourism (Boley et.al., 2014) The majority of the residents feel proud and special when tourists respect the unique culture, traditions and values. This finding supports the concept of psychological empowerment and its important relationship between residents and empowerment in supporting sustainable tourism (Boley et al., 2014; Lv et al., 2019). However, only those being engaged in tourism-related activities gain a stronger sense of pride and self-esteem; business owners, for example, perceive much greater confidence and specialty than farmers within Kon Ko Tu village which supports the findings from Tian and his partners (2021). This result aligns with the community in Ban Chiang, Thailand where residents with tourism-related activities felt prouder of being a part of their community (Gozzoli and Gozzoli, 2021). This suggests that tourism can contribute to psychological empowerment by offering opportunities for personal growth, skill development relating to tourism. Moreover, when individuals feel their opinions matter in decision-making and tourism planning or chances to participate in tourism activities are likely to experience higher psychological empowerment.

The study reports significant differences in **environmental empowerment** relating to residents' household income in which residents with higher income perceived higher than others with lower income. They had more attention to natural surroundings and its impact on tourism activities and tourists towards their community living space. This indicates that economic benefit-sharing, job opportunities and training programs play a vital role in increasing awareness of environmental protection and natural conservation within the community in which the ecological balance is not only for the younger generations but also for the sustainable development of tourism. Black-Necked Crane Festival in Bhutanese community is an example. By creating this festival, the festival both promotes the local festival while controlling the kill of cranes and residents benefit economically (Reinfeld, 2003). Also, the findings indicate the importance of having policies in educating and training both insiders and outsiders, the crucial role of the environment and the collaborative efforts in waste management and eco-friendly tourism practices (Winkler and Zimmermann, 2015).

The findings also revealed that **social empowerment** is still favourable but not perceived at high level. Even though individuals feel connected and valued within their community, their sense of community spirit and cohesion are not strong points. For example, participants who participate in tourism-related activities such as running homestay, making and selling handicrafts, performing Gong music, etc. reported higher levels of social empowerment due to the higher opportunities to participate and interact with other members of the community which is aligns with the case of residents in Zaogang and Laojia, China in which low social cohesion derived from the low participations and low social empowerment in these communities (Tian et al., 2021). Therefore, it is necessary to create opportunities for collaboration among village members in organizing events or managing tourism services, which may tighten the social cohesion and foster a stronger sense of belonging and pride as individuals feel more connected to and respected within their community (Boley et. al., 2014). Residents in Ban Chiang, Thailand felt more connected and belonged with their natural heritages and strengthened their social cohesion (Gozzoli and Gozzoli, 2021). As a result, they have more motivation to preserve and promote their cultural heritage for younger generations. This is consistent with the theory of cohesion and collaboration through tourism in which sharing the same tourism goals results in stronger connection within the community (Scheyvens, 1999; Boley and McGehee, 2014; Maruyama, 2016; Dolezal, 2020; Joo et. al., 2019). Also, policies and strategies should consider a platform where all village members can contribute to the decision-making process and have equitable participation to minimize the potential disparities in social empowerment within the community.

Political empowerment often revolves around the capability of residents in the decision-making process, tourism planning and management as well as raising their voice and concerns relating to tourism within their community. In Kon Ko Tu village, only business owners felt that they had a voice in the community due to the weekly meetings. However, the majority of the village are not involved in giving opinions as well as no power over issues relating to tourism in the community owing to the lack of channels with the authorities and other stakeholders which is in line with the people in Fenghuang Ancient Town (Tian et. al., 2021). Therefore, political empowerment remains at low relevance within Kon Ko Tu village. Whereas the case of residents in Shang Langde Miao village is another positive example of the relationship between protecting culture and supporting tourism when residents have more power in decision-making process (Lor and Donaldson, 2019). This finding suggests that channels for transparent communication between residents, government agencies and other tourism stakeholders should exist to empower residents and to voice their opinions effectively and equally (Boley et. al., 2014). For example, the young people in the Mayan community have no right in expressing their point of views relating to tourism (Ramos and Prideaux, 2013). It requires promoting inclusive governance structures that ensure diverse voices are heard and respected, especially at the country like Vietnam where has the top-down approach in politics in which all power and functions over tourism are in control and in the hands of the government (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Regarding **economic benefits from tourism**, the study reveals crucial roles of tourism sites and occupation influence in residents' perspective. Due to the significant differences in economic benefits between residents living inside and outside tourist attractions, the findings suggest that tourism sites as well as its futuristic development strongly affect residents' economic future. Moreover, business owners involved in tourism activities perceived higher economic benefits than farmers, which echoes with the case of business owners and people in tourism-related jobs who earned more benefits (Boley et.al., 2014) than farmers in Fenguang Ancient Town (Tian et al., 2021). Participants' different income levels show no significant difference in economic benefits from tourism, showing the unbalance of economic benefit sharing within the community which is similar to the case of Kinh and ethnic people in Sapa, Vietnam (Nguyen et al., 2020) and the imbalance of employment opportunities (Ramos and Prideaux, 2013) when benefits from tourism are just in the hands of a few individuals which happened in the El Naranjo village (2014). This may contribute to further policies and planning in promoting equitable distribution of tourism benefits in which more residents participate in tourism-related activities or benefits indirectly from tourism and in considering how income interacts with other factors in tourism such as location, occupation or businesses nearby tourism hotspots (Than et al. 2020).

5.1 Theoretical contribution

First, the study extends the limited research on the relationship between empowerment and sustainable development in the body of literature. By applying the Empowerment and Sustainable Development Framework, the study shows the interaction among six empowerment dimensions with other enabling factors towards sustainable development. Second, this study is among the first to consider the impacts of empowerment on ethnic tourism in the Vietnam context. Thus, understanding insights of empowerment and its function within the ethnic community may explain which empowerment and factor can influence residents' participation in tourism sustainable development. Third, existing research on ethnic tourism in Vietnam has primarily focused on economic factors rather than on sustainable development. This study is one of the earlier studies to assess the factors that motivate residents in preserving cultural heritages and environmental conservation.

5.2 Practical contribution

First, there should be policy and planning of sustainable tourism practices in which tourism development should align with cultural values from residents' perspective rather than commodifying for tourist consumption (Boley et. al., 2014). Second, having channels and platforms to raise opinions and concerns is to ensure community members have equal opportunities to participate in the decision-making process, giving initiatives that protect their culture and environmental surroundings while running ethnic tourism.

Since the shortage of tourists and job opportunities as well as the imbalance of benefits sharing caused the least empowerment in economic benefits, it is necessary to have strategies which promote equitable distribution of tourism benefits, ensure the sustainable tourism practice in the long-term economic benefits in the community and enhance stronger community cohesion while strengthening their pride and ethnic identity. Furthermore, the support from government presents a strong and trust network where residents have opportunities and capitals to run their own business or other tourism-related activities that contribute to their future household income (Putman, 2000; Ward, 2001; Falk and Kilpatrick, 2000). Last but not least, educating and training programs is vital for both tourists and residents in preserving natural resources and the balance of the ecological system within the community.

5.3 Limitations

The sample size of this study might not fully represent the entire Bahnar community in other villages where the economic conditions and other environmental features may exist differently. Also, different villages might not experience the same volume of tourists and its relations such as cultural preservation, causing to the limitation of the generalizability of the findings. While the finding indicates that economic benefits received the least perspectives from the local, it does not provide deeper explanation behind this less economic impact. Further research could investigate potential economic distribution of tourism income within the community and strategies to enhance community benefits. Moreover, the study does not investigate deeply the impact of enabling factors that could influence the participants' perception and their experience of empowerment.

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Identifying the Gap Between Projected and Perceived Destination Images of Terelj National Park in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the gap between projected and perceived destination images of Gorkhi-Terelj National Park in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, to help enhance the marketing and management strategies for the park. Destination management organizations portray the park as vibrant place of natural beauty and cultural richness, emphasizing natural elements, activities and the overall positive experience. While tourists highly appreciate the natural scenery and activities, they also place significant importance on cultural experiences and culinary delights, which are underrepresented in promotional materials. The findings underscore the need for DMOs to highlight the promotion of culinary and cultural experiences, balance activity projection, and include sustainability practices. These insights are important for finetuning marketing strategies and developing offerings that align more closely with the visitor expectations, contributing to sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: destination image, online travel reviews, content analysis, Gorkhi-Terelj National Park, Mongolia

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1 Introduction

Tourism has evolved into one of the largest and most rapidly growing industries in the world, significantly contributing to the economic development of numerous countries, including Mongolia. Known for its rich nomadic culture and unspoiled wilderness, Mongolia remains a relatively underexplored destination. In today's era of social media and evolving tourist behaviors, this study examines the online destination image of one of Mongolia's most popular national parks: Gorkhi-Terelj National Park (Terelj hereinafter). This research aims to explore the gap between the projected and perceived images of Terelj, utilizing Gartner's classification and content analysis techniques. The study investigates the destination image based on three distinct information sources: induced (official DMO websites), autonomous (travel websites like Lonely Planet), and organic (over 760 TripAdvisor reviews).

Mongolia's tourism industry, despite its potential, remains underexplored. Historical and political factors, such as Mongolia's isolation until 1990, have influenced its tourism development. Natural landscapes and nomadic lifestyles are integral parts of Mongolian tourism, with activities including trekking, bird watching, and cultural experiences. The economy, though projected to grow due to the mining boom in the early 2000s, still faces challenges in tourism competitiveness.

Fig. 1: International annual tourist arrivals to Mongolia

The development of Web 2.0 and social media has increased awareness of Mongolia as a destination. The COVID-19 pandemic shifted global tourism trends towards nature-based tourism, underscoring the importance of understanding the projected and perceived destination images of natural sites like Terelj National Park.

Terelj National Park, located near Ulaanbaatar, has been a significant destination since the 1950s. The park, rich in historical and natural attractions, attracts both domestic and international tourists. With unique geological features, cultural sites, and opportunities for various outdoor activities, Terelj serves as an ideal destination for nature and adventure tourism. It is estimated that 20,694 hectares are affected by tourism impacts. Sparse vegetation and bare land increased by 11% between 1991 and 2015 in Terelj, which are more concentrated near tourist camps (Ministry of Environment and Tourism, 2020.) This proves the importance of effective marketing initiatives to increase revenue and fundraise the necessary capital to preserve and sustainably develop the park.

The primary objective of this research is to identify the gap between the projected and perceived destination images of Terelj National Park in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. To achieve this objective, the study seeks to:

- Analyze the projected destination image of Terelj National Park, as portrayed by DMOs and tourism providers.
- Investigate the perceived destination image of Terelj National Park, as reflected in online reviews and travelers' experiences.
- Compare the projected and perceived destination images of Terelj National Park to identify the gaps and potential areas of improvement.
- Provide recommendations for destination marketing and management strategies to enhance the attractiveness of Terelj National Park based on the identified gaps.

This study fills a critical gap in the literature on Mongolia's tourism industry and provides insights for enhancing the marketing and management of Terelj National Park. By identifying discrepancies between the projected and perceived destination images, the research offers recommendations for improving promotional strategies and visitor experiences.

2 Literature review

Destination image theory is essential in understanding how tourists perceive destinations. It involves cognitive and affective components, shaped by personal experiences and information sources. Cognitive components refer to the knowledge and beliefs about a destination, such as its attractions and infrastructure, while affective components relate to the feelings and emotions associated with the destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991).

2.1 Destination image theory

Destination image theory is a fundamental concept in tourism literature, focusing on the mental representation of a destination held by potential or actual visitors. This mental representation is influenced by personal experiences, information sources, and the individual's cultural background, affecting both the decision-making process and post-visit evaluation of the destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). Understanding these factors is crucial for destination marketers and managers to create effective marketing strategies and enhance visitor experiences (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999).

According to Chu, Bao, and Sun's (2022) review of decade's worth of research on destination image, a significant emphasis has been put on multidimensional nature of destination image. Their research outlined two distinct theoretical perspectives regarding the structure of destination image:

- a three-dimensional causal network structure, which categorizes the destination image into cognitive image, affective image, and overall image
- a core–edge structure pattern, where a few key elements of a destination are central to its image, while most peripheral details are less focused and fade over time.

Proponents of the first theory (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999) divide the destination image into two components: cognitive and affective. The cognitive component refers to the knowledge and beliefs a person has about a destination, such as its attractions, infrastructure, and culture. These beliefs are formed based on the objective attributes of a destination and can be influenced by personal experiences or secondary information sources, such as travel brochures, online reviews, and word-of-mouth. The affective component, on the other hand, refers to the feelings and emotions a person associates with a destination, such as excitement, relaxation, or disappointment.

The second perspective summarized by Chu et al. suggests a core-edge structure of a destination image where only a few elements are focal and most are peripheral and often forgotten over time, leaving only a few simple features. Furthermore, the researchers in this school of thought define this core-periphery structure as a mental construct co-created by tourists, with destination images being broken down and then reassembled into patterns where elements are ordered by distinguishable criteria.

Destination image is a dynamic and complex construct that evolves over time as individuals are exposed to new information and experiences (Gartner, 1993). Pre-visit destination image, also known as the induced image, is shaped by external factors such as marketing efforts, media coverage, and word-of-mouth recommendations. Upon visiting a destination, tourists develop a new image based on their actual experiences, which is referred to as the complex or experienced destination image. This experienced image may align with or deviate from the pre-visit image, depending on the extent to which the destination meets or exceeds visitor expectations. Projected destination images are created by DMOs to attract tourists, emphasizing the most attractive aspects of a destination. Perceived destination image, on the other hand, is formed based on their personal experiences, information sources, and cultural background. The gap between these images can impact visitor satisfaction and destination management (Pike & Ryan, 2004). Moreover, closing the gap between projected and perceived destination images can lead to increased visitor satisfaction, as visitors' expectations are more likely to be met or exceeded when they align with the destination's actual offerings (Stepchenkova & Mills, 2010).

Destination image of national parks

National parks are crucial tourism assets, attracting visitors through their natural beauty and recreational opportunities. Managing their image is vital for sustainable tourism development. Positive destination images can lead to increased visitation and repeat visits, while negative images may deter potential visitors and undermine the perceived value of national parks (Newsome, Moore, & Dowling, 2012).

National parks conserve natural and cultural resources while offering recreational opportunities, contributing significantly to local and national economies and promoting sustainable development (Eagles, McCool, & Haynes, 2002; Balmford et al., 2015). Their appeal lies in their natural beauty, biodiversity, and activities like hiking, wildlife viewing, and cultural experiences (Newsome, Moore, & Dowling, 2012).

The destination image of national parks is influenced by natural attractions, accessibility, visitor facilities, and management practices (Priskin, 2001). Positive images enhance visitation and satisfaction, while negative images deter visitors (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). Understanding these factors helps park managers and stakeholders develop effective marketing strategies and improve visitor experiences (Ramkissoon et al., 2013).

Online destination image

The concept of destination image (DI) has evolved with the internet, leading to "online DI," which includes collective online beliefs, knowledge, and impressions about a destination (Mak, 2017). The internet is crucial for travel information and Web 2.0 allows for user-generated content (UGC) on social media, co-constructing online DI between tourism organizations and tourists.

Online travel reviews (OTRs) significantly impact tourists' decision-making and reflect a destination's image post-visit (González-Rodríguez et al., 2016). Research shows tourists increasingly rely on peer reviews for travel information (Assaker, 2020; Filieri, 2015).

2.2 Previous studies on gap analysis

The literature indicates significant gaps in how destinations are marketed by and how these images are perceived by tourists. The discrepancies often manifest across cognitive and affective components of destination images.

First, the difference is apparent in the cognitive and affective components. DMOs emphasize cognitive aspects in DI projections, while tourists integrate cognitive and affective elements, suggesting a need for emotionally engaging marketing (Iordanova & Stainton, 2019; Duan et al., 2020; Malvica et al., 2023). Specific cognitive discrepancies include tourists' perceptions of certain elements that do not match with the projections (Chan & Zhang, 2018; Meng et al., 2021; Díaz-Pacheco et al., 2024). Some valued cognitive attributes are under-represented, indicating a misalignment with tourist priorities (Bui, 2011; Mwaura et al., 2013; Sun, Tang, & Liu, 2021).

Second, the way destinations are marketed varies significantly based on the medium, platform and cultural context, influencing perception (Abodeeb, Wilson, & Moyle, 2015; Guo, Pesonen, & Komppula, 2021; Bassols-Gardella & Coromina, 2021).

Another pattern in the gap analysis is the perceptual stability. Certain stereotypical destinations, such as beach destinations have enduring images of "sand and sun," which are hard to alter (Andreu et al., 2000; Farmaki, 2012). Studies show that pre-travel information shapes initial perceptions, but actual experiences can significantly alter them, often highlighting a disconnect between expectations and reality (Bui, 2011; Mwaura et al., 2013; Martín-Santana et al., 2016). For instance, Mwaura, Acquaye, and Jargal (2013) found that while visitors to Mongolia were satisfied with landscapes and nomadic culture, they rated transportation and hygiene poorly but tolerated these for the authentic experience.

Finally, there is a significant gap when it comes to environmental concerns in destination marketing. There is often a gap in projecting images related to ecotourism and environmental impacts, misaligning with tourists' increasing environmental consciousness (Díaz-Pacheco et al., 2024; Ryan & Aicken, 2010).

3 Methodology

3.1 Research design

This study employs qualitative content analysis to compare the projected images from DMO websites with the perceived images from TripAdvisor reviews. The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the cognitive and affective components of the destination image.

3.2 Data collection

Data was collected from 27 DMO websites and 764 English-language TripAdvisor reviews. ProWebScraper was used to extract the reviews, and content from DMO websites was manually copied. The selection of websites was based on their relevance and prominence in online searches related to Terelj National Park.

3.3 Data preparation

Data cleaning and organization were critical steps in preparing the data for analysis, ensuring efficiency and accuracy. This process involved several tasks:

- Removing Irrelevant Information: Any reviews or content that referenced other attractions or countries were excluded to maintain focus on Terelj National Park.
- Correcting Errors: Misspellings and typographical errors were corrected to ensure data integrity.
- Standardizing Data Format: Uniform spelling of Mongolian words for locations and traditional items was ensured to facilitate qualitative and quantitative analysis.

After cleaning, the data was imported into ATLAS.ti, with 763 reviews and 27 DMO web contents ready for analysis.

3.4 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis in tourism research often involves a six-step process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). First, researchers familiarize themselves with the data by reading and re-reading the text. Second, they generate initial codes that capture meaningful aspects of the data. Third, researchers search for themes by grouping similar codes together. Fourth, they review the themes to ensure they accurately represent the coded data. Fifth, they define and name the themes in a manner that is coherent and meaningful. Finally, researchers analyze and interpret the themes in relation to the research question, drawing conclusions about the implications for tourism practice and theory (Li, Zhang, & Zhang, 2018).

Thematic analysis of destination images of national parks involves identifying and interpreting the common themes and patterns that emerge from various sources of data, such as promotional materials, surveys, or online reviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A number of researchers have conducted thematic analyses to understand the key elements that contribute to the destination image of national parks. For example, Ramkissoon, Uysal, and Brown (2011) conducted a study on the perceived destination image of South African national parks and identified six major themes: wildlife, scenery, culture and heritage, safety and security, accessibility, and amenities. Similarly, Pan, Ryan, and Xu (2014) investigated the destination image of four Chinese national parks and found themes such as landscape, cultural attractions, ecological conservation, and visitor facilities to be central to the perceived image.

Thematic analysis was conducted using ATLAS.ti to identify themes in the data. This process involved coding the data and identifying key themes. The analysis focused on both the projected and perceived images of Terelj. ATLAS.ti is a robust tool designed to assist researchers in the systematic organization, analysis, and interpretation of complex datasets. ATLAS.ti has been extensively utilized in various research fields, particularly in tourism studies, where its capability to manage large volumes of qualitative data proves invaluable. For instance, in the study by Pan, Chon, and Song (2008), ATLAS.ti was used in conjunction with BiPlot to visualize tourism trends, enabling a detailed analysis of complex datasets and the identification of key patterns in tourist behavior and market changes. Another notable application was by Oliveira and Panyik (2015), who explored the digital challenges in destination branding. Their study highlights how ATLAS.ti facilitated the coding and analysis of extensive textual data from online tourist interactions, which was crucial for understanding the dynamics of destination branding in the context of Portugal.

Utilizing ATLAS.ti software, the qualitative examination began with the Coding feature, which facilitated the division of reviews into meaningful chunks or 'quotations.' From these quotations, conceptual labels or 'codes' were deduced. The coding process in ATLAS.ti led to the identification of distinct themes encapsulating the essence of the reviews. These themes provided a structured understanding of the multifaceted tourist feedback.

4 Results and discussion

4.1 Overview of collected samples

For the purpose of assessing the projected destination image of Terelj, a diverse range of websites was selected, encompassing a variety of perspectives from both local and international sources. The selection process aimed to gather a broad spectrum of content that included government websites such as the local Terelj website and the Global Alliance of National Parks, which offer official views on the park's features and significance. Additionally, travel trade websites like Amicus Travel Mongolia and international websites such as Audley Travel were chosen to understand how local tour operators and global travel agencies portray the park to potential tourists.

Hotel websites, particularly the Terelj Hotel site, were included to examine how accommodations within the park market themselves and the surrounding natural attractions. Moreover, reputable travel guides like Lonely Planet provided insights into how international travel media represent the park to a global audience. These websites were systematically scanned for content related to the cognitive and affective components of the park's destination image. This involved analyzing textual descriptions to capture a comprehensive view of how Terelj is presented to potential visitors, forming the basis for a detailed analysis of the gaps between the projected and perceived images of the destination.

Table 1: Projected DI samples

Origin	Type	Name	Website
International	Government	Global Alliance of National Parks	https://national-parks.org/
	Online travel magazine	Lonely Planet	https://www.lonelyplanet.com/
	Travel trade websites	Audley Travel	https://www.audleytravel.com/
		Wild Frontiers	https://www.wildfrontierstravel.com/
		Wild Women Expeditions	https://wildwomenexpeditions.com/
		Wildlife Worldwide	https://www.wildlifeworldwide.com/
		Wild Frontiers	https://www.wildfrontierstravel.com/
		Wild Women Expeditions	https://wildwomenexpeditions.com/
		Wildlife Worldwide	https://www.wildlifeworldwide.com/

Local organizations	Government	Gorkhi Terelj National Park	http://gorkhi-terelj.mpa.gov.mn/
	Hotels and resorts	Terelj Hotel	https://tereljhotel.com/
	Travel trade websites	Amicus Travel	https://www.amicusmongolia.com/
		Ayan Travel	https://www.toursmongolia.com/
		Discover Altai	https://www.discoveraltai.com/
		Discover Mongolia	https://www.discovermongolia.mn/
		Escape to Mongolia	https://www.escapetomongolia.com/
		Guru Travel Mongolia	https://www.tour2mongolia.com/
		Horseback Mongolia	https://www.mongolia-trips.com/
		Insight Mongolia	https://insightmongolia.com/
		Juulchin Tours	https://juulchin.com/
		Legend Tours	https://legendtour.mn/
		Mongolia Short Tours	https://www.mongoliashorttours.com/
		Mongolian Guide Tour LLC	http://www.touristinfocenter.mn/
		Nomadic Journeys	https://www.nomadicjourneys.com/
		Selena Travel	https://www.selenatravel.com/
		Stone Horse Mongolia	https://stonehorsemongolia.com/
		Sunpath Mongolia	https://tourinmongolia.com/
		Travel Buddies	https://www.travelbuddies.info/
		Tsolmon Travel	https://www.tsolmontravel.com/
		View Mongolia	https://www.viewmongolia.com/

The majority of reviews for Terelj National Park on TripAdvisor were highly positive, with 468 reviews being 5 stars, 228 rated as 4 stars, 54 as 3 stars, 13 as 2 stars, and a singular 1-star review. This suggests a high level of tourist satisfaction at Terelj, akin to major national parks worldwide. The travel type distribution for Terelj National Park, based on TripAdvisor reviews, spans various categories, with 'Friends' being the predominant category (231), followed by 'Couples' (161), 'Solo' (136), 'Family' (71), 'Business' (53), and 'Uncategorized' (112). Beginning with a single review in 2005, the park saw an exponential growth in reviews, peaking in 2016 with 137 reviews. A noticeable decline begins post-2016, with a particularly sharp drop in 2020 and beyond. This decline aligns with the global downturn in tourism due to the COVID-19 pandemic, where international travel restrictions and health concerns led to a massive reduction in global tourism. The monthly visitation pattern of reviewers at Terelj National Park displayed noticeable seasonality. The data indicated a substantial increase in the number of reviewers during the summer months. Specifically, June (109 reviewers), July (131 reviewers), and August (144 reviewers) registered the highest counts. Conversely, winter months such as February (9 reviewers) and December (10 reviewers) witnessed the fewest reviewers. The influx during summer could be attributed to favorable weather conditions and the park's natural beauty being at its peak, while the decline in winter could be due to challenging weather conditions and limited accessibility. However, it is worth noting the moderate interest in the shoulder months like May (55 reviewers) and September (93 reviewers). These months might offer a balance between favorable weather and reduced crowd density, making them attractive for certain tourists. The top three countries from which reviews originated were the United States (165), United Kingdom (87), and Australia (80). The notable number of reviews from Singapore and neighboring countries like China can be ascribed to geographic proximity and increasing outbound tourism trends from these regions.

4.2 Word frequency

The word frequency analysis of Terelj National Park reviews reveals interesting patterns and themes that provide a window into the experiences and sentiments of visitors. Recognizing the intricacies of the data, here's a breakdown:

- Natural Beauty and Landscape Importance: Dominant words such as "park" (639 times), "beautiful" (375 times), "rock" (272 times), "nature" (143 times), and "landscape" (71 times) emphasize the park's unparalleled scenic beauty. Specifically, the mention of "turtle" (193 times) alludes to the famous Turtle Rock formation, a testament to the park's geological wonders. Additionally, words like "scenery" (155 times) and "views" (88 times) further emphasize the visual appeal of the park.
- Cultural and Historical Significance: Mentions of "ger" (333 times) and "mongolian" (141 times) illuminate the park's rich cultural heritage. Additionally, references to "temple" (123 times) and "monastery" (96 times) possibly hint at Aryabal, a famous meditation center. The word "nomadic" (44 times) also offers insights into the region's traditional lifestyle.
- Activities and Experiences: Words like "visit" (231 times), "trip" (210 times), "experience" (143 times), "riding" (135 times), "hiking" (82 times), and "tour" (102 times) reflect the wide range of activities available. "Horse" (178 times) indicates the importance of horse-riding experiences, while mentions of "meditation" (53 times) could relate to the Aryabal meditation center.
- Proximity and Accessibility: Mentions of "UB" (228 times) and "city" (108 times) denote Ulaanbaatar, indicating the park's proximity to Mongolia's capital.

- General Sentiments: Overarching positive sentiments emerge with words like "great" (229 times), "good" (152 times), "amazing" (121 times), "worth" (125 times), and "wonderful" (71 times).
- Potential Points of Concern: The term "crowded" (25 times) indicates potential overcrowding issues.

4.3 Themes and descriptions

The total cognitive components were organized into seven major themes, each containing a variety of sub-themes that capture the broad range of experiences available to visitors. Additionally, the affective components associated with these themes have been divided into positive and negative components, highlighting the emotional impact of these experiences on visitors.

Table 2(a): Cognitive themes

Cognitive Themes	Projected	Perceived
Activity (Archery, Biking-Cycling-ATV, Camping, Cave exploring, Climbing, Dairy making, Eagle handling, Geocaching, Golf, Hiking-Trekking, Hot air balloon, Milking goats, Photography, Picnic, Riding camels, Riding horses, Sports and competitions, Visit nomadic family, Watching birds, Water activities, Winter activities, Yak cart riding, Ziplining)	166	231
Culinary (Dairy products, Food)	7	77
Environmental and Social Concerns (Alcoholism, Construction, Corruption, Ecotourism, Environmental concern, Lack of management, Local people, Local tourists, Overtourism, Pollution, Social interaction, Tourist trap)	19	114
Infrastructure (Accommodation, Attractions, Bathroom, Camps, Hotels and Resorts, Location, Restaurants, Roads, Transportation)	51	155
Mongolian exploration (Culture, Ger, Historical site and landmarks, History, Legends, Livestock, Naadam festival, Nomadic lifestyle, Religion)	126	268
Natural elements (Air, Birds, Flora, Forests, Geography, Geology, Grasslands, Hills and mountains, Insects, Landscape, River, Rock formations, Sky, Weather and Seasons, Wild life)	207	164
Places (Chinggis Khaan statue, Monasteries, Turtle Rock)	94	268
Total	670	1277

Table 2(b): Affective themes

Affective Themes	Projected	Perceived
Negative (Boredom, Caution, Challenge and Discomfort, Crowded, Disappointed, Displeasure, Noisy, Unsafe)	6	110
Positive (Adventure, Authenticity, Beauty, Cleanliness, Comfort, Enjoyment, Escapism, Excitement, Exploration, Friendliness, Luxury, Peaceful, Remote wilderness, Romantic, Scenic view, Spirituality, Surprise)	105	832
Total	111	942

4.3.1 Projected DI

In the projected destination image of Terelj National Park, various cognitive and affective components illustrate the park's diverse appeal. Dominating the portrayal are the Natural elements, accounting for 30.9% of the cognitive components, with notable highlights including rock formations (29 occurrences), hills and mountains (27 occurrences), and diverse wildlife (26 occurrences). Activities, comprising 24.8% of the content, also play a significant role, highlighted by horse riding (42 occurrences) and hiking-trekking (26 occurrences). The Mongolian exploration theme, which accounts for 18.8% of the content, prominently features cultural elements such as ger living (20 occurrences) and historical sites (13 occurrences). The Places theme follows with 14.0%, emphasizing key landmarks. Infrastructure represents 7.6% of the image, while Environmental and Social Concerns and Culinary experiences receive less focus, constituting 2.8% and 1.0% respectively, indicating potential areas for further enhancement in marketing efforts.

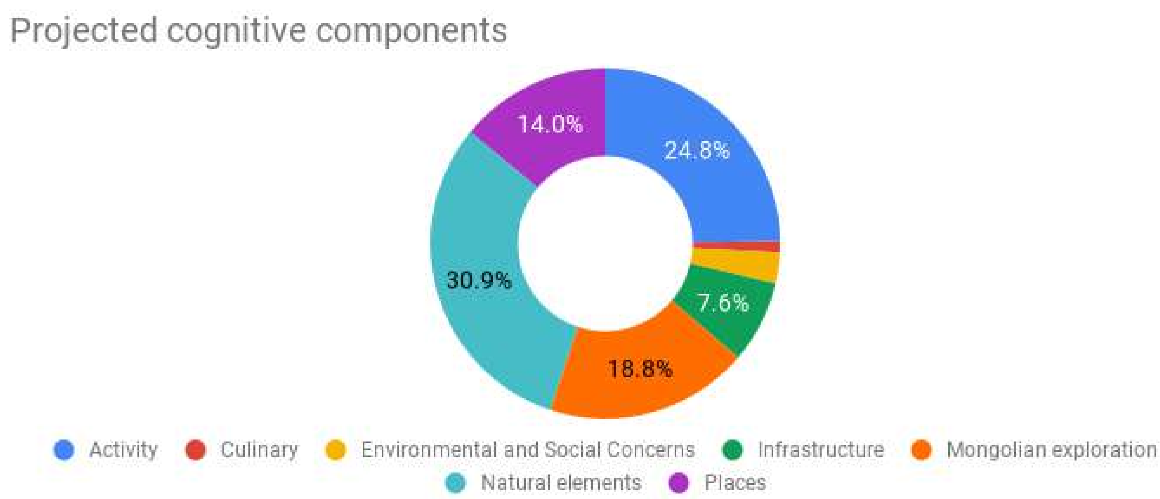

Fig. 2: Projected cognitive components

The affective components mainly emphasize (94.6%) positive experiences like scenic views (22 occurrences), adventure (20 occurrences) and remote wilderness (12 occurrences), suggesting a targeted approach to attract visitors seeking natural beauty and thrills.

4.3.2 Perceived DI

The "Perceived Destination Image" of Terelj National Park is defined by a rich tapestry of experiences. Mongolian Exploration and Places, both capturing 21.0% of the thematic interest, are the most prominent. Mongolian Exploration features deep cultural insights with significant mentions of Culture (152) and Ger (58), while Places is highlighted by the iconic Turtle Rock (175 mentions). Activity accounts for 18.1% of the feedback, emphasizing the park's adventurous nature through activities like Riding Horses (72 mentions) and Hiking-Trekking (61 mentions). Natural Elements and Infrastructure follow, showcasing the park’s environmental diversity and the essential services that support tourism, respectively. Lesser but significant themes include Environmental and Social Concerns (8.9%) and Culinary (6.0%), pointing to areas for potential enhancement.

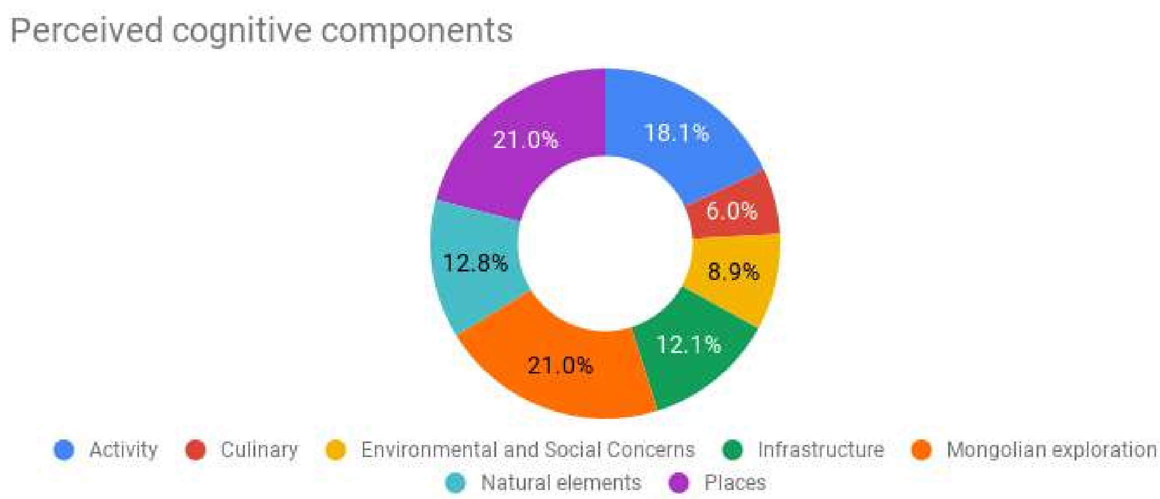

Fig. 3: Perceived cognitive components

The overwhelmingly positive affective responses, led by Enjoyment (376 mentions) and Adventure (169 mentions), underscore the emotional satisfaction of visitors, while also highlighting areas like Disappointment and Crowding as aspects needing management attention.

4.3.3 Cognitive and affective gaps

The substantial over-representation of natural elements and activities in the marketing materials of Terelj National Park contrasts sharply with visitor perceptions. While natural elements are projected at 30.9%, they are only perceived to impact visitor experiences at 12.8%. This misalignment resonates with findings from Iordanova and Stainton (2019) and Duan et al. (2020), where DMOs were similarly found to emphasize cognitive components that did not fully align with the holistic experiences valued by tourists. This suggests a broader trend where the complexity and richness of visitor experiences are often simplified into marketable chunks that fail to capture their full experiential value.

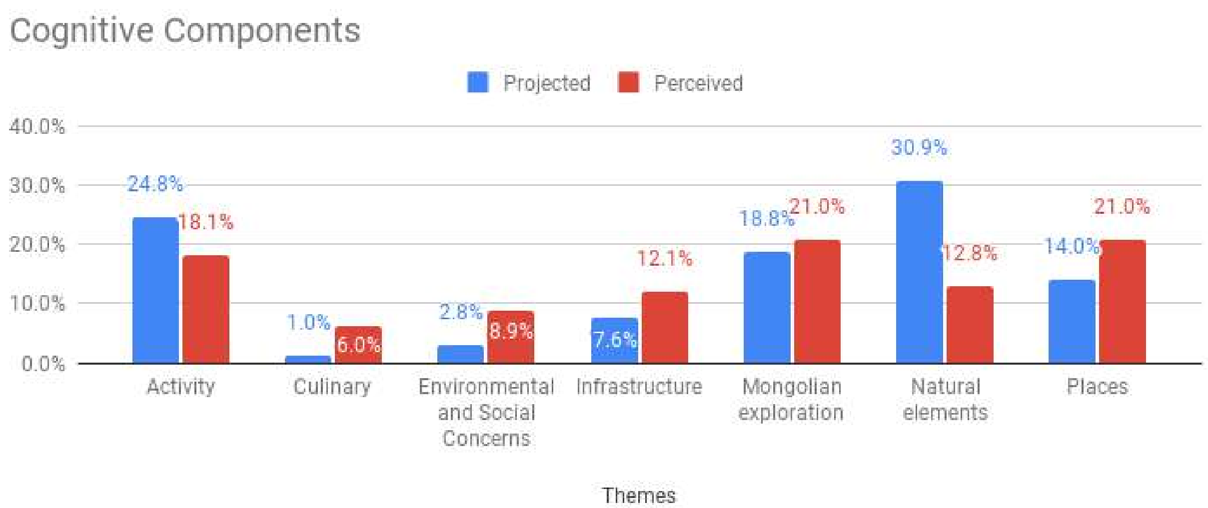

Fig. 4: Comparison of cognitive components

Activities show a similar trend of over-representation (projected at 24.8%, perceived at 18.1%), indicating a potential saturation in marketing that may not resonate deeply with tourists. This finding parallels the research by Chan and Zhang (2018) and Meng et al. (2021), where discrepancies in the cognitive components of destination images often led to visitor disappointment, particularly when the experiences did not meet the heightened expectations set by marketing.

The under-representation of culinary themes in the marketing of Terelj National Park represents a missed opportunity, as highlighted by the gap between the minimal projection (1%) and higher visitor appreciation (6%). This oversight reflects broader trends identified by researchers like Sun, Tang, and Liu (2021), who noted discrepancies between projected and valued attributes in destination marketing. Specifically, while Terelj's promotions overlook culinary experiences, these are aspects that significantly enhance visitor engagement and satisfaction. By integrating Mongolia's rich culinary heritage into its marketing narrative, Terelj could attract tourists seeking unique and authentic dining experiences, thus enriching the overall tourist experience and potentially boosting the destination's appeal and sustainability.

4.3.4 Ecological concerns in destination marketing

The under-representation of environmental and social concerns in the marketing of Terelj National Park (projected at 2.8%, perceived at 8.9%) underscores a critical gap that has significant implications for sustainable tourism practices. This misalignment echoes the concerns raised by Díaz-Pacheco et al. (2024) and Ryan and Aicken (2010), who emphasize the importance of integrating ecological sustainability into destination marketing strategies. Moreover, the notable under-representation of environmental impacts and the observable degradation of natural settings in Terelj highlight the need for a substantial shift in how nature-based tourism destinations are promoted. Marketing efforts must not only celebrate the natural beauty of destinations like Terelj National Park but also responsibly address the sustainability challenges posed by increasing tourist numbers. This approach aligns with the broader discourse on sustainable tourism promoted by scholars such as Butler (1980), advocating for marketing strategies that genuinely reflect the ecological stakes and contribute to the preservation and appreciation of natural environments.

5 Conclusion

This study identified significant gaps between the projected and perceived destination images of Terelj National Park. The projected image, primarily constructed by DMOs, emphasizes the park's natural elements and activities, portraying it as a vibrant destination with diverse appeal. However, traveler-generated content paints a different, albeit more balanced picture, highlighting cultural and culinary experiences as well as the natural scenery and recreational opportunities. These findings align with previous research, which has shown discrepancies between marketed and experienced destination images, emphasizing the need for DMOs to better align their promotional efforts with visitor perceptions to enhance satisfaction and loyalty.

To address these discrepancies, several recommendations emerge from the study, focusing on destination offerings and the communication approach of projected destination images.

5.1 Destination offerings

Firstly, enhancing the promotion of culinary experiences can attract food enthusiasts and provide a more comprehensive destination image. Highlighting Mongolia's rich culinary heritage, which visitors perceive more favorably than currently projected, can address this gap. There is also a significant opportunity to better promote cultural experiences within the park. Visitors value cultural experiences significantly more than current projections suggest. Emphasizing local traditions, historical sites, and cultural activities can attract tourists seeking immersive and authentic experiences.

Furthermore, while activities are well-represented in the projected image, there is a need to balance this with other elements such as relaxation and scenic beauty. A more balanced portrayal that includes opportunities for both adventure and relaxation can better manage visitor expectations and enhance satisfaction. Developing specific tours and packages that focus on cultural heritage and local cuisine, in collaboration with local businesses and communities, can further enrich visitors' experiences. Sustainability and environmental education should also be more prominently featured. Visitors' environmental concerns are significantly higher than those projected by DMOs. Integrating more information on sustainability practices, such as preserving natural landscapes, managing waste, and minimizing the ecological footprint of tourism activities, can enhance the park's image as a responsible tourism destination.

5.2 Projected destination image - Communication approach

A diversified content strategy is recommended for the projected destination image. DMOs should include a balanced mix of natural, cultural, and culinary experiences in their promotional materials. This can be achieved through multimedia campaigns featuring local food, cultural festivals, and serene landscapes alongside adventurous activities, providing a more holistic view of the park. Enhancing the park's digital presence by utilizing traveler-generated content can also provide a more authentic and engaging portrayal. Encouraging user reviews and leveraging social media influencers can help DMOs identify and promote aspects of the park that resonate most with visitors.

Updating the official park website and associated travel sites with comprehensive information about all aspects of the park, including less-highlighted features like culinary experiences and cultural sites, can help align projected images more closely with visitor expectations. Regularly collecting and analyzing visitor feedback to identify emerging trends and areas for improvement can help DMOs adjust their marketing strategies to better reflect evolving tourist preferences.

Finally, launching targeted campaigns that highlight different aspects of the park during various seasons or themed around particular interests, such as wildlife photography, culinary tours, or cultural festivals, can attract a broader range of visitors and encourage repeat visits.

By addressing these gaps and implementing the recommended strategies, Terelj National Park can enhance its attractiveness, better meet visitor expectations, and promote sustainable tourism practices. This approach not only aligns with previous research findings but also provides a framework for more effective and targeted destination marketing and management strategies, ultimately contributing to the sustainable development of tourism in Mongolia.

5.3 Contributions to the body of knowledge

This research expands the theoretical framework of gap analysis by applying it to the context of Mongolia, a lesser researched destination. It highlights the unique DI components that shape visitors' perceptions specific to Mongolian attractions like Terelj National Park. This expansion provides a more comprehensive framework applicable to lesser-known destinations. Empirically, the study confirms the validity of previous research on DI gap by providing new data that aligns with existing findings and fills in the gap in the literature with fresh insights, particularly in the context of Mongolia. Methodologically, this research demonstrates the applicability of thematic analysis by conducting it with user-generated content from TripAdvisor.

5.4 Limitations and future research

This study provides valuable insights into the destination image of Terelj National Park but is limited by its reliance on promotional materials and TripAdvisor reviews, which may not fully represent global perceptions due to linguistic and cultural differences. Future research should incorporate a broader range of data sources, including multiple review platforms, social media, and interviews with local stakeholders, to gain a more holistic view. Addressing the seasonal bias in reviews by capturing the full seasonal cycle and conducting longitudinal studies can further clarify evolving perceptions. Integrating quantitative methods with qualitative approaches and employing advanced data analytics can uncover deeper patterns and trends, enhancing destination marketing and management strategies for better alignment with visitor expectations and sustainable tourism development.

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Bangkok Lecturers' Perceptions Towards the Incorporation of Accessible Tourism into the Tourism Ethics Course

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Abstract

This study aims to assess awareness and inclusion of disability-related topics in the Thai Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (TQF: HEd). Despite the recognized importance, current higher education curricula in Thailand lack specialized accessible tourism components. Specifically targeting faculty members of Tourism and Hospitality Departments in Bangkok-based universities, this paper investigates lecturers' perceptions of the integration of accessible tourism within the university curricula. Questionnaire surveys were distributed to active lecturers from both public and private universities in Bangkok and SPSS was used to conduct the analysis. Findings indicate that integrating accessible tourism into the curriculum, particularly within Tourism Ethics courses, would be beneficial for students by enhancing a holistic perspective on tourism ethics and promoting equal rights for persons with disabilities to engage in leisure and travel. The results of this study advocates for the need of future professionals and stakeholders in tourism to become knowledgeable and equipped to inclusively address the needs of both people with disabilities and those without.

Keywords: accessible tourism, People with Disabilities (PWDs), tourism education, tourism ethics course

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1 Introduction

Tourism has largely concerned itself with those who participate rather than those who are excluded from participating. Those who are "othered", omitted, overlooked, or ostracized from tourism are typically marginalized based on their low socio-economic status, ethnicity, indigeneity, age, gender, sexuality, ability, or the intersectionality of the compounding effects of these areas of identity (Darcy et. al.; 2020, p. 140). Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) are often marginalized and are defined as people who have a disability or a variety of disabilities, such as people with hearing loss or people with spinal cord injury (Ozcan et.al, 2021). According to the American Disability Association (2019), PWDs are defined as any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities and interact with the world around them, such as vision, movement, thinking, remembering, learning, communicating, hearing, mental health, and/or social relationships (Benjamin et.al., 2021, p. 297). Leal et.al, (2020, p. 578) refers to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2016) and describes disability as a multidimensional phenomenon that results from the interaction between people and the physical and social environment. Thus, disability and functionality are influenced by the interaction between health conditions and contextual factors, which can be human or environmental.

It is believed that the tourism and hospitality industry can potentially create a meaningful contribution to people's lives and the planet at large, which is the reason why there is considerable advocacy for accessible tourism, particularly tourists with disabilities. This study therefore aims to examine items that are important in the design of tourism ethics courses through the lens of lecturers of the universities located in Bangkok, Thailand. This would help those who may be concerned to design the appropriate tourism and hospitality curriculum that would contribute to the human rights principles, especially the rights of PWDs in accessible tourism.

2 Literature review

The initial convergence of tourism and disability is frequently attributed to the establishment of the Stoke Mandeville Games (later evolved into the name "Paralympic Games" in 1960) where PWDs needed to be transported and housed from various regions within the host country or from abroad in order to participate. Beyond the sports realm, PWDs who wish to travel are largely underrepresented in the history of tourism due to the prevalent inaccessibility of transportation and accommodation. It was not until the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons in 1975 and the designation of 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons that a social movement advocating for the rights of individuals with disabilities began to emerge. This movement sought equal rights across all facets of citizenship, including travel and tourism, and subsequently led to the initial academic scholarship on the subject (Darcy et.al., 2017; Van Horn & Isola, 2006; Woodside & Etzel, 1980; Darcy et.al., 2020, pp. 140-141).

Accessible Tourism refers to the process of eliminating the barriers that prevent disabled people from entirely enjoying an experience in tourism. It has developed to involve the process of reshaping the environment of the whole tourist, including informative, physical, online and attitudinal aspects, following the "Universal Design" (Buhalis & Darcy, 2011; Buhalis & Micropoulou, 2011; United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2016; Rubio-Escuderos et.al., 2021, p. 2). Universal Design refers to the creation and organization of environments to ensure they are accessible, understandable, and usable by all individuals, regardless of age, size, ability, or disability. This approach requires the environment (including buildings, products, and services) to be designed to accommodate the needs of everyone who wishes to utilize them (Center for Excellence in Universal Design, 2018; Rubio-Escuderos et.al., 2021, p. 18). Buhalis and Darcy (2011) put forth that accessible tourism is a type of tourism characterized by a collaborative effort among stakeholders. This process facilitates the ability of individuals with various access needs (such as those related to mobility, vision, hearing, and cognitive functions) to operate independently with fairness and dignity. This is achieved through the provision of universally designed tourism products, services, and environments. This definition embraces a whole-of-life approach, ensuring that individuals benefit from accessible tourism throughout their entire lifespan. This includes people with both permanent and temporary disabilities, seniors, individuals with obesity, families with young children, and those working in environments designed for greater safety and social sustainability (Darcy et. al., 2020, p. 141).

The current relevance of accessible tourism is influenced by a change of conception on disability.-PWDs experience limitations and do not fully enjoy their travel experience because holiday destinations and tourism companies are not fully prepared to meet their needs (Rubio-Escuderos et. al., 2021, p. 2). In 1980, the 107 signatories of the Manila Conference recognized the rights to tourism as an aspect of the fulfillment of the human being (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 1980). In 1999, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) on the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET) explicitly stated that tourism for PWDs should be encouraged and facilitated (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 1999). In 2008, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities came into force, consisting of 165 Parties and 160 Signatories who recognized the rights of PWDs to participate on an equal basis with non-disabled people in leisure, recreation, and tourism (Benjamin et.al., 2021, p. 297). Generally, the rights of persons with disabilities to engage in leisure and travel under conditions equivalent to those of individuals without disabilities should be acknowledged (Rubio-Escuderos et.al., 2021).

The participation rate of PWDs in tourism activities remains low, highlighting a significant gap in the travel and accommodation sector. Research by prior scholars has identified the accessible tourism market as both substantial and profitable, however, factors influencing travel participation and the travel process are persistently neglected by the tourism industry (Ozcan et.al., 2021). There is increasing recognition among tourism scholars for the need for tourism education to address the complexities of the contemporary world and its associated challenges. This reflects a maturation of tourism education, shifting from a purely vocational focus to a more liberal approach, aiming to cultivate more reflective practitioners who seek not only to profits but also to make positive contributions to the world and their communities (Farasi, 2017). Given the emphasis on the rights for PWDs and the specialized requirements needed to facilitate their travel, it is essential to assess whether PWD-related topics have been integrated into tourism curricula. (Liasidou et.al., 2019, p. 116).

Although the issues of PWD considered above are not directly the problem of the universities, the universities' incorporation of accessible tourism and PWD issues in Tourism Ethics courses must at least ensure that the PWD issues are raised to tourism students and aimed for students to be aware of the PWD tourists, as literally in the ethical sense, into the future world of works (Coppola et al., 2012). Liasidou et al. (2019) argue that tourism education should incorporate diverse educational content, including details about specialized services, facilities, and their delivery to all customers. The study specifically suggests that, moving forward, hotel and tourism professionals need to become knowledgeable and equipped to address the needs of PWDs.

Lecturers are key stakeholders in tourism education and play two primary roles in the educational process; firstly, influencing the strategic direction of education through curriculum development and secondly, assessing performance through quality management practices (Cooper and Westlake, 1998; Lewis, 2004). In the context of tourism education, a stakeholder approach involves any group that can affect or be affected by decisions related to the tourism curriculum in its planning. Unlike the industry-led approach to curriculum development, the stakeholder approach advocates for collaborative planning that integrates the interests of a broader range of stakeholders (Lewis, 2004). Tribe (1999) and Lewis (2004) points out that stakeholders have diverse interests that can impact the shaping of the tourism curriculum. In curriculum space, it has been identified that different industry employers (such as accommodation, attractions, and transport sector), professional bodies, students, and academics rooted in business departments with a commercial interest that promote a vocational tourism curriculum. The influences of environmentalists, the local community, the government, academics, and other interest groups (such as all people with special needs) encourage a liberal tourism curriculum with a more open agenda for tourism studies. Perception may be energized by both the past and present experience, individual attitude, expertise, knowledge, the interest of the person, the level of attention, the physical state of the sense organ, and the interpretation given to the perceptions are seemed to have a significant impact on the tourism curriculum. This is consistent with central to this study were lecturers as a stakeholder and how their perceptions towards the incorporation of accessible tourism especially persons with disabilities in the tourism curriculum.

The review of the current body of literature reveals that the topic of disability is scarcely discussed and is not included in the tourism curriculum. As such, there is a need to raise awareness of this issue and provide more insight to fill this knowledge gap. The primary problem, as observed, is that tourism studies are considered vocational and do not take into account the social perspective linked to the sector (Oktadiana & Chon, 2016; Hsu, Xiao, & Chen, 2017). Also, there is a significant research gap in disability studies in leisure modules and courses. Oktadiana and Chon (2016) focused on this issue in an attempt to frame their approach to studying accessible tourism from the perspective of including disability studies in social sciences. Conversely, they indicated a lack of specialized modules in Tourism Ethics courses in the tertiary education system designed for disabilities in the tourism and hospitality sector (Devile & Kastenholz, 2018).

Thailand is near the top of the list of countries that recorded the highest international tourist arrivals in 2019. The number of tourists visiting Thailand increased from 35.35 million in 2017 to 38.28 million in

2018 and then 39.92 million in 2019 (Tourism Statistics Thailand, 2020). Although the covid-19 pandemic in late 2019 had highly affected this growth, Thailand is currently recovering this growth. Nonetheless, it can be generally agreed that over the years, Thailand has caught the attention of the global travel market due to its adventurous and mystical destinations. Individuals frequently visit Thailand to explore its pure natural beauty, and centuries-old tangible and intangible cultural heritages (Buhalis & Darcy, 2011). For decades, Thailand has attracted several major segments, including pilgrims, adventurers, trekkers, wildlife enthusiasts, holidaymakers, and particularly medical tourism. As scholars expressed that Thailand is the leading destination country for medical travelers in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN (NaRanong, 2011).

Thai Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (TQF: HEd) provides eight general guidelines components that public and private higher education institutions should implement to maintain quality and standard of education. These general guidelines imply that the degree programs in Tourism and Hospitality Management offered in universities ought to meet TQF: HEd guidelines to achieve comparable standards both at the local and international levels. The university education in Thailand would necessarily need to be adjusted the tourism academic curriculum under the TQF: HEd to be accordingly consistent with the principle of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET) from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), as it is the fundamental framework for socially responsible and sustainable tourism, which has at its core the promotion of accessible tourism for all people, including persons with disabilities. Therefore, Thailand can potentially produce a quality standard of tourism education that can be comparable to the international standard level of tourism education (Buhalis & Michopoulou, 2011).

Although Thailand's tourism industry has not initiated disabled service-related courses in collaboration with the Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Thailand, some developed economies have realized immense change after embracing the learning courses in the tourism education curriculums. The major issues include fragmented knowledge, generalizations, and discrepancies between knowledge of accessible tourism and practice in the industry. Therefore, the primary research objective that this study seeks to fulfil is to determine the perception of tourism lecturers in Bangkok about the incorporation of the accessible tourism in the curriculum.

3 Research design and methodology

3.1 Population and sample size

The target population for the study was teaching faculty members of the Tourism and Hospitality programs at the university level in Bangkok, Thailand. This is because they would provide rich data on tourism situations or events as they are part of the tourism society, and are deemed to be aware of the current and emerging issues as well as potential solutions for the tourism industry. Universities whose Tourism Ethics courses are not offered in their tourism programs were not selected for this research. As universities in Bangkok are both public and private, 5 public universities and 5 private universities were selected to give the target group equal representation. Based on these criteria, 10 universities were selected and they are: Dhurakij Pundit University, Dusit Thani College, Kasetsart University, Phranakhon

Rajabhat University, Siam University, Srinakharinwirot University, Sripatum University, Suan Dusit University, Suan Sunandha University, and University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce.

The determination of sample size for this research was calculated according to the formula of Yamane (1967), and 120 respondents were considered as a good representation reliable for this research. Therefore, each university's Tourism and Hospitality Department was represented by 12 lecturers, and the sample consisted of a total of 120 lecturers in the Tourism and Hospitality Department from the selected universities in Bangkok. Purposive sampling was conducted to identify the respondents and in the case that the university has more than 12 lecturers in their Tourism6 and Hospitality Department, simple random sampling was conducted within the division.

3.2 Research design and method

Data for the study was collected by using a quantitative approach using the cross-sectional survey. The first section was about the demographic details of the participants including questions regarding educational level, academic position, and teaching courses. The second section consists of twenty-eight questions concerning lecturers' perceptions towards the incorporation of accessible Tourism in the Tourism Ethics course on a 5-Point Likert Scale. The questionnaire design was considered to be consistent with the research topics, research questions, and research objectives as well as to cover the essential conceptual frameworks of this research which developed from the research's phenomena such as perceptions of lecturers, accessible Tourism, Tourism Ethics (education), Tourism and Disability, as well as the background of the study that explored the economic state of tourism (industry players, education, and policy), advocacy on PWD, and emerging prospects for integrating this for Thailand's accessible tourism advancement and global competitiveness that potentially obtained the statements of each construct used in the questionnaire. Accordingly, these twenty-eight questions are relative to the issues of lecturers' perceptions on 4 areas (i.e., Perception on the Tourism Curriculum, Perception on the Concept of Accessible Tourism, Perception on incorporating accessible Tourism into the Tourism Ethics course of the Tourism Curriculum, and Perception on People with Disabilities and Accessibility Tourism). Finally, the third section is where respondents can include additional comments. Respondents would complete the questionnaire surveys for approximately 10 minutes and data was collected from the 22nd February 2022 to the 26th February 2022. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23 was used to analyse the data.

4 Research findings

4.1 Descriptive statistics

Referring to Table 1, the majority of respondents in this research have a Master's degree (55.88%), with the academic position as a General Lecturer (93.14%), and have more than 10 years of teaching experience (47.06%) majorly teaching in general courses in Tourism and Hospitality Curriculum (87.25%). To note, a total of 18 respondents did not complete the survey within the time of the study and were dropped out (n=102). The ANOVA test was conducted to compare results among the different groups as classified by Educational Level, Academic Position, Teaching Experience, and Teaching Course. Overall, no significant differences were observed thus concluding that results point towards a similar direction as per below reported findings.

Table 1: General information of the respondents

General Information	Number	
	People	Percentage
Educational level		
- Bachelor's degree	14	13.73
- Master's degree	57	55.88
- Ph. D.	31	30.39
Total	102	100.00
Academic position		
- General Lecturer	95	93.14
- Assistant Professor	6	5.88
- Associate Professor	1	.98
- Professor	0	0
Total	102	100.00
Teaching experience		
- 1-5 years	30	29.41
- 6-10 years	24	23.53
- More than 10 years	48	47.06
Total	102	100.00
Teaching Course		
- General courses in Tourism and Hospitality curriculum.	89	87.25

- Tourism Ethics or Ethical issues in tourism.	1	.98
- General courses and Tourism Ethics or Ethical issues in tourism.	12	11.77
Total	102	100.00

4.2 Lecturers' perceptions towards the incorporation of accessible tourism into the tourism curriculum

Respondents used in this study had lecturers' perceptions towards the incorporation of accessible tourism into the Tourism curriculum, overall and individually, at a moderately agree level. The highest average ($\bar{x}$ = 4.44) and perception on incorporated accessible tourism into the Tourism Ethics courses of the Tourism curriculum. The lowest average ($\bar{x}$ = 3.99). Details of the results of the data analysis are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Overview lecturers' perceptions towards the incorporation of accessible tourism into the tourism curriculum

No. Perception toward the incorporation	$\bar{x}$	$S.D.$	Meaning
1. Perception on the Tourism curriculum.	4.44	.37	Moderately Agree
2. Perception on the concept of accessible tourism.	4.21	.36	Moderately Agree
3. Perception on incorporated accessible tourism into the Tourism Ethics course of the Tourism curriculum.	3.99	.48	Moderately Agree
4. Perception on people with disabilities and Accessibility tourism.	4.05	.47	Moderately Agree

Overview	4.17	.31	Moderately Agree

4.3 Perception on the Tourism curriculum

When considering item by item, it was found that item 1, "The Tourism curriculum should be focusing on enabling students to become operational and make a smooth transition into the world of work", had the highest mean ($\bar{x}$ = 4.76), and item 3, "The current state of tourism puts more concentration on productivity and profitability", had the lowest mean ($\bar{x}$ = 4.15). Details of the results of the data analysis are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Lecturers' perception towards the incorporation of accessible tourism into the Tourism curriculum: Perception on the Tourism curriculum.

No.	Perception on the Tourism curriculum	$\bar{x}$	$S.D.$	Meaning
1.	The tourism curriculum should be focusing on enabling students to become operational and make a smooth transition into the world of work.	4.76	.45	Strongly Agree
2.	Students should be educated to view tourism in such a way that it brings profit to the tourism business and satisfaction to the paying tourist.	4.16	.92	Moderately Agree
3.	The current state of tourism puts more concentration on productivity and profitability.	4.15	.64	Moderately Agree
4.	The tourism curriculum should provide students with a holistic understanding of tourism as a phenomenon and not only simply as an industry.	4.49	.64	Moderately Agree
5.		4.70	.61	

	The tourism curriculum should encourage students to adopt critical and ethical perspectives on tourism knowledge gained.			Strongly Agree
6.	In the tourism curriculum designs, the stakeholder's perspective such as people with disabilities should also be considered.	4.42	.87	Moderately Agree
7.	The core course should be balanced between a business standpoint and an environmental, political, and socio-cultural standpoint.	4.40	.73	Moderately Agree
	Overview	4.44	.37	Moderately Agree

4.4 Perception on the concept of accessible tourism

Considering each item, it was found that item 6, "You agree with the principle that tourism is a 'rights' of all individuals" has the highest mean ($\bar{x}$ = 4.69) and in item 1, "You understand that accessible tourism refers to people with disabilities only" has the lowest mean ($\bar{x}$ = 2.37). Details of the results of the data analysis are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Lecturers' perceptions towards the incorporation of accessible tourism into the Tourism curriculum: Perception on the concept of accessible tourism

No.	Perception on the concept of accessible tourism	$\bar{x}$	$S.D.$	Meaning
1.	You understand that accessible tourism refers to people with disabilities only.	2.37	.12	Moderately Disagree
2.	You accept that accessible tourism refers to everyone who is not limited by their age, or physical or mental disabilities.	4.61	.57	Strongly Agree

3.	You agree that accessible tourism includes the process of providing facilities that will allow people of all groups, especially those with disabilities, to travel on their own.	4.37	.66	Moderately Agree
4.	You think that accessible tourism has implications, including an ethical value.	4.37	.72	Moderately Agree
5.	You agree that accessible tourism is a universal concept not depending on a particular country or a particular culture.	4.49	.71	Moderately Agree
6.	You agree with the principle that tourism is a 'rights' of all individuals.	4.69	.51	Strongly Agree
7.	You agree the students in your department should have an understanding of tourism ethics and accessible tourism along with other courses.	4.57	.59	Strongly Agree
	Overview	4.21	.36	Moderately Agree

4.5 Perception on incorporating accessible tourism into the Tourism Ethics course of the Tourism curriculum

When considering each item, it was found that item 1, "You think that the modules on accessible tourism should be incorporated into the Tourism Ethics course of the Tourism curriculum" has the highest mean ($\bar{x}$ = 4.55), and item 5, "The Tourism Ethics course should not be part of the compulsory or elective course but should be included in the general education course in the Tourism curriculum" has a minimum average ($\bar{x}$ = 3.38). Details of the results of the data analysis are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Lecturers' perceptions towards the incorporation of accessible tourism into the Tourism curriculum: Perception on incorporating accessible tourism into the Tourism Ethics course of the Tourism curriculum

No.	Perception on incorporating accessible tourism into the Tourism Ethics course of the Tourism curriculum	$\bar{x}$	$S.D.$	Meaning
1.	You think that the modules on accessible tourism should be incorporated into the Tourism Ethics course of the Tourism curriculum.	4.55	.59	Strongly Agree
2.	The teaching and learning of tourism and hospitality should be consistent with the rights of people with disabilities.	4.41	.67	Moderately Agree
3.	The Tourism Ethics course should be a compulsory subject in the Tourism curriculum.	4.22	.82	Moderately Agree
4.	The Tourism Ethics course should be an elective course in the Tourism curriculum.	3.51	1.13	Moderately Agree
5.	The Tourism Ethics course should not be part of the compulsory or elective course but should be included in the general education course in the Tourism curriculum.	3.38	1.27	Neutral
6.	The Tourism Ethics course should contain content about Fundamental theories of ethics; ethical issues in tourism; the codes of ethics for tourism; accessibility tourism for people with disabilities.	4.25	.59	Moderately Agree
7.	The Tourism Ethics course does not put as much emphasis on the issue of tourism ethics as it should.	3.60	1.07	Moderately Agree

Overview	3.99	.48	Moderately Agree

4.6 Perception on people with disabilities and accessibility tourism

Here, it was found that item 4, "You are aware of the fundamental human rights of people with disabilities in accessible tourism" has the highest mean ($\bar{x}$ = 4.58) and item 7, "You think the tourism curriculum is crowded and lacks space to incorporate accessible tourism modules for people with disabilities" has the lowest mean ($\bar{x}$ = 2.66). Details of the results of the data analysis are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Lecturers' perceptions towards the incorporation of accessible tourism into the tourism curriculum: Perception on people with disabilities and accessibility tourism

No.	Perception on people with disabilities and Accessibility tourism	$\bar{x}$	$S.D.$	Meaning
1.	You think that tourism and hospitality in Thailand prioritize travelers with disabilities that do not meet the standards that this group deserves.	4.27	.75	Moderately Agree
2.	You think people with disabilities have the equal rights and dignity of human beings as people without disabilities.	4.52	.91	Strongly Agree
3.	You agree that people with disabilities should be treated without discrimination or exclusion.	4.48	.81	Moderately Agree
4.	You are aware of the fundamental human rights of people with disabilities in accessible tourism.	4.58	.65	Strongly Agree
5.	You agree that the current situation of Thailand still lacks a concrete practice for disabled people in access to tourism.	4.54	.62	Strongly Agree

6.	You think that tourism and hospitality are about business more than ethical matters.	3.31	1.41	Neutral
7.	You think the tourism curriculum is crowded and lacks space to incorporate accessible tourism modules for people with disabilities.	2.66	1.32	Neutral
	Overview	4.05	.47	Moderately Agree

4.7 Summary of findings

The study revealed the perspectives from university lecturers based in Bangkok regarding the need to adapt teaching methods and revise the tourism and hospitality curriculum to incorporate a more universal design. In general, there is a recognition of the positive outcomes associated with integrating accessible tourism into the curriculum, particularly by incorporating this area into existing Tourism Ethics courses offered at the university level. This adjustment is seen as a way to foster a new generation of students (as future practitioners) with perspectives on tourism ethics related to accessible tourism, as well as to promote equal rights for all individuals.

5 Discussion

There was an agreement in terms of the level of approval toward the incorporation of accessible tourism in their universities and reported that this impacted their quality of teaching. In addition to this, many said that incorporation of an accessible tourism curriculum in their universities enables students to become operational, develop a smooth transition, adopt critical and ethical perspectives on sustainable tourism knowledge gained, as well as ultimately promote 'rights' to all individuals. All the respondents supported the opinion that people with disabilities were, unfortunately, not being accorded the same rights and dignity as human beings as was the case with the general population of individuals without disabilities. According to the respondents, by not including accessible tourism curriculum in Tourism Ethics courses, universities will in a way not be utilizing resources properly and adequately to tackle the all-important issue of accessible tourism right from higher education curricula. This in turn lowers the standard of tourism teaching in universities in Bangkok (McDowall, 2010; Pookaiyaudom, 2020). The respondents indicated that all relevant parties should reach a consensus on how to behave responsibly toward accessible tourism.

The respondents put a larger emphasis on the significance of accessible tourism curricula in universities in Bangkok both in the present and the future. Regarding the topics of interest relating to accessible tourism and whether they should be taught in universities, none of the topics was less essential than the other topics. In addition to receiving higher scores on questions that pointed to the necessity of incorporating an accessible tourism curriculum through well-coordinated teaching and the importance of a long-term view for the development of tourism in Bangkok, the lecturers were also in favour of the opinion that people with disabilities have the equal rights and dignity of human beings as people without disabilities. The lecturers' responses indicated that they believed that the complete incorporation of the accessible tourism curriculum in higher education is a sign of successful outcomes in the tourism sector which is consistent with other findings and literature (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018; Sisto et al., 2022; Suntikul, 2014).

In terms of the lecturers' overall grasp of the notion of accessible tourism, the respondents were unanimous in their belief that accessible tourism includes everyone who is not restricted by age, physical or mental disability. They also believe that accessible tourism is a global notion that does not rely on a specific nation or culture. The respondents were of the modest view that the notion of accessible tourism is a "right" to all persons and that accessible tourism solely applies to people with impairments. They also agreed, if somewhat, that accessible tourism comprises the process of establishing amenities that enable individuals of all groups, particularly those with impairments, to travel independently. Respondents' responses that accessible tourism has important ramifications have also been suggested in the literature including studies that indicated the importance of ethical value, and that students in their department should have an awareness of tourism ethics and accessible tourism in addition to other courses (Tomassini & Baggio, 2022).

In terms of the accessible tourism curriculum in regard to persons with disabilities, respondents were overwhelmingly convinced that people with disabilities have the same human rights and dignity as individuals without disabilities. The respondents were also aware of the basic human rights of persons with disabilities in accessible tourism and firmly agreed that Thailand now lacks a tangible practice for disabled people in access to tourism. According to the respondents, tourism and hospitality in Thailand emphasize visitors with disabilities who do not match the standards that this group deserves, and persons with disabilities should be handled without prejudice or exclusion. Respondents were likewise of the modest view that tourism and hospitality are more about business than ethics. They expressed a modest view that the tourism curriculum is overburdened and lacks room to include accessible tourism courses for individuals with impairments. Other studies found similar outcomes and suggested well-coordinated curricula (Wan, 2015; Wilson & von der Heidt, 2013; Yang & Xu, 2022).

Concerning the incorporation of accessible tourism, the instructors were emphatic that the concepts of accessible tourism and tourism ethics be included in the tourism and hospitality curricula. They also believed that tourism and hospitality education and training should be congruent with the rights of individuals with disabilities and that a Tourism Ethics course should be required in the curriculum. They also agreed that tourism ethics should be an optional course in the curriculum and that tourism ethics should not be a required or elective subject, but should be included in the curriculum's general education course. According to the presenters, the Tourism Ethics course should include topics such as basic theories of ethics, ethical concerns in tourism, codes of ethics for tourism, accessible tourism for persons with disabilities, and so on. In contrast, the Tourism Ethics course does not place as much attention on the topic as it should.

Instructors were unanimous in their belief that the tourism curriculum should concentrate on helping students to become operational and make a seamless transition, as well as encouraging students to embrace critical and ethical viewpoints on tourism information learned. The lecturers were also of the same opinion that students should be trained to perceive tourism in such a manner that it produces a profit for the tourism company while also satisfying paying tourists, and that the present status of tourism places a greater emphasis on productivity and profitability. The lecturers also believed that the tourism curriculum should give students with a comprehensive grasp of tourism as a phenomenon and that the perspectives of stakeholders such as individuals with disabilities should be incorporated into its creation. The core course should strike a balance between a corporate perspective and an environmental, political, and socio-cultural perspective.

The lecturers seemed to lean more toward the notion of sustainability and seemed to understand the necessity of incorporating accessible tourism into university curricula in Bangkok. The respondents seemed to emphasize the advantages that accessible tourism may offer to academia and society. Only well-organized planned and design-based curricula with accessible tourism courses devoted entirely to teaching accessible tourism were indicated to result in sustainability notions. Accessible tourism may finally become the facilitator of sustainable development if suitable accessible tourism education is provided in universities in Bangkok to help students to comprehend the social costs of excluding other people due to disability, age or any other factor (Chaisawat, 2005; Dhevabanchachai & Wattanacharoensil, 2017; Fakfare et al., 2022; McDowall, 2010; Pookaiyaudom, 2020). The fact is that data shows that many university tourism students tend to graduate from their respective institutions of higher learning lacking accessible tourism knowledge (Abu Bakar et al., 2021; Eppolite & Burford, 2020; Handler & Tan, 2021; Yang & Xu, 2022). This assertion was derived from the lecturers' responses indicating the need for educators to properly develop students' capacities to think critically and solve difficult issues linked to accessible tourism and sustainable development by sufficiently engaging students in making sense of the accessible tourism ideas. Based on the results of this study, it is possible to infer that one approach to properly educating and sufficiently training tourism students on the topic of accessible tourism is to embrace the idea of the lecturers themselves first (Barkathunnisha et al., 2019; Dredge & Schott, 2013; Goh & King, 2020; López-Bonilla & López-Bonilla, 2014).

Researchers have identified that many groups of people have different beliefs about accessible tourism and its impacts. While some may appear skeptical, others appear enthusiastic, and yet others moderately optimistic (Akdemir, 2021; Miller et al., 2022; Moura et al., 2022). Accessible tourism should be on the agendas of universities offering courses in tourism-related courses (Camargo & Gretzel, 2017; Cloquet et al., 2018; Domínguez Vila et al., 2019). The optimum time to promote accessible tourism maybe during university education years for tourism students, which, based on the data reported in this study, is somehow lacking in Bangkok (McDowall, 2010; Pookaiyaudom, 2020).

Self-reports revealed perceptions paralleled education level, positions in institutions, and instruction area, while comments and suggestions indicated a need to improve, internationalize the curriculum, and re-consider PWD. Some reasons for moderate agreement on incorporating or understanding concepts focused on students, productivity, and profit. The Tourism Ethics course should be elective; the rights of PWD have been casually understood hence the casual space in the curriculum and overall perceptions. The higher the education level, the lower the mean on the research topic. However, the research is significant today because it addresses progressive weaknesses that limit our destination's competitive and inclusion potential by enlightening the rights of PWD. Education regarding aforementioned areas at the university level pose as a possible mediating agent for accessible tourism implementation now and in the future.

6 Conclusion

The study discusses the potential integration of accessible tourism into university curricula to promote sustainable development within the tourism sector. It emphasizes findings that suggest varying levels of awareness and agreement among lecturers regarding the importance of accessible tourism and its sustainable development aspects. Despite differences in educational backgrounds and teaching experiences, there is overall consensus among lecturers regarding the need for formal education on accessible tourism. The research highlights that incorporating accessible tourism into academic programs could enhance students' understanding of its economic, social, and environmental impacts. It advocates for curriculum adjustments that not only educate future tourism professionals but also cater to broader societal needs, including those of PWDs. The study highlights the importance of practical training and problem-based learning to better prepare students for real-world challenges in accessible tourism.

This research acknowledges challenges such as varying perceptions within the tourism industry and a lack of comprehensive definitions and competencies related to accessible tourism, and calls for a structured approach in university education to clarify these concepts and foster a more inclusive tourism industry. In conclusion, the study advocates for a paradigm shift towards integrating accessible tourism into higher education curricula, aiming to equip future tourism leaders with the necessary skills and knowledge to promote sustainable and inclusive tourism practices.

6.1 Limitations

There was a difficulty of obtaining a substantial sample size was difficult for the study as the number of lecturers who fits the criteria of being a teaching faculty member of the Tourism and Hospitality programs at the university level in Bangkok are few and generally highly occupied. As this research is part of a Master Degree thesis, data collection for this study was forced to be amidst the covid-19 pandemic to fulfil its requirements. Due to social distancing demands at the time, personally visiting the respondents for face-to-face interviews was not possible. Also, the respondents (university lecturers) were experiencing many changes and were newly adopting technology as a new requirement for online teaching. Furthermore, with no prior relationship or contact built with respondents or universities before the time of data collection, it was not possible to persuade all respondents to participate in an online interview and adopt the qualitative research design for this study.

The study only focused on the views from lecturers from universities located in Bangkok and as such, there are limits to its generalizability. Similar studies conducted in other comparable contexts would help provide additional insights into what incorporating accessible tourism education in university curricula means in theory, practice, and tourism higher education. It is also worth noting that, despite the fact that the study was conducted in a non-English speaking country such as Thailand, the emphasis was on the notion of accessible tourism and the incorporation of this concept in higher education institutions' curricula, rather than English as a pedagogical medium of instruction. Nonetheless, the study missed the opportunity to explore the difficulties that might be associated with providing accessible tourism education in a non-English speaking country as this subject has increasingly assumed an international and intercultural dimension. The study also did not use other groups of people such as curriculum developers, policymakers, or tourism students as respondents to gain their opinions and perceptions on the other aspects in different dimensions. Future studies could include respondents from different geographical areas and other stakeholders to gain a more holistic body of knowledge.

6.2 Research implications

6.2.1 Managerial implications

The study adds to the body of knowledge on the subject matter by providing a viewpoint on how lecturers understand the concept of accessible tourism and its incorporation into the curricula of higher education institutions offering ethical tourism as a course in Bangkok, Thailand. The paper offers valuable insights for higher education institutions on both the perceptions of lecturers and why they need to adopt accessible tourism in ethical tourism courses in reality. The paper also offers useful insights for practitioners in the field of tourism as it provides practical recommendations that are not only applicable in institutions of higher education but also in the field of practice, namely, the adoption of accessible tourism to ensure that all tourists, regardless of their physical or demographic characteristic are accorded equal and equitable opportunities to access and participate in tourist activities and sites. Therefore, integrating an accessible tourism curriculum into the Tourism Ethics courses or programs ensures the practical application of the research.

6.2.2 Academic implications

The research contributes by providing knowledge on perceptions entrenched in our institutions and curriculum, linking existing neglect of PWD to the current curriculum, and offering insights on instructional approaches that address their needs as a destination opportunity rather than a burden. In addition, the research extends previous knowledge as the deviation in results perception on incorporation, concept, and PWD topic was relatively consistent. This means the variables are well-known but ignore the issue as the literature unfolds (gaps). Furthermore, the research provides a novel approach and gaps in the topic, which is helpful for other researchers to understand the current state of literature and the new directions.

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Push and Pull Factors Influencing Western Travelers to Inle Lake, Myanmar

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Abstract

Inle Lake is a flagship destination in Myanmar, attracting Western travelers. Understanding their motivations can help develop strategies to attract more visitors. This research examines the push and pull motivational factors influencing Western travelers to visit Inle Lake. A survey was distributed, and 429 respondents completed it. Descriptive statistics, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), and One-way ANOVA were used to analyze the data. Results showed that “To see other people’s ways of life” (M=4.66, SD=0.59) and “Lake and mountains” (M=4.29, SD=0.74) ranked highest among push and pull factors. EFA identified “Seeking Novelty & Knowledge” and “Cultural Attractions” as the top factors. The findings also indicated that the influence of these factors varied among nationalities. These insights provide a comprehensive understanding of traveler motivations and behaviors, aiding in the development of targeted tourism strategies.

Keywords: travel motivation, push factor, pull factor, Inle Lake, Western travelers

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1 Introduction

Myanmar, the second-largest ASEAN country, **abounds with** natural, cultural, and historical resources. **With its** diverse ethnic groups, pristine coastlines, and ancient architecture, Myanmar **is committed to** responsibly developing its tourism sector. Since the country's democratic transition in 2011, **the** tourism industry has **witnessed** significant growth. In 2015, international tourist arrivals surged to over 4.6 million, marking a milestone for Myanmar's tourism sector (Ministry of Hotel and Tourism [MOHT], 2024). However, challenges arose, including a drop-in arrival in 2016 due to the Northern Rakhine State crisis. Western arrivals showed remarkable growth from 2015 to 2017 (MOHT, 2024). Unfortunately, the crisis in 2017 led to a nearly 20% decline in Western tourist arrivals in 2018 (MOHT, 2024). Despite this setback, the government of Myanmar (GOM) responded by relaxing visa policies and enhancing direct flight connections. As a result, Western arrivals slightly rebounded in 2019 compared to 2018 (MOHT, 2024).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Myanmar, like many countries, faced travel restrictions. However, due to a decrease in COVID-19 incidence rates, the health insurance certificate requirement for e-visa applications has been lifted (Myanmar eVisa, 2024). Nevertheless, the significant decline in international visitors in 2018, including a drop in Western visitor arrivals by 35% to 40% (MOHT, 2024), prompted Myanmar to focus on regaining and attracting tourists.

1.1 Inle Lake, Myanmar

Inle Lake, located in Myanmar's Shan State, offers a unique blend of culture, natural beauty, and traditional practices (Once in a Lifetime Journey, 2024). The lake is inhabited by the Innthar ethnic group, known for their unique leg-rowing technique and cylindrical fishing nets. Myanmar aims to become a top tourist destination in the ASEAN region by enhancing its tourism infrastructure and developing new attractions. Inle Lake, a flagship destination, is a focus for the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism and the Shan State Government, which are promoting community-based, eco, and cultural tourism to extend visitors' stays and increase their spending.

Inle Lake gained prominence among tourists around 2014, becoming a sought-after destination. Birdwatchers flock to the lake during winter (November-March) to observe migratory species. When comparing tourist arrivals, Inle Lake competes with other well-known destinations in Myanmar, such as Yangon, Mandalay, and Bagan (Lonely Planet, 2024). Although Western tourists account for only about one-third of total international arrivals, they significantly contribute to Inle Lake's tourism. In fact, they represent more than 50% of total international arrivals and play a crucial role in supporting local businesses, including hotels and guesthouses. Hotel construction around Inle Lake surged by 30% between 2015 and 2017 (MOHT, 2024).

In 2015, Inle Lake saw approximately 137,680 international travelers, which increased to about 210,805 by 2019, representing an increase of around 53% (MOHT, 2024). Western travelers, a significant group for

Inle Lake, numbered about 89,495 in 2015 and grew to approximately 127,179 in 2019, marking an increase of around 42% (MOHT, 2024). These figures highlight the importance of Western travelers, who constitute a substantial portion of the international visitors to Inle Lake. Their consistent growth underscores their critical role in the region's tourism sector.

In 2021, international tourist arrivals to Inle Lake dropped to 358, with Western travelers comprising the majority of international visitors at approximately 55% of the total. In 2022, international arrivals remained low at about 2,218 people (MOHT, 2024). However, in 2023, the number of international arrivals increased to 3,928, which is still significantly lower compared to pre-COVID-19 levels (MOHT, 2024). Notably, the rate of Western tourist arrivals improved more than other types of tourists, with an increase of about 477% between 2022 and 2023 (MOHT, 2024). Thus, Inle Lake's local tourism organization and the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism in Myanmar should actively attract and increase the number of Western tourists, recognizing their potential as a valuable market.

Therefore, in this study, Western travelers were the main targeted population as they are the major international visitors to the Inle Lake destination in Myanmar. This group includes travelers from North America and European countries.

1.2 Push and Pull Factors

Travel motivation lies at the heart of the question, "Why do people travel?" (Dunne, 2009). Extensive research has explored these motivations, often focusing on the interplay between push and pull factors (Crompton, 1979). Push and pull factors play a crucial role in shaping tourists' preferences and behaviors (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979). Push factors refer to an individual's desire to travel, driven by socio-psychological impulses (Crompton, 1979). Pull factors are the characteristics of destinations that inspire travel motivations (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979; Prayag & Ryan, 2011). These external elements include natural beauty, cultural heritage, recreational opportunities, and unique experiences; they act as compelling forces, drawing individuals toward specific places (Crompton, 1977; Dann, 1977). Nationality significantly shapes the push and pull factors that influence tourists' choice of destination. Understanding tourist motivations, or knowing why people travel, is essential for effective destination marketing. The push and pull factors that affect travel decisions can vary among different places (Khuong, Thi, & Ha, 2014; Kim, Lee, & Klenosky, 2003; Nikjoo & Ketabi, 2015; Said & Maryono, 2018; Suhud, Mamoon, & Willson, 2021; Wen & Huang, 2019; Yiamjanya, & Wongleedee, 2014). Prayag and Ryan (2011) also found that different national groups exhibit distinct motivations for visiting specific places.

Understanding Western tourists' motivations will help formulate effective marketing strategies and policies, ensuring traveler satisfaction and supporting long-term tourism goals. Recognizing the importance of push and pull factors is crucial for predicting future tourism trends in Inle Lake and its surroundings.

Despite having plans and policies for Inle Lake's tourism development, comprehensive academic research is essential for sustainable tourism and effective market strategies. This research will provide valuable insights into the travel motivations of Western tourists, aiding tourism stakeholders, including policymakers, the Regional Tourism Executive Committee (RTEC) of Shan State, Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), tourism business owners, and marketers.

While there were numbers of research focused on Inle Lake, however, majority of research regarding Inle Lake was on sustainability and its natural resources (Buijtendijk & Tschunkert, 2016; Ingelmo, 2013; Sett, & Liu, 2014; Soe & Romsaitong, 2018). For Inle Lake, there was no research on travel motivation focusing on push and pull factors. There was also lack of studies on Western travelers to visit the Inle Lake. Thus, this research aimed to understand the motivation of Western travelers to visit the Inle Lake in Myanmar by exploring the push and pull factors that influence their decision-making process to travel to Inle Lake. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to investigate the motivations driving Western travelers to select Inle Lake as their destination by examine both internal (push) and external (pull) factors contributing to their decision.

2 Literature review

2.1 Travel motivation

Travel motivation is a crucial topic in tourism research, encompassing anthropology, sociology, and psychology (Cohen, 1972; Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Gnoth, 1997). It is essential for understanding tourist behavior and developing the tourism industry (Wahab, 1975). Travel motivation explains tourist behavior and helps categorize tourists (Crompton, 1979). It is vital for understanding travelers' behavior, decision-making (Farmaki, Khalilzadeh, & Altinay, 2019), and positively affects revisit intentions (Huang, 2007).

Travel motivation helps tourism businesses anticipate travelers' needs and expectations (Kluin & Lehto, 2012) and understand their target groups, which may vary by age, gender, and nationality (Baloglu, 1997; Jönsson & Devonish, 2008; Kozak, 2002). The decision-making process can be complex (Marques, Mohsin, & Lengler, 2018), but understanding motivation can simplify it. You et al. (2000) noted that considering motivational factors helps satisfy travelers' needs.

Various factors affect travel motivations, which can also act as barriers (Roby, 2014). The competitive tourism market has made understanding travelers' motives even more critical (Blichfeldt & Kessler, 2009). Dann (1977) highlighted that travel motivation drives individuals to travel based on personal needs, influencing their behavior and destination choices. This study identified travel motivation using the push and pull motivation theory.

2.2 Push and pull factors

Dann (1977) proposed the widely accepted push and pull motivation theory in travel and tourism research. This theory categorizes travel motivations into two types: push factors, which express the desire to travel, and pull factors, which influence destination choice (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981).

Push and pull factors are essential for understanding travel motivations and developing destination marketing strategies (Oh, Uysal, & Weaver, 1995; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). They are crucial for assessing tourist motivations and creating effective tourism policies (Kassean & Gassita, 2013).

Chang, Backman, and Huang (2014) highlighted that understanding why people travel remains a critical issue in tourism research. Push motives reflect tourists' desire to travel, while pull motives describe the attractions of a destination (Dayour, 2014; Dayour & Adongo, 2015).

2.2.1 Push factors

Push motivation factors are driving forces for individual travel (Botha, Crompton, & Kim, 1999; Cha et al., 1995; Jang & Wu, 2006; Kim, Lee, & Klenosky, 2003; Park & Yoon, 2009; Pearce & Lee, 2005). Common push factors include prestige, exploration, relaxation, escape from routine, social interaction, and relationship enhancement. Push factors are internal drives that motivate individuals to travel (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979). They are associated with recreation, rest, adventure, and escaping the isolation of modern life. Thus, push factors represent the socio-psychological needs of travelers.

Literature shows that different push factors motivate various nationalities and types of travelers (Arowosafe et al., 2022; Cifci et al., 2024; Dayour, 2014; Ezeuduji et al., 2020; Fam et al., 2017; Heung, Qu & Chu, 2001; Jang & Cai, 2002; Kassean & Gassita, 2013; Mohammad & Som, 2010; Salsabila & Alversia, 2020; Sandybayev, Houjeir & Reczey, 2018; Sangpikul, 2008; Sastre & Phakdee-Auksorn, 2017; Wen & Huang, 2019; Wong, Musa & Taha, 2017; Yiamjanya & Wongleedee, 2014; Yousefi & Marzuki, 2015; Yuan & McDonald, 1990).

Fig. 1 shows push factors used in previous research.

	Push Factors	Yuan and McDonald (1990)	Cha et al. (1995b)	Oh et al. (1995)	Botha et al. (1999)	Hanqin and Lam (1999)	Jang and Cai (2002)	Kim and Klenosky (2003)	Pearce and Lee (2005)	Jang and Wu (2006)	Sangpikul (2008)	Park and Yoon (2009)	Mohammad and Som (2010)	Kassean and Gassita (2013)	Dayour (2014)	Dayour and Adongo (2015)	Kim et al. (2015)	Yousefi and Marzuki (2015)	Wong et al. (2017)	Fam et al. (2017)	Sastre and Phakdee-Auksorn (2017)	Sandybayev et al. (2018)	Binbasioglu (2019)	Wen and Huang (2019)	Ezeuduji and Dlomo (2020)	Salsabila and Alversia (2020)	Arowosafe et al. (2022)	Cifci et al. (2024)
1	Novelty Seeking	X		X		X	X				X	X		X		✓	X	✓				X	✓			X		
2	Seeking Knowledge		X	X		✓	✓	X	X	✓			X					✓		✓			✓	X		X		X
3	Fulfilling Prestige	X	X	X	X	X			X	X			✓							X							X	
4	Relaxation		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	✓	✓	X	✓		X				X	X			X	X	X		X
5	Escape from Daily Life	X		X	X		X	X	X	X				X	X		X		X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
6	Exploration				X			X	X	X														X	X	X		X
7	Social Interaction			X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X		X				X				X	X		X	X
8	Relationship enhancement				X	X		X	X	X			X				X											
9	Adventure		X					X							X	X							X					
10	Sports/ Entertainment		X		X								X														X	X
11	Healthy Life																X		X					X		X		X
12	Fun and Excitement						X					X									X	X				X		
13	Family and Friend Togetherness		X				X	X				X										X					X	
14	Nostalgia													X														
15	Cultural/ Natural/Attractions							X					X			X	X			X					X		X	X
16	Oversea Experience																		X									X
17	Oversea Retirement Dream																		X									

✓ = The most important push factors / X = All push factors founded by each researcher

Fig. 1: Push factors identified in previous research

2.2.2 Pull Factors

Pull motivation factors originate from within the designated destinations and can also support generating push factors (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979). These pull factors describe the features of a place that attract tourists, such as facilities, amenities, attractions, activities, infrastructure, prices, and service quality (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979). Destination managers should meet customers' expectations regarding these aspects, providing high-quality offerings like food and beverages, transportation, accommodation, natural and cultural attractions, and amusement parks. This approach ensures that tourism products align with customers' needs and desires, fulfilling their satisfaction.

Similar to push factors, pull factors influencing travel decisions vary among nationalities and destinations (Amonhaemanon & Amornhaymanon, 2015; Arowosafe et al., 2022; Baniya & Paudel, 2016; Cifci et al., 2024; Ezeuduji et al., 2020; Fam et al., 2017; Hanqin & Lam, 1999; Jang & Cai, 2002; Jang & Wu, 2006; Kassean & Gassita, 2013; Kim et al., 2003; Oh et al., 1995; Mohammad & Som, 2010; Naushin & Yuwanond, 2016; Salsabila & Alversia, 2020; Sangpikul, 2008; Sastre & Phakdee-Auksorn, 2017; Sie, Patterson & Pegg, 2016; Šimková & Holzner, 2014; Wen & Huang, 2019; Wong et al., 2017; Yavuz, Baloglu & Uysal, 1998; Yiamjanya & Wongleedee, 2014; You et al., 2000; Yousefi & Marzuki, 2015; Yuan & McDonald, 1990).

Fig. 2 shows pull factors used in previous research.

	Pull Factors	Yuan and McDonald (1990)	Oh et al. (1995)	Yavuz et al. (1998)	Hanqin and Lam (1999)	You et al. (2000)	Jang and Cai (2002)	Kim and Klenosky (2003)	Jang and Wu (2006)	Sangpikul (2008)	Mohammad and Som (2010)	Kassean and Gassita (2013)	Yiamjanya and Wongleedee (2014)	Simkova and Holzner (2014)	Amonhaemanon and Amornhaymanon (2015)	Yousefi and Marzuki (2015)	Naushin and Yuwanond (2016)	Sie et al. (2016)	Baniya and Paudel (2016)	Wong et al. (2017)	Fam et al. (2017)	Sastre and Phakdee-Auksorn (2017)	Wen and Huang (2019)	Ezeuduji and Dlomo (2020)	Salsabila and Alversia (2020)	Arowosafe et al. (2022)	Cifci et al. (2024)
1	Culture/ Heritage Attractions	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X		X	✓	✓	✓		✓	X		X		X	X	X	X	X
2	Natural Attractions	X	X				X			X	X	X	X	✓	✓		✓			X	✓	✓	X	X	X		X
3	Accessibility and Transportation				X			X			X								✓						X		X
4	Safety and Cleanliness		X				✓		✓	X															X		X
5	Affordable and Value for Money	X	X		X					X	X				X				✓	X	X		X		X	X	
6	Events and Activities		X								✓									X	X			X			X
7	Variety Seeking							X											X	X	X						X
8	Sightseeing Variety				X			X		✓	X												X			X	
9	Adventure										X		X								X						
10	Climate and Weather											✓											X		X		
11	Foods and Beverages												✓										X		X		
12	Upscale Service/Hi-tech		X		X							X					X			X				X			
13	Education & Experience																	X					X	X			X
14	Service Quality				X																		X		X	X	X
15	Friendliness of people																					✓			X		

✓ = The most important pull factors / X = All pull factors founded by each researcher

Fig. 2: Pull factors identified in previous research

3 Research methodology

The target population for this research comprised Western travelers (primarily from North America and Europe) who visited Inle Lake. A total of 480 questionnaires were distributed to Western travelers visiting Inle Lake and Nyaungshwe Township. The sample included travelers from France, the USA, Italy, Germany, the UK, Austria, Switzerland and other western countries. Both package tour travelers and free independent travelers (FITs) were surveyed. Surveys were distributed at MOHT tourist information counters, express bus stations, boat jetties, popular tourist spots, hotels, and guesthouses catering to Western travelers. A total of 429 completed questionnaires were obtained, defining the sample size for this research.

A self-administered questionnaire was used to investigate the push and pull travel motivational factors for visiting Inle Lake. The questions were developed based on the relevant literature, focusing on travel motivation factors. Specific questions about Inle Lake's attractions were developed to meet the research objectives, considering the unique characteristics of the destination. The survey questionaire was developed in English and divided into three main parts: travel information and patterns, travel motivations (push and pull factors), and demographic characteristics and recommendations. Pilot testing was conducted with 30 Western travelers to check the reliability and validity of the research instrument (Cavana, Delahaye, & Sekaran, 2001). The Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to determine inter-item consistency and reliability, with values of 0.84 for push items and 0.89 for pull items, indicating acceptable reliability (Nunnally, 1994).

Data was analyzed using SPSS (Version 25) with a significance level of 0.05. Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, and percentage) described respondents' travel information, patterns, and demographics. Descriptive statistics and one-sample t-tests were used to identify top push and pull motivational items. Multicollinearity tests were conducted on the 18 push and 24 pull items, with acceptable VIF values between 1 and 5 and tolerance values above 0.20. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was applied to group push and pull factors, with KMO values greater than 0.5 and eigenvalues above 1.0. Items with factor loadings above 0.4 were considered reliable. Using SPSS, new variables were created for the factor groups, and mean scores and standard deviations were calculated. ANOVA and T-test analyses examined significant differences in push and pull factors across demographic subgroups, FITs, and package tours, providing insights for future tourism service improvements and marketing activities.

4 Findings

The demographic characteristics of 429 Western respondents were recorded based on age, gender, marital status, educational status, occupation, income level, and nationality, as shown in Figure 3. Most respondents were aged 56 and above, representing 137 individuals (31.9%). This was followed by 126 respondents (29.4%) aged 26 to 35 years, 61 respondents (14.2%) aged 36 to 45 years, 60 respondents

(14.0%) aged 46 to 55 years, and 45 respondents (10.5%) aged 18 to 25 years. There were 47.3% male and 54.8% male respondents. As for nationality, 81 respondents (18.9%) were French, 72 respondents (16.8%) were German, 50 respondents (11.7%) were Italian, 40 respondents (9.3%) were British, 37 respondents (8.6%) were Austrian, 35 respondents (8.2%) were American, and 34 respondents (7.9%) were Swiss. Moreover, 80 respondents (18.4%) were from other nationalities, including Belgian, Swedish, Spanish, and Danish.

Characteristics	Classification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18 - 25 years	45	10.5%
	26 - 35 years	126	29.4%
	36 - 45 years	61	14.2%
	46 - 55 years	60	14.0%
	56 and above	137	31.9%
Gender	Male	194	45.2%
	Female	235	54.8%
Marital Status	Single	203	47.3%
	Married	223	52.0%
	Others	3	0.7%
Education	High School or Lower	46	10.7%
	Diploma	59	13.8%
	Bachelor Degree	108	25.2%
	Master Degree	139	32.4%
	Doctorate/Professional Degree or Higher	77	17.9%
Occupation	Student	22	5.1%
	Company Employee	156	36.4%
	Government Staff	41	9.6%
	Self-employed/ Own Business	78	18.2%
	Housewife	7	1.6%
	Retired	81	18.9%
	Unemployment	20	4.7%
	Others	24	5.6%
Monthly Income	Less than Euro 2,500	163	38.0%
	Euro 2,051-5,000	140	32.6%
	Euro 5,001-7,500	65	15.2%
	Euro 7,501-10,000	13	3.0%
	Euro 10,001-12,500	12	2.8%
	More than Euro 12,500	31	7.2%
	Prefer not the answer	5	1.2%
Nationality	French	81	18.9%
	American	35	8.2%
	Italian	50	11.7%
	German	72	16.8%
	British	40	9.3%
	Austrian	37	8.6%
	Swiss	34	7.9%
	Others	80	18.4%

Fig. 3: Respondent profile

Characteristics	Classification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
How do you travel in Inle Lake destination?	FIT	261	60.80%
	Package Tour	168	39.20%
What is your primary reason for visiting Inlay Lake?	Visiting friends/relatives	7	1.60%
	Holiday/ Vacation	416	97.00%
	Business	1	0.20%
	Education	4	0.90%
	Volunteer work	4	0.90%
	Conference/ Meeting	-	-
	Pilgrimage/Spiritual merit	3	0.70%
	Others	6	1.40%
How long will you stay on this Inlay Lake trip?	1 Night	28	6.50%
	2 Nights	176	41.00%
	3 Nights	150	35.00%
	4 Nights	54	12.60%
	5 Nights	11	2.60%
	6 Nights and more	10	2.30%
How many times in total (including this trip) have you visited Inlay Lake?	First Time	383	89.30%
	Second Time	26	6.10%
	More than two times	20	4.70%
What is your mode of transportation to Inlay Lake destination?	By Air	214	49.90%
	By Bus	141	32.90%
	By Railways	14	3.30%
	By Private or Hired Car	59	13.80%
	By Tour Coach	38	8.90%
	Trek from Kalaw	43	10.00%
	Others	5	1.20%
Where are you staying in Inle Lake?	Hotel	357	83.20%
	Guesthouse	72	16.80%
What is/are the source (s) of information about Inle Lake that you use to find out about the destination?	Radio/ TV	16	3.70%
	Printed Media/ Guidebook	156	36.40%
	Travel Trade Show	8	1.90%
	Internet/ Websites	260	60.60%
	Hotel/ guesthouse	29	6.80%
	Tour Operators/ Agents	127	29.60%
	Online Travel Agents	88	20.50%
	Friends and Relatives	155	36.10%
	Others	4	0.90%

Fig. 4: Travel behaviour of respondents

Figure 4 highlights the travel information of Western respondents visiting Inle Lake. There were 261 (60.8%) FIT respondents and 168 (39.2%) Package Tour respondents. 416 (97%) respondents visited for a "Holiday or Vacation." Regarding the length of stay, 176 (41%) stayed for two nights, 150 (35%) for three nights, 54 (12.6%) for four nights, 28 (6.5%) for one night, 11 (2.6%) for five nights, and 10 (2.3%) for over six nights. Most respondents, 383 (89.3%), were first-time visitors, while 26 (6.1%) visited for the second time, and 20 (4.7%) visited more than twice.

Transportation to Inle Lake included air (214, 49.9%), bus (141, 32.9%), private or hired car (59, 13.8%), trekking from Kalaw (43, 10%), tour coach (38, 8.9%), and railways (14, 3.3%). Accommodation choices were hotels (357, 83.2%) and guesthouses (72, 16.8%). Travel information sources included the internet/website (260, 60.6%), guidebooks or printed media (156, 36.4%), friends and relatives (155, 36.1%), tour operators or travel agents (127, 29.6%), and hotels and guesthouses' information desks (29, 6.8%).

Figure 5 shows the level of likelihood of the respondents' behavior. 230 respondents (about 53.61% of total respondents) were likely and very likely to revisit the Inle Lake destination. About 411 respondents (about 96% of total respondents) were also likely and very likely to recommend others visit the Inle Lake destination.

Characteristics	Classification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To revisit Inle Lake	Very Unlikely	36	8.40%
	Unlikely	63	14.70%
	Neutral	100	23.30%
	Likely	115	26.80%
	Very Likely	115	26.80%
To recommend others to visit Inle Lake	Very Unlikely	1	0.20%
	Unlikely	2	0.50%
	Neutral	14	3.30%
	Likely	83	19.30%
	Very Likely	329	76.70%

Fig. 5: Likelihood to revisit and recommend Inle Lake among respondents

As a result of push motivation items analysis, Figure 6 illustrates mean score, and standard deviation of the eighteen items that were analyzed for their importance in motivating Western travelers to visit Inle

Lake. The highest mean score was "To see other people's ways of life" (M=4.66, SD=0.59), while the lowest was "To visit friends and relatives" (M=1.95, SD=1.20). The second highest mean score was "To experience cultures that are different from mine" (M=4.62, SD=0.65), followed by "To enhance my knowledge and experience about a foreign country" (M=4.47, SD=0.73), "To see something new and exciting" (M=4.43, SD=0.74), "To explore destinations I have not previously visited" (M=4.41, SD=0.82), "To enjoy and make myself happy while traveling" (M=4.35, SD=0.78), and "To travel and go somewhere with a different environment" (M=4.35, SD=0.75).

Push Motivation	Mean	S.D.
To see other people's ways of life	4.66	0.59
To experience cultures that are different from mine	4.62	0.65
To enhance my knowledge and experience about a foreign country	4.47	0.73
To see something new and exciting	4.43	0.74
To explore destinations, I have not previously visit	4.41	0.82
To enjoy and make myself happy while traveling	4.35	0.78
To travel and go somewhere with a different environment	4.35	0.75
I want to see and meet different group of people	3.92	1.01
To be away from the routine life	3.85	1.17
To enhance communication with local community	3.8	1.02
To escape from stress in my daily life	3.72	1.23
To relax and rest	3.42	1.11
To be able to talk about my experience with other people when I return home	2.92	1.27
To go to the places my friends have been before and recommend	2.6	1.21
To spend more time with my family members	2.42	1.44
To visit a place which most tourists value and appreciate	2.41	1.19
To visit a destination that would impress my friends and family	2.14	1.28
To visit friends and relatives	1.95	1.2

Fig. 6: Descriptive analysis results of push factors in terms of importance in motivating Western travelers to visit Inle Lake

Figure 7 shows the result of twenty-four pull motivational items that were analyzed for their importance level among Western travelers that influence them to visit Inle Lake. The highest mean score was "Lake and mountains” (M=4.29, SD=0.74), while the lowest was “Bird watching activities” (M=2.24, SD=1.12). The second highest mean score was “Unique traditions” (M=4.28, SD=0.86), followed by “Local people’s diverse ways of life” (M=4.27, SD=0.79), “Innthar people’s unique ways of life” (M=4.20, SD=0.87), “Floating islands” (M=4.15, SD=0.93), “Safe destination” (M=4.13, SD=0.98), “Floating farms” (M=4.09, SD=0.98), and “Authentic culture and fine arts” (M=4.02, SD=0.96).

Pull Motivation	Mean	S.D.
Lake and mountains	4.29	0.74
Unique traditions	4.28	0.86
Local people’s diverse ways of life	4.27	0.79
Innthar people’s unique ways of life	4.2	0.87
Floating islands	4.15	0.93
Safe destination	4.13	0.98
Floating farms	4.09	0.98
Authentic culture and fine arts	4.02	0.96
Value for money	3.85	1.01
Affordable and reasonable price	3.83	0.95
Local markets (5 days market)	3.63	1.21
Ease of trip arrangement	3.58	1.05
Convenience of traveling	3.51	1.01
Easy access	3.48	1.07
Floating market	3.39	1.27
Local handicrafts and souvenirs	3.19	1.19
Local lotus weaving and textile products	3.16	1.26
Trekking and Hiking	3.14	1.39
Traditional music and dance	2.9	1.15
Local festivals and events	2.85	1.21
Nyaungshwe night market	2.72	1.2
Biking	2.65	1.31
Shopping	2.58	1.25
Bird watching activities	2.24	1.12

Fig. 7: Descriptive analysis results of pull factors in terms of importance in motivating Western travelers to visit Inle Lake

The push motivation items were analyzed using EFA to determine underlying dimensions among the 18 variables. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic was 0.780, with Bartlett’s test significantly less than 0.001. Figure 8 shows the EFA results for 18 push items, categorized into five groups with a total variance of 64.14%.

Factor 1 is “Seeking Novelty & Knowledge” (Eigenvalue = 4.256, 23.643%), Factor 2 is “Relaxation” (Eigenvalue = 3.015, 16.751%), Factor 3 is “Fulfilling Prestige” (Eigenvalue = 1.798, 9.992%), Factor 4 is “Family Togetherness” (Eigenvalue = 1.372, 7.621%), and Factor 5 is “Enhancing Social Interaction” (Eigenvalue = 1.103, 6.128%).

All factor loadings were greater than 0.4, and the eigenvalues were greater than 1.0, which signifies a strong relationship between factors and items (Lee, 2000) and reliability (Kaiser, 1974). Hair et al. (2010) suggested that a Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.7 or higher indicates internal reliability. Pallant (2007) noted that a value above 0.60 is acceptable. The analysis revealed alpha values of 0.681 for Factor 4 and 0.677 for Factor 5, close to 0.70 and acceptable. Therefore, all five push factor dimensions were identified as final factors. Based on factor mean scores, “Seeking Novelty & Knowledge” (factor mean = 4.49) emerged as the main push factor motivating Western travelers to visit Inle Lake.

Push Factor Dimensions (Reliability Alpha)	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	Variance explained (%)	Factor mean
Factor (1): Seeking Novelty & Knowledge *(α=0.818)*		**4.256**	**23.643**	**4.49**
To explore destinations, I have not previously visited	0.633			
To enhance my knowledge and experience about a foreign country	0.791			
To experience cultures that are different from mine	0.780			
To see other people's ways of life	0.804			
To see something new and exciting	0.628			
To travel and go somewhere with a different environment	0.674			
Factor (2): Relaxation *(α = 0.813)*		**3.015**	**16.751**	**3.84**
To relax and rest	0.648			
To enjoy and make myself happy while traveling	0.632			
To escape from stress in my daily life	0.901			
To be away from the routine life	0.877			
Factor (3): Fulfilling Prestige *(α = 0.733)*		**1.798**	**9.992**	**2.52**
To visit a destination that would impress my friends and family	0.791			
To go to the places my friends have been before and recommend	0.706			
To visit a place which most tourists value and appreciate	0.774			
To be able to talk about my experience with other people when I return home	0.563			
Factor (4): Family Togetherness *(α = 0.681)*		**1.372**	**7.621**	**2.19**
To spend more time with my family members	0.825			
To visit friends and relatives	0.823			
Factor (5): Enhancing Social Interaction *(α=0.677)*		**1.103**	**6.128**	**3.86**
I want to see and meet different groups of people	0.816			
To enhance communication with local community	0.832			
Total Variance Explained	**64.14%**			

Fig. 8: Result of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) on push factors

The pull motivation items were analyzed using EFA to identify underlying dimensions among the 24 variables. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic was 0.817, with Bartlett's test significance at less than 0.001.

Pull Factor Dimensions (Reliability Alpha)	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	Variance explained (%)	Factor mean
Factor (1): Easy Access and Safe (α=0.878)		**6.336**	**26.399**	**3.68**
Convenience of traveling	0.840			
Ease of trip arrangement	0.884			
Easy access	0.856			
Safe destination	0.645			
Factor (2): Cultural Attractions (α = 0.853)		**3.014**	**12.559**	**4.19**
Authentic culture and fine arts	0.710			
Unique traditions	0.779			
Innthar people's unique ways of life	0.821			
Local people's diverse ways of life	0.794			
Factor (3): Events and Sightseeing (α=0.795)		**2.419**	**10.078**	**3.09**
Traditional music and dance	0.544			
Local festivals and events	0.691			
Nyaungshwe night market	0.795			
Floating market	0.751			
Local markets (5 days market)	0.613			
Factor (4): Shopping Local Products (α=0.839)		**1.885**	**7.852**	**2.98**
Shopping	0.782			
Local lotus weaving and textile products	0.848			
Local handicrafts and souvenirs	0.849			
Factor (5): Natural Attractions (α = 0.830)		**1.400**	**5.831**	**4.17**
Lake and mountains	0.666			
Floating islands	0.860			
Floating farms	0.874			
Factor (6): Variety Seeking (α = 0.699)		**1.151**	**4.797**	**2.67**
Bird watching activities	0.600			
Biking	0.829			
Trekking and Hiking	0.826			
Factor (7): Affordable Destination (α=0.851)		**1.019**	**4.247**	**3.84**
Affordable and reasonable price	0.836			
Value for money	0.866			
Total Variance Explained	**71.76%**			

Fig. 9: Result of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) on pull factors

Figure 9 presents the EFA results for 24 pull items, highlighting seven main factors with a total variance of 71.76%. Factor 1 is "Easy Access and Safe" (Eigenvalue = 6.336, 26.399%), Factor 2 is "Cultural Attractions" (Eigenvalue = 3.014, 12.559%), Factor 3 is "Events and Sightseeing" (Eigenvalue = 2.419, 10.078%), Factor 4 is "Shopping Local Products" (Eigenvalue = 1.885, 7.852%), Factor 5 is "Natural Attractions" (Eigenvalue = 1.400, 5.831%), Factor 6 is "Variety Seeking" (Eigenvalue = 1.151, 4.797%), and Factor 7 is "Affordable Destination" (Eigenvalue = 1.019, 4.247%).

All pull factors had eigenvalues higher than 1.0, and factor loadings greater than 0.4. Cronbach's alpha values for the seven factors ranged from 0.699 to 0.878, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Therefore, all seven pull factor dimensions were identified as the final factor structure.

Based on factor mean scores, "Cultural Attractions" (factor mean = 4.189) and "Natural Attractions" (factor mean = 4.174) were the primary pull factors attracting Western travelers to Inle Lake.

Push and Pull Factor Dimensions	Nationality							F Value	p Value
	FR	US	IT	GE	UK	AU	SW		
Push Factors									
1) Seeking Novelty & Knowledge	4.41	4.58	4.36	4.53	4.64	4.64	4.39	2.307	0.034*
2) Relaxation	3.78	3.81	3.64	3.89	3.65	3.97	4.03	1.329	0.243
3) Fulfilling Prestige	2.63	2.73	2.53	2.37	2.46	2.74	2.50	1.113	0.354
4) Family Togetherness	2.53	1.96	2.07	1.98	1.89	2.24	2.12	2.491	0.023*
5) Enhancing Social Interaction	4.14	3.67	3.89	3.88	3.76	3.70	3.82	2.037	0.060
Pull Factors									
1) Easy Access and Safe	3.99	3.54	3.23	3.67	3.56	3.78	3.69	4.401	0.001*
2) Cultural Attractions	4.34	3.95	4.30	4.22	4.07	4.39	3.85	3.510	0.002*
3) Events and Sightseeing	2.94	2.79	3.15	2.97	3.18	3.54	3.02	2.652	0.016*
4) Shopping Local Products	3.19	2.59	3.11	2.74	3.00	3.33	2.70	3.253	0.004*
5) Natural Attractions	4.34	3.93	4.25	4.25	4.10	4.27	3.95	2.142	0.048*
6) Variety Seeking	2.68	2.45	2.69	2.44	2.62	2.75	2.87	1.077	0.376
7) Affordable Destination	3.80	4.13	3.56	3.83	3.98	3.81	3.66	1.652	0.132

***p-value < 0.05**
FR = French **US** = America **IT** = Italian **GE** = German **UK** = British
AU = Austrian **SW** = Swiss

Fig. 10: One-Way ANOVA results comparing push and pull factors among nationalities

Figure 10 shows the comparison of mean importance of push and pull factors in terms of visiting Inle Lake among nationalities. Significant differences were found in push factors “Seeking Novelty & Knowledge” (p-value=0.034) and “Family Togetherness” (p-value=0.033). Post-Hoc Tests (LSD) revealed “Seeking

Novelty & Knowledge" for British travelers (M=4.64, SD=0.43) and Austrian travelers (M=4.64, SD=0.43) were more importance than for French travlers (M=4.41, SD=0.60), Swiss travelers (M=4.39, SD=0.53), and Italian travelers (M=4.36, SD=0.54). This suggests British and Austrian respondents were more motivated by this factor. For "Family Togetherness," French travelers (M=2.53, SD=1.27) scored higher than German travelers (M=1.98, SD=0.99) and British travelers (M=1.89, SD=0.94) respondents, indicating a higher motivation for French travelers.

Significant differences were also found in pull factors "Easy Access and Safe" (p-value=0.001), "Cultural Attractions" (p-value=0.002), "Events and Sightseeing" (p-value=0.016), "Shopping Local Products" (p-value=0.004), and "Natural Attraction" (p-value=0.048). Post-Hoc Tests (Tukey) showed that French (M=3.99, SD=0.75) and Austrian (M=3.78, SD=0.97) travelers scored higher than Italian travelers (M=3.23, SD=0.99) in "Easy Access and Safe." French (M=4.34, SD=0.62) and Austrian (M=4.39, SD=0.73) travelers also scored higher than Swiss travelers (M=3.58, SD=0.83) in "Cultural Attractions." Austrian travelers (M=3.54, SD=1.12) scored higher than French (M=2.94, SD=0.95) and American (M=2.79, SD=1.09) travelers in "Events and Sightseeing." Austrian travelers (M=3.33, SD=0.98) also scored higher than American travelers (M=2.59, SD=1.23) in "Shopping Local Products." For "Natural Attraction," French (M=4.34, SD=0.70), Austrian (M=4.27, SD=0.76), Italian (M=4.25, SD=0.65), and German (M=4.25, SD=0.79) travelers scored higher than American (M=3.93, SD=0.83) and Swiss (M=3.95, SD=0.87) travelers, suggesting that this factor gives a higher motivation to visit for these nationalities.

5 Discussion

As shown, the main seven push motivational items for Western travelers to Inle Lake were "To see other people's ways of life," "To experience cultures that are different from mine," "To enhance my knowledge and experience about a foreign country," "To see something new and exciting," "To explore destinations I have not previously visited," "To enjoy and make myself happy while traveling," and "To travel and go somewhere with a different environment." These findings align with previous studies as follow. Heung et al. (2001) and Jang and Wu (2006) found that "I want to see something different" was a key push motivation for Chinese and Taiwanese travelers. Heung et al. (2001) also noted that "I want to experience cultures that are different from mine" was significant for Japanese leisure travelers. Sangpikul (2008) identified similar motivations for Korean travelers. Mohammad and Som (2010) found that "to visit a place I have not visited before" was a major push item for tourists to Jordan. Yiamjanya and Wongleedee (2014) and Fam et al. (2017) also highlighted the importance of experiencing new cultures and environments. These insights help destination marketers, hoteliers and travel agencies better understand Western travelers' needs.

The most important pull factor for Western travelers to Inle Lake was "Lake and mountains," followed by "Unique traditions," "Local people's diverse ways of life," "Innthar people's unique ways of life," "Floating islands," and "Safe destination." These findings also align with previous studies such as the following.

Yavuz et al. (1998) found “cultural attraction” as a major draw for European travelers to Cyprus. Jang and Cai (2002) noted British travelers preferred cultural or exotic places. Sangpikul (2008) identified “Thai cultural,” “cultural & historical attractions,” and “beaches/seaside” as key pull items for Korean travelers. Amonhaemanon and Amornhaymanon (2015) highlighted “beaches and natural attractions,” “cultural festivals or events,” “good value for money,” “historical and religious sites,” and “cost or price level” as core pull factors for Chinese tourists to southern Thailand. Naushin and Yuwanond (2016) found top pull items for domestic travelers to Cox’s Bazar Sea Beach included “beautiful nature,” “most famous beach destination,” “attractive cultural and historical sites,” “good service quality,” and “unique cultural traditions.” Cleanliness and safety were also significant pull factors for British and Taiwanese travelers (Jang & Cai, 2002; Jang & Wu, 2006). These insights help tourism policymakers, marketers, and business owners better understand and attract Western travelers.

The push factor dimensions “Seeking Novelty and Knowledge,” “Relaxation,” “Fulfilling Prestige,” “Family Togetherness,” and “Enhancing Social Interaction” were identified as motivating Western travelers to Inle Lake. “Seeking Novelty and Knowledge” was the most crucial factor. This supports Yuan and McDonald (1990), who found “escape, novelty, and prestige” as main push factors for travelers from France, West Germany, and the UK. Oh et al. (1995) identified six push factors for Australian travelers, including “knowledge/intellectual” and “novelty/adventure.” Jang and Cai (2002) and Jang and Wu (2006) also highlighted “seeking knowledge” as a key push factor for British and Chinese travelers. Dayour and Adongo (2015) and Yousefi and Marzuki (2015) found similar results for travelers to Ghana and Malaysia, respectively.

For pull factors, “Easy Access and Safe,” “Cultural Attractions,” “Events and Sightseeing,” “Shopping Local Products,” “Natural Attractions,” “Variety Seeking,” and “Affordable Destination” were identified. “Cultural Attractions” was the most crucial, followed by “Natural Attractions.” These findings align with Yuan and McDonald (1990), who identified “cost, culture, wilderness, and history” as key pull factors. Oh et al. (1995) and Yavuz et al. (1998) also found cultural attractions significant for travelers. Amonhaemanon and Amornhaymanon (2015) and Yousefi and Marzuki (2015) highlighted similar pull factors for travelers to Thailand and Malaysia. Naushin and Yuwanond (2016) found “beautiful nature” and “unique cultural traditions” as top pull factors for domestic travelers in Bangladesh. Sie et al. (2016) noted “educational and cultural touristic experiences” as important for older tourists. Baniya and Paudel (2016) found “history and culture” as main pull factors for Nepali travelers. Fam et al. (2017) and Sastre and Phakdee-Auksorn (2017) highlighted “natural attractions” as key pull factors. These insights help tourism policymakers, marketers, and business owners attract more Western travelers to Inle Lake.

The results highlighted significant differences in "Relaxation" and "Family Togetherness" for push factors, and "Easy Access and Safe," "Cultural Attractions," "Events and Sightseeing," "Shopping Local Products," and "Natural Attractions" for pull factors across Western nationalities. British and Austrian travelers were more motivated by "Seeking Novelty & Knowledge" than French, Italian, and Swiss travelers. French travelers were more motivated by "Family Togetherness" than German and British travelers.

French and Austrian travelers were more attracted to Inle Lake by "Easy Access and Safe" and "Cultural Attractions" than Italian and Swiss travelers. Austrian travelers were more attracted by "Events and Sightseeing" than French and American travelers. They were also more attracted by "Shopping Local Products" than American travelers. Additionally, French, Austrian, Italian, and German travelers were more attracted by "Natural Attractions" than American and Swiss travelers.

Therefore, the destination marketers and managers should focus on promoting cultural and natural attractions to Western travelers by highlighting Inle Lake's unique cultural experiences and natural beauty in marketing campaigns to attract British, Austrian, French, and German travelers. They should enhance accessibility and safety to ensure easy access and promote the safety of the destination to appeal to French and Austrian tourists. Moreover, they shall develop family-friendly packages by creating travel packages that emphasize family togetherness to attract French travelers. Furthermore, they may feature local products and events to promote local markets, handicrafts, and cultural events to attract Austrian and American tourists. This could be done by leveraging digital marketing by utilizing social media and travel platforms to showcase testimonials and experiences from Western travelers, focusing on novelty, knowledge, and cultural experiences. They should also collaborate with travel agencies that are international travel agencies to create tailored packages that meet the specific preferences of different Western nationalities. These strategies can help Inle Lake attract more Western travelers by aligning with their travel motives and behaviors.

This research focused solely on Inle Lake and Western travelers. Future research should broaden the population range and compare different traveler characteristics to better understand their motives and behaviors. Future research may try to include other destinations to compare motivations across different regions; study travelers from various backgrounds, including different age groups, nationalities, and travel purposes; conduct studies over time to observe changes in travel motivations and behaviors; and use both qualitative and quantitative methods to gain deeper insights into traveler motivations. The future research may also seek to investigate how different marketing strategies influence traveler decisions and preferences. These recommendations can help provide a more comprehensive understanding of traveler motivations and behaviors, aiding in the development of targeted tourism strategi

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Session 10: Innovative Approaches to Sustainable Tourism

Re-Envisioning Smart Tourism through Smart Community-Driven Outcomes

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Abstract

The definition and description of smart tourism have mainly focused on implementing ICT in tourism activities. Smart tourism's techno-centric approach threatens to marginalize thriving smart communities, hindering the symbiotic relationship crucial for destination success. In conducting the theoretical and literature review of smart tourism, the authors found that cloud computing, the Internet of Things (IoT), and End-user devices have facilitated the process but have not changed the nature of tourism. Unsustainable tourism practices can overwhelm communities. To investigate the interconnected nature of smart tourism dimensions, the "Smart Community-Driven Outcomes" model fosters collaboration by leveraging collective intelligence, technology acceptance, a systems-thinking approach, and physical destination resources. This model effectively addresses the challenges of excessive tourism. This holistic perspective cultivates a nuanced understanding of the intricate relationship between smart communities and smart tourism. This collaborative effort lays the groundwork for a truly smart community that transcends technological advancements.

Keywords: collective intelligence, community system thinking, smart community, smart tourism, technology acceptance

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1 Introduction

"Tourism is a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purpose." (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2024). As defined by UNWTO (2024), tourism has emphasized the relevant implications of social and cultural aspects and economic benefits from business activities in the tourism industry. For decades, numerous Asian and European countries have launched smart tourism campaigns as part of their tourism development strategies. These campaigns promote their socio-cultural heritage and natural resources to attract more tourists and enhance the tourism sector's contribution to economic growth. These countries are increasingly investing in building or enhancing their infrastructure to support smart tourism strategies, a novel concept in tourism development (Gretzel, Reino, Kopera, & Koo, 2015). This approach leverages technological advancements to assist tourism businesses and activities, catering to the growing number of tech-savvy tourists (Gelter, Lexhagen, & Fuchs, 2021).

The integration of information and communication technology, including social media applications, the Internet of Things, e-commerce platforms, and technological infrastructure, has transformed the form and presentation of services at tourism destinations. This shift has also evolved the traditional tourism ecosystem into smart tourism (Gretzel et al., 2015). According to Gelter et al. (2021), information and communication technology applications and infrastructure are crucial technological drivers for enhancing and developing interactions between tourists and destinations in a smart tourism context. Furthermore, a meta-narrative analysis of the smart tourism destination research portfolio emphasized that the smart tourism concept depends on the level of community engagement with information and communication technology (ICT) to facilitate tourist-stakeholder interactions at destinations. ICT may include cloud computing, the Internet of Things (IoT), end-user devices (such as desktop or laptop computers, smartphones, and tablets), and destination digitalization (Gelter, Lexhagen, & Fuchs, 2021; Buhalis & Moldavska, 2022).

Moreover, extensive research in smart tourism indicates that technology engagement in tourism businesses and activities through ICT significantly enhances tourists' memorable experiences. However, using ICT in smart tourism has revealed security and privacy issues, which are seen as counterproductive impacts of smart applications facilitating tourist interactions with destinations. Tourists are increasingly concerned about providing their personal information to application systems and services offered by agencies at destinations (Suntacha, Banos-Pino, & Del Valle, 2023).

In addition to the involvement of information and communication technology in tourism activities among stakeholders, providing access to tourism information and digitalized services at destinations (Suntacha, Banos-Pino, & Del Valle, 2023), another perspective from the theory of planned behavior (TPB) suggests that the emotional connection between tourists and destinations remains crucial for enhancing the quality of tourists' memorable experiences in smart tourism destinations (Nieves-Pavón, López-Mosquera, & Jiménez-Naranjo, 2024).

Zhou, Buhalis, Fan, Ladkin, and Lian (2024) underscore the community's pivotal role in constructing a smart tourism framework. Their study evaluates and develops destination strategies to attract digital nomads, highlighting the community's collective contributions to smart tourism development. Utilizing stakeholder theory, they categorize communities into three types: international, destination, and institutional. Each community, with its unique characteristics and contributions, plays a crucial role in smart destination planning and strategy to meet smart tourists' needs (Zhou et al., 2024). Zhou et al. (2024) emphasize the development of smart tourism planning and strategies through the interplay of various communities, each with its unique characteristics and contributions. This concept aligns with Bethune et al. (2022), who advocate for interdependence and collaboration among community actors in fostering a smart tourism destination. The integration of these ideas underlines the community's pivotal role in smart tourism planning and strategy, facilitated by community-to-community and actor-to-actor interactions at the destination. Information and communication technology advancement has shaped the tourism ecosystem and has inevitably affected the characteristics of traditional tourism elements such as attraction, accessibility, and amenities (Kim et al., 2022; Suntacha et al., 2023). However, this circumstance is not to undermine traditional elements of tourism and the community capability and critical role, whether through the interaction between one community and another community or interaction between actors within a community to their important contribution to smart tourism development (Gelter et al., 2021; Bethune et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2024).

2 Smart tourism

For years, researchers have studied and defined tourism from various perspectives, enriching their understanding and extending the context of tourism from traditional to smart tourism. Furthermore, the smart tourism phenomenon has globally influenced sustainable economic growth by leveraging rich tourism destinations and advancements in information technology (Gelter, Lexhagen, & Fuchs, 2021).

According to Gretzel et al. (2015), smart tourism is an interconnected network of smart tourism businesses, destinations, and technological infrastructure. In this framework, the physical elements of a tourism destination are repackaged, re-communicated, and reconnected to tourists through information-based technology applications and infrastructure. This definition suggests that tourists experience a unique and memorable visit due to smart interactions and connectivity with the destination's physical elements via applications and Wi-Fi (Gretzel, Reino, Kopera, & Koo, 2015).

Similarly, Li, Hu, Huang, and Duan (2017) define smart tourism from an information services perspective as the interaction between an individual tourist support system and the tourism technology ecosystem, particularly in exchanging information through smart information services. Another notable study on smart tourism by Cerdá-Mansilla, Tussyadiah, Campo, and Rubio (2024), viewed as a broader concept of smart destinations, indicates that each stakeholder in the tourism sector at the destination interprets smart tourism differently, presenting various features. Their literature review categorizes stakeholders at the destination into the industry, local community, tourists, and researchers, suggesting that each group presents distinct features when defining a smart destination.

Cerdá-Mansilla et al. (2024) argue that the local community presents distinct features compared to the industry, tourists, and researchers, although several smart community features overlap among stakeholders. The unique features the local community identifies in defining smart destinations include environment, transport, and measurement standards. This viewpoint suggests that the community has specific concerns about the destination's environment, transport accessibility, and indicators of tourism activities, which other stakeholders do not represent. Nonetheless, accessibility, sustainability, tourists, and technology are features shared by all stakeholders, including the community (Cerdá-Mansilla, Tussyadiah, Campo, & Rubio, 2024).

Investigating the smart tourism literature has supported the authors' propositions toward the concept of smart tourism as proposed by Dar (2022), who argued that the boundaries of the smart tourism concept have been extended beyond merely installing technology applications to digitalize tourism activities at the destination. Instead, the smart behavior of the community in their activities and interactions plays a crucial role in developing fundamental aspects of tourism, creating memorable experiences (Nieves-Pavón et al., 2024). Additionally, developing a smart community relies on integrating technology and data in tourism businesses and activities and multiple factors that significantly influence destination planning (Ghorbani, Danaei, Zargar, & Hematian, 2020).

Building smart tourism hinges on a foundation of smart communities empowered by real-time data and critical decision-making (Dar, 2022). Active community participation strengthens program success across diverse initiatives – from tourism development to climate action and entrepreneurial ventures. This includes involvement in planning, implementation, and oversight at both collective and individual levels (Reimerson, Priebe, Hallberg-Sramek, de Boon, & Sandström, 2024). Such participation fosters responsible resource use and knowledge acquisition.

In the research field of smart tourism destinations, using the word 'smart' has become a magic word to enhance a research article's look, making it look advanced and contemporary. This phenomenon has led to a deficiency in the theoretical definition and description of smart tourism destinations (Gelter et al., 2021), which could undermine and drive the ambiguity in understanding the role of destination communities in tourism development. Some supportive evidence has been observed. Naldi et al. (2015) posit a strong link between smart communities and individual intelligence fostered by education systems. This collective intelligence empowers communities to identify problems and find effective solutions. A recent literature review by Jakobsen et al. (2023) identified knowledge gaps in smart community technology applications research. These gaps encompass methodological concerns, research approaches, digital integration, co-evolution and impacts, domain-specific technical insights, and the digital divide's societal implications. Jakobsen et al. (2023) further emphasize the importance of a sociotechnical perspective. They argue that successful smart technology implementation necessitates considering social and cultural contexts, economic benefits, and community infrastructure as integral components of problem-solving mechanisms.

The current focus on technology in smart tourism often overlooks the crucial role of smart communities. While technology facilitates information flow and interaction, the underlying principles, frameworks, tools, and models fail to fully recognize the importance of community involvement (Asian Development Bank, 2023). A destination's ability to adopt and leverage technological advancements hinges on the community's capacity to embrace them. This empowers them to share information effectively using intelligent applications, improve business efficiency, and cater to the evolving preferences of smart tourists (Liu & Wu, 2023).

The extended boundaries of the smart tourism concepts, as the literature in smart tourism highlighted, have enhanced our concept of the important role of the smart community in the relationship with smart tourism. The four interdependent aspects that explain the crucial role of smart community in smart tourism in this concept have been recognized:

- System thinking mechanism: the community's problem-solving abilities are central (Senge et al., 1994; Jakobsen et al., 2023).
- Technology acceptance: the tourism community's acceptance of information and communication technologies is crucial (Gelter et al., 2021; Liu & Wu, 2023).
- Collective intelligence: the community's collective knowledge and wisdom are vital (Naldi et al., 2015).
- Physical destination resources: the destination's core attractions, accessibility, and amenities are essential (Gretzel et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2022).

2.1 System thinking mechanism

Recently, people in Spain's Canary Islands rallied to protest the government's tourism policy and demand that the government limit the number of tourists who have harmed the environment and the residents' lives regardless of the economic benefit they have experienced for years (BBC News, 2024). This island had more than 13 million visitors in 2023, which is even greater than in 2018 and 2019, years before the COVID-19 pandemic (Statista, 2024). In the other destinations, the tourism authority has taken further action to deal with the problem of over-tourism. The Venice Tourism Authority announced the terms and policy commencing June 1, 2024; they would like to limit the number of tourists in one group to 25 persons. Likewise, it requires an advanced booking to visit and pay an entrance fee of up to €10 per person to enjoy the tourism activities in this destination. The previous year, they banned large cruises from anchoring and bringing tourists into this city (Whitmore, 2024). The residents of Hallstatt in Austria have encountered similar issues about the excess tourism activities (The News, 2024). Similarly, in Majorca in Spain (Marshall, 2023), the local residents took the same awareness and reaction to protect and maintain the city's sustainability from the harmful impact of the over-tourism problem on the destinations. These recent events have demonstrated the community's awareness of the collateral damage of over-tourism activities and reaction to preserve the nature of the destination and residents' convenience and peaceful life regardless of the privilege of economic and social benefits (Whitmore, 2024).

Dar (2022) highlights community awareness as a critical factor in building smart communities. Similarly, de São José et al. (2021) emphasize the synergy fostered by collaborative decision-making within communities, where residents work together to identify and implement solutions to local challenges. This underscores the importance of integrating communities into destination planning. Their role has been increasingly recognized in sustainable tourism development, as evidenced by Dar (2022) and McKenna and Hanrahan (2024). The latter study also reveals a disconnect – while the community acknowledges tourism's positive economic and social impacts (McKenna & Hanrahan, 2024), they have not been actively involved in decision-making processes. McKenna and Hanrahan (2024) observe a gap between resident concerns and the tourism authority's input during sustainable destination planning.

Research suggests that local residents and communities, through their inherent problem-solving mechanisms, can effectively understand and analyze local situations, identify root causes, and develop alternative solutions for sustainable destination planning (Jakobsen et al., 2023) and specialization strategies (Romão, 2020). However, this effectiveness can be hampered by discrepancies between the concerns and input provided by the tourism authority and the community.

The authors assert that problem-solving mechanisms are essential attributes of smart communities. These communities demonstrate their ability to identify problems, conduct causal analysis, find alternative solutions, and implement the right solutions. Smart communities necessitate problem-solving mechanisms. Developing intelligent, sustainable, and inclusive growth in smart communities requires enhancing individual education, which is recognized as a crucial indicator (Naldi, Nilsson, Westlund, & Wixe, 2015). Satisfaction, equity, inclusivity, accessibility, safety, and cultural preservation are acknowledged as social indicators for smart tourism destinations alongside technological dimensions (Hussain, Ahonen, Karasu, & Leviäkangas, 2023).

Furthermore, Hussain et al. (2023) presented a rubric for smart tourism assessment, identifying technological indicators such as online service availability and multiple contactless payment systems. The social and technological dimensions coexist in their rubric, advancing the smart community, yet they function as independent dimensions with specific measurement indicators (Hussain et al., 2023). Constructing a smart community should involve the multidimensional tasks and roles of various stakeholders and the integration of numerous soft and hard infrastructures (Gu et al., 2024). Although information technology is indispensable in shaping smart communities, the principles of socio-technological interactions, where social and technological aspects benefit each other, should adhere to livable, sustainable, efficient, secure, resilient, productive, inclusive, and transparent principles (Gupta et al., 2021; Dar, 2022; Bethune et al., 2022; Nakhaei et al., 2023; Berhanu et al., 2024).

However, the definition of a smart community has evolved to encompass complex tasks and roles, distinguishing it by the presence of problem-solving mechanisms (Jakobsen et al., 2023), community involvement in decision-making processes (McKenna & Hanrahan, 2024), individual education levels (Naldi et al., 2015), social quality indicators (Hussain et al., 2023), multidimensional tasking, supportive soft and hard infrastructure (Gu et al., 2024), stakeholder collaboration (Defe & Matsa, 2024), technology adaptation (Collado-Agudo et al., 2023), and information and communication technology (ICT) (Gelter et al., 2021).

2.2 Technology acceptance

The research underscores the importance of technology acceptance for community activities and interaction at tourist destinations. This acceptance fosters positive behavioral changes, influencing community preferences and interests (Dar, 2022). Within the tourism context, technology acceptance can be understood as the community's willingness to engage with technological applications related to tourism activities or businesses at the destination (Dar, 2022).

Destination agencies and businesses must improve efficiency to cater to evolving tourist preferences and enhance the visitor experience. This can be achieved by adopting and offering intelligent application systems that give tourists the information they need to create memorable experiences (Liu & Wu, 2023).

A study by Collado-Agudo et al. (2023) examines how tourism businesses at a destination can adopt the smart tourism model by shifting their focus from the TOE (Technology, Organization, Environment) framework to the TAM (Technology Acceptance Model). This shift significantly impacts managerial innovation, enhancing competitiveness and commitment to IT development. Ultimately, this strengthens the smart tourism ecosystem. While technological advancements undeniably facilitate tourism interactions and transactions (Torabi et al., 2023), there is a crucial need for capacity building within the destination community. Equipping residents with the knowledge and skills to utilize available IT applications empowers them to leverage smart technologies and digitize their services, further enriching the smart tourism experience.

2.3 Collective intelligence

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2024) defines collective intelligence as leveraging technology for collaborative knowledge sharing, interpretation, and problem-solving. While a study (Calof, Søilen, Klavans, Abdulkader, & El Moudni, 2022) suggests a decline in the term "collective intelligence" popularity compared to that of "crowdsourcing," the terms are often still used interchangeably. Notably, collective intelligence finds application in various research fields, with computing science being prominent.

Talukder et al. (2023) highlight the value of collective intelligence for communities. It facilitates data sharing and problem-solving among diverse stakeholders, leading to locally-driven solutions. A study by

Bulchand-Gidumal (2022) employed the Delphi method with experts to identify key dimensions of smart communities in tourism destinations. Three key dimensions linked to collective intelligence emerged: education, tourist integration, and productivity/employment.

Building a smart tourism community hinges on three key dimensions Bulchand-Gidumal (2022) identified: education, tourist integration, and productivity/employment. Educating residents equips them with the knowledge and interpersonal skills needed for collaboration. Fostering a safe and welcoming environment for both tourists and residents is crucial for a thriving tourism destination. Finally, encouraging residents to explore non-tourism business opportunities reduces overreliance on a single industry and promotes economic diversification.

2.4 Physical destination resources

The UNWTO (2024) defines the physical element of a destination as a cornerstone of tourism. This encompasses the countries or places tourists visit, along with the people, culture, and environment that shape their experiences. The quality of interaction between tourists and these elements significantly impacts their satisfaction, memories, and revisit intention (Torres-Moraga, Rodriguez-Sanchez, Alonso-Dos-Santos, & Vidal, 2024).

Furthermore, Torres-Moraga et al. (2024) have studied the impact of the physical appearance of destinations, along with social, symbolic, and natural dimensions, as stimuli for destination identification, measured by the emotional connection between tourists and destinations. The physical appearance of a destination influences tourists' perceptions of its environmental concerns and alignment with their self-concepts (Torres-Moraga et al., 2024).

Multiple stakeholders' acquisition of information and communication technology at the tourism destination to improve their efficiency and connection with tourists should not undermine the important role of the destination's physical elements in developing destination planning and strategy (Kim et al., 2022). The destination's identity represents the tourist's total concept, affecting their experience and revisiting intention (Torres-Moraga et al., 2024).

A smart community can be identified by its ability to maintain and improve social quality (Hussain et al., 2023), preserve hard infrastructure (Gu et al., 2024), and enhance attraction, accessibility, and amenities (Kim et al., 2022) as part of the destination's physical identity.

3 Smart Community-Driven Outcomes Model

The authors propose an integrated conceptual model, the "Smart Community-Driven Outcomes Model," to illustrate the critical role of existing smart destination communities in fostering smart tourism, smart economics, smart collaboration, and smart sustainability. This model depicts a reciprocal relationship between a core smart community and four "smart outcomes": smart tourism, smart economics, smart collaboration, and smart sustainability (Figure 1).

The Smart Community-Driven Outcomes Model is a conceptual framework with three interconnected dimensions grounded in a literature review of smart communities and smart tourism.

- Core Layer: Smart Destination Community - This layer represents the model's foundation.
- Middle Layer: Smart Drivers - This layer encompasses the factors that propel the smart community forward.
- Outer Layer: Smart Outcomes - This layer reflects the positive consequences of the smart community, including smart tourism, smart economics, smart collaboration, and smart sustainability.

3.1 Smart destination community

Smart destination communities encompass residents, stakeholders, and their surrounding social structures, economics, demographics, culture, and behavior (Nieves-Pavón et al., 2024). These communities are crucial in maintaining socio-cultural quality, facilitating tourist interaction, and ensuring resource sustainability (McKenna & Hanrahan, 2024).

The core element is people – their skills and knowledge (hard and soft capacities) alongside available tourism resources. Importantly, these communities also involve active interaction among multiple stakeholders: residents, government agencies, NGOs, and international actors (Zhou et al., 2024; Defe & Matsa, 2024).

Effective destination planning hinges on a smart community. Active stakeholder engagement, leveraging diverse capabilities, establishes a foundation for smart tourism (Zhou et al., 2024). Resident participation forms the bedrock upon which other smart tourism dimensions are constructed (Sigalat-Signes, Calvo-Palomares, Roig-Merino, & García-Adán, 2020). Their collective efforts and stakeholder commitment are crucial for effective problem-solving.

Reinforcing this point, Sigalat-Signes et al. (2020) emphasize a resident-centric approach after interviewing several stakeholders at the tourism destination in Gandia, Mediterranean. They argue that smart tourism development should prioritize residents over technology as the primary driver of solutions. Thus, they emphasize residents as the center of the community more than technologies as problem-solving facilitators.

Fig. 1: Smart community-driven outcomes

3.2 Smart community driver

The second dimension of this model is smart community drivers. The authors have identified several key drivers in this dimension: physical destination resources (Kim et al., 2022), community collective intelligence (Calof et al., 2022), community system thinking (Jakobsen et al., 2023), and technology acceptance (Dar, 2022). These drivers have significantly contributed to the development of smart destination communities.

The community at the destination, as the core dimension of this model, requires these drivers to qualify as a smart community. The presence of these drivers enhances the community's ability to identify collective problems and find optimal solutions. This increased decision-making capacity indicates the evolution of the community from a traditional to a smart community (Jakobsen et al., 2023).

These drivers support smart destination community development as both inward and outward forces, sustaining smart community outcomes such as smart tourism, smart economics, smart collaboration, and smart sustainability. Beyond their roles as inward and outward forces, these drivers can also serve as indicators to assess whether the community's collective performance meets the decision-making mechanism's standards.

3.2.1 Physical destination resources

Physical destination resources, encompassing natural assets, social quality (Hussain et al., 2023), soft and hard infrastructure (Gu et al., 2024), attractions, accessibility, and amenities (Kim et al., 2022), form the foundation of a tourist destination. These elements define a location's identity and directly impact visitor experiences.

Tourists actively engage with the physical environment, shaping their memories and influencing their decision to revisit (Torres-Moraga et al., 2024). A destination's unique blend of resources fosters memorable experiences, ultimately influencing a tourist's intention to return.

3.2.2 Community collective intelligence

Community collective intelligence refers to the problem-solving capability that emerges from an educated citizenry and active stakeholder interaction (Talukder et al., 2023). This collective intelligence empowers the community to identify shared challenges and collaboratively find optimal solutions, ultimately improving social well-being.

It functions as a dual force. Internally, it strengthens the core smart community by fostering problem-solving capacity. Externally, it contributes to positive outcomes like smart tourism and smart sustainability.

3.2.3 Community technology acceptance

Technology acceptance reflects the community's perception of technology's usefulness and ease of use in their activities (Davis, 1989). This includes attitudes and how readily people adopt new technologies.

Building technology acceptance within the smart destination community requires inclusion programs that equip residents with the knowledge and skills to leverage these advancements (Torabi et al., 2023). When stakeholders embrace technology, it transforms tourism interactions and service delivery at the destination (Collado-Agudo, Herrero-Crespo, & San Martín-Gutiérrez, 2023). Moreover, it empowers innovation in tourism businesses, leading to more efficient practices and enhanced destination competitiveness.

Technology acceptance acts as a dual force. Internally, it strengthens the core smart community by fostering digital literacy and technology use. Externally, it contributes to positive outcomes like smart tourism and smart economics.

3.2.4 Community system thinking

System thinking is a core principle of learning organizations (Senge et al., 1994). It refers to the ability to understand complex systems as a whole. Individual capacity for system thinking builds on early development and is crucial for collective learning within groups and societies (Senge et al., 1994).

In the context of smart communities, system thinking translates to strong community decision-making mechanisms. It empowers residents to identify and solve problems collaboratively, ultimately improving their quality of life (Jakobsen et al., 2023).

Like other smart community drivers, system thinking acts as a dual force. Internally, it strengthens the core community by fostering collaborative problem-solving. Externally, it contributes to positive outcomes like smart tourism and smart sustainability.

3.3 Smart outcomes

The outermost layer of the model represents the positive outcomes driven by the smart destination community: smart tourism, smart economics, smart collaboration, and smart sustainability. These "smart outcomes" result from the community's collective efforts and outward forces.

Interestingly, a two-way relationship exists between smart outcomes and smart community drivers. While the community's capabilities propel positive outcomes, the success of these outcomes can, in turn, enrich and strengthen the drivers themselves. For example, a thriving smart tourism industry might incentivize further investment in physical destination resources.

3.3.1 Smart tourism

Smart tourism development hinges on the foundation of a strong smart community (Zhou et al., 2024). This community's ability to leverage information technology fosters intelligent interactions between tourists and the destination, a crucial element for effective smart tourism planning (Liu & Wu, 2023).

Information and communication technologies (ICT) and social media advancements constantly reshape smart tourism. These advancements introduce innovative products and service presentations, enriching tourist-destination interactions and enhancing the overall tourist experience (Hussain et al., 2023). Furthermore, integrating technology into smart tourism strategies fosters broader social networking partnerships and facilitates faster information sharing (Park, Lee, Yoo, & Nam, 2016).

3.3.2 Smart economy

Recent qualitative research by Park & Gordon (2024) on a community economic development project in a rural county of Ontario, Canada, has uncovered the community's roles in building a stronger and more resilient economy. They highlighted the community's willingness to engage in interconnected activities within economic development programs, their capacity to identify new opportunities for revenue-generating business activities, and their initiatives to collaborate with other stakeholders as contributors to economic development.

The higher the degree of technology acceptance by the community, the more effective and efficient their business operations will be. Similarly, improving managerial capacity will intensify economic activities at the destination and expand their network coverage (Collado-Agudo, Herrero-Crespo, & San Martín-Gutiérrez, 2023).

3.3.3 Smart collaboration

Effective collaboration among stakeholders at a destination fosters a win-win situation. It unlocks opportunities for network improvement, risk and resource sharing, ultimately enhancing destination competitiveness (Luongo, Sepe, & Del Gaudio, 2023). This collaborative spirit fuels product and service co-creation, a key driver of competitive advantage. As highlighted in the Regional Innovation System (RIS) matrix, a strong tourism innovation system thrives on innovation capacity and resource endowment (Luongo et al., 2023).

Reinforcing this notion, Chung, Lee, Ham, and Koo (2021) propose a framework for sustaining smart tourism competitiveness. They identify five key partners who interact at the destination: tourists, residents, the local community, tourism companies, and the government. By leveraging these stakeholders' unique roles and contributions, successful collaboration empowers destinations to innovate and thrive.

3.3.4 Smart sustainability

Sustainable tourism development hinges on a community's ability to balance the influx of tourists with preserving its physical resources and socio-cultural quality (McKenna & Hanrahan, 2024). Research by Vieira, Alén, Fernandes, and Rodrigues (2024) reinforces this notion, highlighting that community involvement and attachment are crucial for positive cost-benefit outcomes in sustainable tourism destinations.

4 Implications

This conceptual research offers significant advancements to the understanding of smart tourism. First, it introduces the concept of a smart community as a key driver for achieving positive outcomes in smart tourism, sustainability, collaboration, and economics. This highlights the crucial role of a strong community foundation for success across various dimensions. Second, the research strengthens the theoretical framework of smart tourism by positioning the smart community as the cornerstone for successful strategy development. By placing the community at the center, this framework underscores the importance of resident engagement, collective intelligence, and system thinking in achieving sustainable and successful tourism practices.

Finally, the proposed "Smart Community-Driven Outcomes Model" provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the interconnected nature of smart tourism development. The model identifies key drivers within a smart community, including physical resources, technology acceptance, collective intelligence, and system thinking. Importantly, it also highlights the interdependent outcomes of these drivers, encompassing smart tourism, sustainability, collaboration, and economics. This holistic perspective fosters a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between community development and positive tourism outcomes. Building upon these novel insights, this research paves the way for further exploration of the intricate relationship between smart communities and smart tourism. Future research could involve empirical studies testing the proposed model and exploring specific strategies to foster smart community development within tourism destinations.

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How to Boost Event Attendees Sharing their Experience through Social Media Platforms? The Role of Self-Image Congruence Theory

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Abstract

This research attempts to demonstrate a conceptual framework by explaining the role of self-image congruence, and predicting their self-event connection and engaging in sharing their experiences via social media platforms. These following research questions will be addressed. (1) How do different dimensions of self-image congruence perceived by attendees in music and entertainment influence their self-event connections? (2) Does self-event connection have a greater impact on sharing event experiences via social media platforms? The self-image congruence theory is adopted as an underpinning conceptual framework. Data will be collected via online self-administrative survey with people who had attended the Mor Lum Festivals in Thailand, and will be analysed with the partial least square-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The holistic model underlying event attendee behaviour of music and entertainment events is expected to be drawn as the main outcome from this research.

Keywords: self-image congruence theory, sharing experiences, music event, Mor lum festival

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1 Introduction

Special events and festivals have become one of the fastest growing industries which attracts large audiences to the host destination and contributes to positive economic and social drives in the service sector (Meeprom, 2022; Wong et al., 2023). Especially, music and entertainment events are increasingly becoming popularity around the world (Borges et al., 2021). Before the covid-19 pandemic, more than 800 music event and festival are organized throughout the globe about a fifth of the U.S. population attended live music events annually. As the nature of event characteristics occurs in a specific timing and on a particular destination and place (Gilstrap et al., 2021), the music and entertainment events are organised and employed as marketing strategies to booth economic advantages and offer job creations during the off-peak season in many countries. Therefore, with the continuous expansion of the events and festivals and the growing competition in music and entertainment industries, it is impossible for the event organizers to run their events without considering the level of market competition (Chiengkul et al., 2023). Delivering superior quality and experience to the event attendees plays an essential role in creating attendee-event long-term relationship (e.g., attendee loyalty) (Chiengkul et al., 2023). However, some scholars suggest that different people are motivated to attend the events in different ways based on their preference, attitude, and personality (Duan et al., 2020). Moreover, Meeprom and Fakfare (2021) suggest that people are likely to attend the events which fit their self-image. This matching can explain better predicting event attendee behaviour. Especially, a higher level of congruence between event image and attendee self-image can reflect their self-identity (Meeprom & Fakfare, 2021), which leads to attendee engagement, self-connection, and positively advocacy. Previous research on special event and festival contest is predominantly focused on attendee motivation, satisfaction, perceived event quality, and behavioral intention (e.g., revisit intention and word-of-mount) (Albayrak & Caber, 2018; Hsu et al., 2021; Mainolfi & Marino, 2020). Limited research has concentrated on understanding insight into how different dimensions of attendee self-image match the event image when attending music and entertainment festivals and leveraging attendee behavioral response (Meeprom & Fakfare, 2021). To address the research gap, this study aims to present a conceptual framework to explain how self-image congruence and predict their self-event connection and engaging in sharing their experiences via social media platforms, since creating superior experience is the ultimate goal of event marketing. Specifically, this study attempts to answer the research questions; (1) How do different dimensions of self-image congruence perceived by attendees in music and entertainment influence their self-event connections? (2) Does self-event connection have a greater impact on sharing event experiences via social media platforms?

2 Theoretical framework and methods

According to Sirgy and Su (2000), the role of self-image congruence refers to the degree of match or mismatch between a product/service image and a customer's self-image and has been extensively applied in various areas of service marketing and tourism literature (Meeprom, 2024; Wei & Qiu, 2020). When apply this theory in the event context, stronger the congruity between attendees' self-concept and event image is, the more likely that attendees will form positive both cognitive and affective connections with the event, thereby receiving an enjoying and valuable experiences connection with the event. Building upon the self-image congruence theory as a conceptual framework, this study advances theoretical understanding of event attendee's behaviour. An integrated model is applied to evaluate key constructs underlying the wider nomological network within which it is situated, including actual self–image, ideal self–image, social self–image, ideal social self–image, self-event connection, and sharing their experiences via social media.

Data will be collected via online self-administrative survey through a purposive sampling approach with people who had attended the music and entertainment event, especially, Mor Lum Festivals in Thailand. Mor Lum Festival is recognised as folk performance which represents a deep-rooted in the Northeast traditional styles of performance (Dolphen, 2016). Moreover, Mor Lum Festival becomes a prominent and popular music and entertainment events all over the north-eastern region and expand to other regions in Thailand (Boonsinchai et al., 2024). The partial least square-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) will be employed to test the proposed hypothesised relationships. The results of the study may contribute to the literature by developing and testing a theoretically holistic model underlying event attendee behaviour of music and entertainment event. The results of the study offer benefits to destination marketing organisations and event managers in focusing on strategies for delivery superior experience to specific event segmentation, but also provide useful insights into the dynamics of the hospitality and tourism systems such as creating a competitive new operating environment and changing consumer preferences and behaviour.

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Collective or Individual? Tourists' Travel Mode Choice During a Pandemic

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Abstract

The coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) led to holiday journeys being associated with significant health risks. While there are numerous studies on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on travel mode choice in everyday mobility, there are a lack of studies on tourists' choice of travel mode, even though tourism transport in Switzerland makes up 24% of all distance travelled. Based on an extended conceptual framework of the Health Belief Model (HBM), this study investigates the effect of COVID-19 on tourists' intentions to choose a particular travel mode during the pandemic. Our findings show that the higher the perceived susceptibility to illness associated with the holiday journey, the lower the choices for collective travel modes. Furthermore, for those tourists who are more likely to take risks, their choices for collective travel modes are increased. The study recommends that public transport operators choose measures that increase the application of non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) against tourists while travelling; this may encourage the safe use of collective transport modes during a pandemic.

Keywords: travel mode choice, health belief model, COVID-19, holiday journeys, NPIs, tourist destination
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Rethinking Resilience Strategies amidst the COVID-19 Crisis: Perspectives from Tourism Social Entrepreneurship in the Greater Mekong Subregion

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Abstract

COVID-19 has posed economic and financial challenges to tourism social enterprises worldwide, yet they have managed to maintain their social missions and financial viability. Some tourism social enterprises have struggled to survive, while others have been adaptive and managed their business well under similar circumstances. This article aims to explore resilience strategies employed by tourism social enterprises in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) to respond to challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on in-depth interviews with six social enterprises in the Mekong region, the findings revealed that four different coping mechanisms or strategies should be viewed as an iterative and integrative process namely: 1) applying a market-based strategy, 2) adjusting employment policies, 3) increasing operational efficiency, and 4) adapting or alter the operations. Learning about coping strategies during times of crisis, especially from the past and understanding the present, is necessary to efficiently build a resilient social enterprise.

Keywords: tourism social enterprise, COVID-19, resilience, crisis, the Greater Mekong Subregion

1 Introduction

Tourism significantly contributes to the livelihoods of local communities in developing countries, especially in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) comprising six member countries, namely Cambodia, Lao PDR, PR China, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. The importance of tourism in the Mekong subregion is demonstrated through its contribution to poverty alleviation and reducing socio-economic inequalities while boosting inclusive growth in host communities. Due to the prosperity of tourism resources in this subregion along with assistance from the Asian Development Bank, the GMS has been a major tourist destination among international travellers since 1992 (Asian Development Bank, 2005). Statistically, the GMS, excluding PR China, attracted over 73 million international tourist arrivals in 2019 generating approximately $101 billion in tourism receipts prior to its drastic decline in 2020 by 13.4 million inbound arrivals generating $27.7 billion in revenue (Destination Mekong, 2021). Having served as a secretariat of the GMS tourism working group, the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office (MTCO) aims to facilitate the cooperation of the six national tourism organisations with Destination Mekong, the destination marketing organisation (DMO) led by private sector, and related stakeholders to create an inclusive environment to support tourism enterprises, local residents, and other beneficiaries in the GMS.

Social entrepreneurship has emerged over the past decades as a way to identify and create social change beyond the profit-seeking motives of private sector entrepreneurship. Despite the growth in practices, there is no consensus on the definition, making the boundaries of social entrepreneurship unclear and uncertain (Dees, 1998; Sheldon et al., 2017). The debate brings no-resolution on what the characteristics of social entrepreneurship should be. The author, however, has applied Abu-Saifan's (2012) definition, which highlights social entrepreneurship’s core mission of “creating social value for the less privileged through an entrepreneurially oriented entity that is financially independent, self-sufficient, or sustainable” (p. 25)." In this study, social enterprise is generally referred as a social firm, a community organisation, a private and semi-private company, or a foundation with a specific social value that serves its primary purpose. Unlike a commercial enterprise aiming to maximise profits for their owners or shareholders, a social enterprise primarily focuses on a social value while still earning revenue (Mair & Marti, 2006). Furthermore, a social enterprise differs from a charity in terms of their financial independence and self-sufficiency (Abu-Saifan, 2012). The charity largely operates their activities through donations, while on the other hand a social enterprise often earns profits from their business to continue making a social impact.

As the primary concern for social enterprises is to achieve social, cultural, community economic, and/or environmental outcomes (Urbano et al., 2010), social entrepreneurship has played an important role in promoting sustainability and alleviating poverty in many developing countries (Hall et al., 2012; Zeng, 2018). The aforementioned statement can be further supported by the fact that social entrepreneurship in tourism has incorporated sustainable development into its agenda, aiming to distribute positive outcomes to local communities and beneficiaries while mitigating negative impacts caused by their operations (Aquino et al., 2018). Previous literature revealed that social entrepreneurship in tourism is characterised by small or medium enterprises that exist in and serve marginalised communities (Dredge, 2017).

In order to promote the GMS as a single responsible travel destination, the Experience Mekong Showcase is held annually to motivate other social enterprises to learn best practices in sustainable tourism and innovation. The Mekong Showcases have adopted sustainable business practices, tourism products and services to create positive social impacts for host communities and beneficiaries. By looking the context of their operations, social missions, and geographical setting, the Mekong Showcases can be viewed as a catalyst for promoting sustainable development in the GMS as they potentially offer sustained, inclusive, decent work and capacity-building schemes for disadvantaged groups of people, while reducing social inequality and environmental degradation.

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, a highly transmittable and deadly respiratory virus, has taken a devastating toll on humanity and *exogeneous shocks worldwide.* The COVID-19 has adversely affected the world economy, healthcare, and mobility through travel restrictions, event cancellation, employment workforce, food chain, academia, and healthcare capacity (Shrestha et al., 2020). Given as a vehicle for social entrepreneurship (Hall et al., 2012; Mody & May, 2014), all tourism enterprises have been disrupted by the global pandemic as a result from the government interventions for COVID-19, especially lockdowns and travel restrictions for months (Dube et al., 2020; Weaver, 2020). The national lockdowns and social distancing measures to reduce the spread of virus apparently made social enterprises more vulnerable to economic disruptions resulting in falling revenues, job loss, and widespread of uncertainty (Carr, 2020). Previous literature revealed that a considerable change in consumer demand patterns has disrupted operations and supply chain management as tourism enterprises were to adjust their business hours to reduce people interactions (Debata et al., 2020). It was clear that the social distancing measures hindered and eradicated opportunities for many tourism enterprises to generate their revenue (Aldianto et al., 2021; Weaver, 2020).

Being vulnerable to turbulent times, tourism social enterprises (TSEs) in the GMS have been adversely affected by COVID-19 posing challenges in maintaining their social missions and financial sustainability. However, while some TSEs are struggling in a high degree, others can still be adaptive and manage their business well under similar circumstances (Fiksel et al. 2015). What are the critical factors influencing social enterprise resilience and how do they cope with the crisis? Empirical research on resilience strategies for social enterprises in tourism and hospitality is limited, especially at the organisational level (Weaver, 2020). Given the research gap, this paper aims to explore resilience strategies employed by TSEs in the GMS to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. This study helps in understanding coping mechanism that TSEs can recover quickly from unprecedented crisis and bounce back stronger after facing adversities.

2. Literature Review

Tourism social enterprises and business resilience

In the tourism context, Sheldon et al. (2017) define *tourism social entrepreneurship* as "a process that uses tourism to create innovative solutions to immediate social, environmental and economic problems in destinations by mobilising the ideas, capacities, resources and social agreements, from within or outside the destination, required for its sustainable social transformation". (p. 7). They also define *tourism social entrepreneurs* as an 'change agent in a destination' who bring their talents, passion, capacities and resources to solve social problems and promote sustainable development in destinations. Similarly, *tourism social enterprises* are referred to as private, semi-private organisations or foundations dedicated to creating social change for their destination.

In the business context, resilience is generally defined as the capacity for an organisation or an enterprise to deal with unexpected disruptions by ensuring the existence and prosperity of the organisation (Fiksel, 2006; Hamel & Valikangas, 2003). Scott & Laws (2006) viewed resilience as the capacity for adaptation to rapid change and exogenous shocks. They proposed three perspectives on resilience: (1) Ability to return to previous state (normality); (2) Capacity for recovery from crisis by following the sequence of rescue, restoration of damaged infrastructure and then rebuilding of markets (new business may emerge - gradual change); (3) A fundamentally different state; business concept changes drastically in unplanned and uncontrolled ways, new model of operations, new partner, new network, new markets.

Social enterprises require an innovative and adaptive ability as a core value which they navigate an unexpected disruption and bounce back from the crisis in a healthy and positive way (Alegre & Berbegal-Mirabent, 2016; Thukral, 2021). In time of crisis, the response to rapid change and exogenous shocks is critical for business resilience (Williams & Vorley, 2014). Being characterised as small and medium enterprises, TSEs are relatively responsive to exogenous shocks as they are more flexible, and adaptable than large organisations (Williams & Vorley, 2014). However, some of the key differences between small and large organisations are organisational structure, leadership style, reactions to the environment, available resources, and the internal context in which they operate (Man et al., 2002).

Dahles & Susilowati (2015) examined a series of coping strategies that small tourism & hospitality businesses in developing countries, especially in Indonesia, potentially adapt and survive in time of crisis. Their coping strategies include supporting employees (find other jobs etc.), selling current business, finding other business opportunities other than tourism, switching from international markets to domestic tourist markets, reducing sale prices, cutting out unnecessary business expenditures, and engaging in other income earning activities.

Previous literature revealed that tourism enterprises have adapted their business model in response to COVID-19 by undertaking product diversification, reducing prices, changing marketing strategies, staffing changes, and engaging in inter-enterprise cooperation (Rogerson, 2021). Social enterprises during the pandemic requires balancing resilience, while still remaining open to new market opportunities for business growth (Giones et al. 2020). Weaver (2020) proposed three important issues should be addressed to examine the impacts of the COVID-19 on social entrepreneurship: (1) Financial performance, challenges and opportunities faced by social enterprises during and after the pandemic; (2) Geographic location influencing both opportunities and barriers to achieve resilience; and (3) Resilience strategies employed to mitigate adverse impacts caused by COVID-19.

In their study of the COVID-19 effects on business ventures, Krishnan et al. (2022) observe that an enterprise can use an entrepreneurial intervention as a crisis management strategy and to improve organisational resilience. The entrepreneurial intervention, which is an appropriate combination of entrepreneurial actions and entrepreneurial orientations with entrepreneurial supports, will help to reduce the risk of failure as well as leverage new opportunities. The authors list 10 components of entrepreneurial actions to help enterprises to manage a crisis better. These components include crisis/disaster planning, business model pivoting, Hustle/Idea blitz, being frugal, having financial prudence, networking, and social connecting, bricolage, effectuation, being agile, and undertaking R&D. It is noted that coping strategies for the COVID-19 need to be studied for its context and industry sector because they are contingent on the surrounding environment (Krishnan et al., 2021).

Most recent scholarly publications concentrate on examining the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on tourism enterprises, leading to the adoption of various resilience strategies, economic challenges, business model adaptations, and the utilisation of technology to navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic (Haqbin et al., 2022; Rastegar et al., 2023; Thukral, 2021; Wang et al., 2022). The challenges faced by these enterprises underscore the need for tailored recovery models and the importance of government support in the recovery process. However, a smaller subset of research has shifted its focus to investigate how individuals or organisations actually respond to disruptions or contextual changes once they occur. This area of study is less developed, and existing research tends to overlook the importance of the specific context in which these responses happen. There is limited understanding of how insights gained from one context might be applicable or transferable to different settings.

The nature of the research across various contexts has led to fragmented and inconsistent conceptualisations of resilience. This fragmentation means that while some studies offer valuable insights into resilience, these findings may not be easily applicable across different scenarios or environments. There is a growing call within the academic community to investigate whether findings from individual case studies can be generalized to broader contexts. This is particularly important for settings in developing countries, where different challenges and conditions may affect the applicability of resilience strategies.

One specific gap in the literature is the concept of "mission agility" within social enterprises during and after the COVID-19. Mission agility refers to the ability of social enterprises to adapt their missions by securing their financial sustainability as the paramount importance to achieving their long-term social missions in response to changing circumstances (Bacq & Lumpkin, 2020). Addressing this gap could provide valuable insights into how social enterprises can maintain social missions and financial viability despite disruptions.

3 Research Methodology

This study applies the qualitative methodology for the investigation due to its exploratory and the interpretative in nature. Since the aim of this study is to explore coping mechanisms of the TSEs in the GMS, the author selected six TSEs who were chosen as the Mekong Showcases of year 2020 by Destination Mekong, a destination marketing organisation who works closely with the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office to promote the GMS as a single responsible destination. The Experience Mekong Showcase is designed to inspire organisations by highlighting exemplary practices in sustainable tourism and innovation. These showcases feature initiatives that have successfully adopted innovative and promising practices in sustainability, thereby generating a positive social impact on host communities and beneficiaries. Although the primary focus of this paper is not to prioritise resilience factors or assess the degree of social enterprise resilience, the author seeks to explore the various coping mechanisms and strategies that these enterprises have employed to address the adverse effects of an unexpected crisis.

Conducting in-depth interviews provides a richer understanding of the local contexts within which individual social enterprises operate. Through these interviews, we have gained insights into their processes of social value creation, their organisational backgrounds, and how they have navigated the challenges posed by the crisis. The six selected cases are particularly compelling, not only because of their innovative business models and commitment to social value creation but also due to their diverse geographical locations. This study has thus become an intriguing inquiry into how these enterprises have managed to sustain themselves amidst the challenges they face.

A key question that arises is whether these enterprises have been able to maintain their social missions while also ensuring financial viability during this period of crisis. Although the findings from these six cases cannot be generalised to all social enterprises, they nevertheless provide valuable insights into the local contexts of each enterprise. Moreover, they shed light on the internal and external factors that play a crucial role in influencing the recovery of social enterprises in times of crisis.

The owners and the high-level management of these six TSEs were interviewed regarding the nature of their social enterprises, how they have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and how they have coped with the COVID-19's impacts. After conducting the interviews, the audio recording files were carefully listened to, transcribed into interview scripts, and common phrases related to the same issues, patterns, and themes were extracted and highlighted. The analysis began with familiarization with the data, which involved highlighting key salient points (words), themes, and actual words to identify patterns and interesting data relevant to the research questions. All of these were marked, noted, and coded. The author further conducted desk research, mainly secondary data sources such as previous literature, websites, and social media profiles in order to collect more in-depth and relating information before composing the narrative conclusion of each investigated topics. These narrative documents were sent back to the six social enterprises to double check and ensure the validity of the data. Not until the author received the final approval from the interviewees that these documents would be used for the analysis. The thematic analysis was chosen as the author wanted to explore patterns across the data. The thematic analysis also gives the author the opportunity to see how different aspects of resilience strategies are adopted by the respondents. The discussions were carried out on the thematic findings.

4 Results

Although the main purpose for social enterprises is to achieve social values, this is NOT an obstacle to pursuing economic benefits. We need to ensure business viability (a viable business is profitable – more revenue coming than operating costs) and ability to achieve social missions. Details of the 2020 Experience Mekong Showcases are shown in Table 1, which provides a comprehensive overview of several key aspects related to the six enterprises, including geographical locations, typologies of business activities and product, methods of operations for social value, and socio-economic and environmental contributions to host communities and destinations.

The six social enterprises have implemented various strategies to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 by combining efficiency, innovation, and resources of profit-making entrepreneurs – business model, products, services, marketing strategies and social interventions.

Although the GMS member countries have been relatively successful in containing the spread of virus and saving people's lives compared to most developed countries, this success has come at a high economic cost due to extended restrictions in travel, mobility and gatherings (World Tourism Organisation, 2023). All the six TSEs had faced with the financial constraints due to a huge drop of income derived from international markets (e.g. foreign visitors, tourists, volunteers) which put restraints on their key business activities and operations. The stringent measures directly impacted economic activities for TSEs as their business came to a standstill during the first wave of coronavirus outbreak between March and June, 2020.

The six selected TSEs in the GMS have all been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, yet within different extent and degree of internal factors and external factors shaping their performance. Due to the fact that these TSEs do not entirely pursue the same type of business activities (products and services), this has brought them different tactics and approaches to deal with the pandemic crisis. It is argued that not all tourism related businesses were equally disrupted by the pandemic. This can be supported by the Tourism Council of Thailand's survey on tourism firms' revenue recovery in the first quarter of 2021. The finding revealed that tour operators, man-made attractions, and night clubs were among the hard-hit sectors because their revenue recovered only to 20% of their pre-COVID levels, according to Surawattananon et al. (2021). On the other hand, restaurants, grocery shops, and transportation are among the business that demonstrated a high degree of resilience in the post pandemic period.

Table 1: General details of the 2020 Experience Mekong Showcases

Social Enterprise	Typology of Business Activities	Operational Model	Operational Description*	Establishment
Laos Buffalo Dairy, Laos PDR	*Business activities*: Buffalo dairy products, farm tours *Social contributions*: Support farmers, breed healthy buffaloes, reduce malnutrition	Cooperative Model	Cooperate with local villagers by leasing their buffalo to produce milk, which in turn provide them with a regular income and improved care for female buffaloes and their calves. Then, distribute the dairy products to local restaurants and hotels, along with the farm tours.	2014
Journey of the Senses, Vietnam	*Business activities*: Seven businesses of restaurants, Café, and flower shop *Social contributions*: Employ people of disabilities (Blind, Deaf)	Employment Model	Provide decent work and job training for people with disabilities in a restaurant business.	2014
Elephant Valley Project, Cambodia	*Business activities*: Eco-tourism *Social contributions*: Elephant conservation, preserve culture, create jobs and income to the communities, protect land & forest	Employment Model	Offer employment opportunities/job training for indigenous people through an ecotourism project aiming to improve welfare for retired working elephants.	2007
Living Irrawaddy Dolphin, Myanmar	*Business activities*: Ecotourism, Community-based tourism *Social contributions*: Preserve Irrawaddy Dolphins, jobs and income to communities	Cooperative Model	Cooperative with fishing communities of the Irrawaddy River by promoting dolphin and cooperative fishing tours along with homestays and local cultures in communities.	2017
Yangshuo Mountain	*Business activities*: Lodgings	Employment Model	Provide employment opportunities/job training in towns for local women with	2001

Retreat, China	*Social contributions*: Preserve community's culture, sustainable management, income to communities, employ women & minorities		high barriers to employment through green lodging concepts.	
The Family Tree, Thailand	*Business activities*: Gift/souvenir shop *Social contributions*: Fair trade to communities, income to the communities, forest cultivation	Market Intermediary Model	Sell gifts and handicrafts to help impoverished artisans to access new markets based on fair trade principles.	2011

Source: *Adapted from Alter (2006)

While some social enterprises had the ability to turn their product and service offers to the domestic market (i.e. Yangshuo Mountain Retreat and Journey of the Senses) and/or diversify to new products types (Journey of the Senses, The Family Tree, Laos Buffalo Dairy), the majority of social enterprises found that the local demands could not make sufficient replacement. This has brought Living Irrawaddy Dolphin (Myanmar) to suspend business activities. In Myanmar, the COVID-19 pandemic adversely impacted the tourism sector, leading to a sharp decline in international tourism in 2020, with only 903,343 international visitors, down to 79% (Ministry of Hotels & Tourism, Myanmar, 2023). This economic downturn was further aggravated by the continued political instability and security concerns, in particular the military coup in 2021, creating negative media coverage, fear and insecurity in travel and tourism.

Those other social enterprises that could find the second sources for business incomes (either from domestic or from other markets) tend to be better shielded on their resources and operations and are able to continue their social supports without much difficulties.

On the other hand, the decreasing income also affects the social activities of the six SEs, but to a different degree. It has become clear that *restaurants, herbal drink, and lodging* show a high degree of resilience during and post pandemic period, while *man-made attractions, farm tour, gift and souvenir shop* were among the most disrupted sectors in the Mekong region which faced a slower recovery during the crisis as the world also experienced a deep recession.

Currently, all social enterprises in Mekong region (except Living Irrawaddy Dolphin) still continue their social supports but under this circumstance, the three social enterprises who could not offset their income from the domestic market would rely their financial support from national and international donors & fundings (i.e. Laos Buffalo Dairy, Elephant Valley Project, Living Irrawaddy Dolphin). Nonetheless, the degree of difficulties in securing the fundings depends on the nature of collaboration with the donors prior to COVID-19. Whilst the buffalo dairy enterprise and the elephant welfare project could still retain the supports from the international agencies or governments, the dolphin conservation project and the gift and handicraft shop faced more challenges and relied more on the local donors. As a results, these two types of social enterprises (i.e. Living Irrawaddy Dolphin, Family Tree) faced more financial vulnerability and could not continue their business activities in the second year of the pandemic, while they could still carry on their social activities to a certain period. In this current stage of 2022, at least five out of six SEs still manage to secure fundings to cover their social activities. However, only the Family Tree that the owners decided to cease the operation on the souvenir shops and restaurants in 2021, after over a year of the crisis, and have moved to other province to seek for new opportunities to restart. These evidences show that those social enterprises who had found market replacements, established good networks and collaborations with international funders (even to those who faced challenges in finding the second sources of business incomes), still have the ability to carry on their key social supports, despite in a lesser scale.

Moreover, a number of coping mechanisms have been deployed by the six TSEs in the GMS during the years of COVID-19. The study found four different but relating coping mechanisms namely: 1) apply market-based strategy 2) adjust employment policies 3) increase operational efficiency 4) adapt or alter the operations.

Due to the sharp drop in revenues, all the TSEs had to **create a market-based strategy** (coping 1) by doing heavy promotions and marketing activities to generate more incomes from other market sources. Some TSEs have switched to new markets that still relate to tourism with new products of a similar kind (e.g. the case of Journey of the Senses opened a new vegetarian restaurant to tap on local demands) or they deployed the new business model that are not relating to tourism & hospitality (e.g. Laos Buffalo Dairy has turned to exporting dairy products to international markets such as Japan). Coping under the market-based strategy, the six TSEs have all leveraged their resources and markets with different degree of diversification that also gives some implication to the resilience and the survival of these TSEs. The degree of diversified markets of the six SEs is shown in Figure 1 here under:

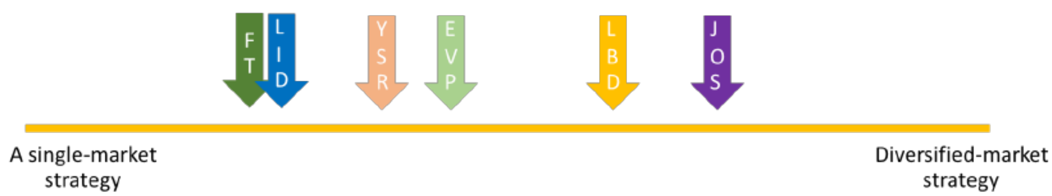

Fig. 1: The position of the six SEs on the single-diversified market strategy spectrum

Apart from enhancing the income via market-based strategy, frugality in economics by saving resources is a common coping approach for the six TSEs to practise self-restraint in their use of money, especially during the period of disruption.

This includes **changing human resources policies** (coping 2) mainly in readjusting full-time and part-time employment to optimise the HR operational costs. This coping method is particularly evidenced in Laos Buffalo Dairy, Elephant Valley Project, and Family Tree. Furthermore, **increasing operational efficiency** (coping 3) is also found to effectively be carried out by the three TSEs which include sharing resources amongst social businesses and trying to achieve synergy in the operation (i.e. Journey of the Senses), an efficient use of resources via sustainable approach and minimising waste (i.e. Yangshuo Mountain Retreat), and rescaling and re-shifting manpower (i.e. Elephant Valley Project). These mechanisms reduce operational costs while maintaining the efficiency, and they are applied base on what best fit with the nature of each TSE selected business models. In fact, apart from the rescaling and re-shifting the manpower, the former two coping mechanisms in this category are what the TSEs had been doing prior to COVID-19, only that the crisis has reinforced these actions.

The last coping approach is **adapting the operations** to better fit with new potential markets (i.e. Yangshou Mountain Retreat's switch from common international distribution channels to the Chinese channels for a better reach to a huge local market; Laos Buffalo Dairy focuses more on exporting to foreign countries). This coping approach is evidenced in those enterprises who have had context advantages (Yangshuo Mountain Retreat has a large market of China; and Laos Buffalo Dairy established entrepreneurial skills through an exporting business before the crisis). From the selected coping approaches, along with the different nature of operations, these has brought the six TSEs into different stages when dealing with the pandemic, in which Living Irrawaddy Dolphin and Family Tree have shown a higher degree of vulnerabilities than others. As a results, the dolphin conservation tour has to halt the eco- and community-based tourism activities since March 2020 – but maintaining social activities, while Family Tree decided to cease the gift shop in mid-2021, and plan for other new business opportunities that better fit situation.

The findings of this research study support Thukral's work (2021) which states that entrepreneurship is an iterative and integrative process dependent on entrepreneurs' characteristics, resilience, and external enablers. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach in response to the crisis, a social entrepreneur must consider both internal and external factors as part of an integrative process to serve as a resilience mechanism or strategy. The main internal factors include diversification strategies, viable business models, employee capabilities, institutional support, collaborative networks, and community engagement in supply chain operations. While on the other hand the external factors, especially size of the crisis, demographic, economic, social capital, and political characteristics in individual countries also lead to varying degree of business resilience and vulnerability.

5 Conclusions

The six selected TSEs in the Mekong subregion have all heavily hit by COVID-19 due to the fact that the majority of their revenue came from international travellers and customers. With the border closed and travel restrictions, the main income that these TSEs used to operate their social missions have been drained, affecting their social contributions. COVID-19 has necessitated new marketing policies in tourism enterprises, such as increased use of social media, enhanced customer communication, and flexible cancellation policies. While the majority of these TSEs adapt and survive in time of crisis, the others have to halt or cease their business operations, and rely mostly on external fundings from donors. In this regard, internal factors and external factors in business play a crucial role in shaping organisational performance, strategies, and response to the crisis. The chosen coping mechanisms affect the resilience of TSEs including viable business model, market diversification by adding products and seeking new markets, mission agility, institutional support, network collaboration, employee capacity, and community engagement in supply chain operations. Additionally, external factors, especially size of the crisis, demographic, economic and political characteristics in the country context also result in a different degree of resilience (versus vulnerability), ensuing to the ability of these SEs to survive and thrive during and post COVID-19 recovery. Notably, learning resilience factors and coping strategies in time of crisis, especially from the past and understanding the present are necessary to build a resilient social enterprise efficiently.

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Enhancing Sustainable Tourism through 3D Archaeological Replicas: The Leang Bulu Sipong 4 Case

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of digital archaeology in promoting sustainable tourism at the Maros-Pangkep Karst area, Indonesia. A 1:2 scale 3D-printed replica of the Leang Bulu Sipong 4 prehistoric painting was installed at the Rock Art Information Center. Tourist engagement was assessed through direct observation over ten weekend days in June 2024, measuring viewing duration, total visit time, and exhibit preferences. Results show that 36% of 288 visitors spent 11-15 minutes with the replica, while 58.5% spent 16-30 minutes in the center overall. The 3D replica was rated most interesting by 36% of visitors. A significant positive correlation ($r=0.644$, $p<0.001$) was found between replica viewing time and total visit duration. These findings suggest that 3D replicas can effectively balance tourist satisfaction with site preservation, offering a promising approach to sustainable archaeological tourism. The study highlights the potential for collaboration among tourism stakeholders, conservationists, and technologists in cultural heritage preservation.

Keywords: sustainable tourism, digital archaeology, 3D-printed replicas, visitor engagement, Rock Art, Maros-Pangkep Karst

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1 Introduction

The Maros-Pangkep Karst area, spanning 42,000 hectares in Indonesia, stands as a geographical demarcation of global cultural and natural significance. This region houses several prehistoric cave sites containing the world's oldest known rock art, dating back 39-45.5 thousand years (Aubert et al., 2019). These ancient artworks predate their European counterparts, challenging long-held notions about the epicenter of Homo sapiens' creative expression. Beyond its archaeological importance, the karst area represents a vital ecosystem with unique flora and fauna (Brumm, 2021). Recognizing its exceptional value, UNESCO added this region to its Tentative List of World Cultural Heritage in 2009, and it has since been classified as a National Geopark in 2017 and UNESCO Global Geopark in 2022.

The remarkable significance of the Maros-Pangkep Karst area has galvanized efforts to preserve its archaeological treasures. However, the region faces sustainability challenges stemming from climate change and the mining sector (Nuhung, 2016). In response, scholars have proposed tourism as an alternative industry to reduce dependence on extractive sectors like marble and cement mining. Yet, conventional tourism models still rely heavily on physical visitation to archaeological sites, potentially compromising the authenticity and preservation of these invaluable locations.

To address this dilemma, our research team initiated a pioneering project: the creation of Indonesia's first macro-scale 3D printed replica of the prehistoric painted object from Leang Bulu Sipong 4 (Fig. 1). This site was chosen for its distinction as the world's oldest known cave painting location. The prehistoric artwork, featuring human and animal imagery, offers crucial insights into early human life and culture. By creating accurate replicas, we aim to provide tourists with an immersive historical experience while safeguarding the original sites. This approach aligns with the assertion that digitization of artifacts and archaeological sites can democratize access to cultural heritage (Kantaros, Ganetsos, et al., 2023; Kantaros, Soulis, et al., 2023), transcending geographical limitations (Aricò et al., 2023; Vlizos et al., 2024; Wei et al., 2019).

Fig. 1: Rock art panel of Leang Bulu Sipong 4 Painting in the Maros-Pangkep Geopark Area (left) and the 3d-printed replica of the rock art panel exhibited at Rock Art Information Center at Leang- Leang Archaeological Park (right).

Our study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- How does the presence of the 3D-printed Leang Bulu Sipong 4 replica at the Rock Art Information Center impact tourist satisfaction?

- To what extent does this digital archaeological approach contribute to sustainable tourism practices in the region?

The primary objectives of this research are twofold: (1) to assess tourists' perceptions and engagement with the 3D replica of the Leang Bulu Sipong 4 prehistoric cave artwork, specifically examining its impact on visitor satisfaction at the Rock Art Information Center; and (2) to evaluate the extent to which this digital archaeological approach contributes to sustainable tourism practices in the Maros-Pangkep Karst area. As the first macro-scale 3D recreation of a prehistoric site in Indonesia, this study offers valuable insights into the potential of digital archaeology in promoting sustainable tourism and heritage preservation, while balancing visitor engagement with conservation needs.

This paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews relevant literature on sustainable tourism and digital archaeology. Section 3 outlines our methodology, followed by results and discussion in Section 4. We conclude with implications for practice and future research directions in Section 5.

2 Literature review

2.1 The intersection of sustainable tourism and digital archaeology

The concept of sustainable tourism, particularly as it pertains to archaeological sites and cultural heritage, has become increasingly relevant in recent years (Buonincontri et al., 2017; Powell & Ham, 2008). Sustainable tourism, as defined by Mowforth and Munt (2016), involves managing resources in a way that satisfies current needs without compromising future generations' ability to meet theirs, and encompasses environmental sustainability, social welfare, and long-term economic benefits (Cárdenas et al., 2015).

Digital technology plays a crucial role in enhancing the sustainable tourism experience (El Archi et al., 2023; C. Jiang & Phoong, 2023). By leveraging digital technologies, tourism ecosystems can embrace smart tourism perspectives that focus on sustainability, circular economy principles, quality of life, and social value, thereby creating more enriching and sustainable tourism experiences (Pencarelli, 2020). It allows for real-time assessment of tourist satisfaction and enables personalized experiences tailored to travelers' interests (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2015; Neuhofer et al., 2015). Additionally, these technologies provide detailed contextual information about archaeological sites, enriching visitors' understanding and appreciation of historical sites (Gillings, 2012).

Digital archaeology, defined by Evans and Daly (2006) as the use of digital technology to reconstruct, model, and interpret archaeological sites, offers innovative solutions to the challenges of heritage preservation. Tools such as 3D scanning, virtual reality, and GIS not only help in rebuilding ancient sites but also enhance visitor experiences while minimizing the physical impact on these locations (Kontopanagou et al., 2021; Poux et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2021). This integration of digital archaeology with sustainable tourism ensures that cultural heritage can be preserved and appreciated by future generations.

2.2 The Relationship of Digital Archeology to Tourist Satisfaction

Tourist satisfaction is a key factor in the success of sustainable tourism. Advanced digital technologies such as 3D scanning (Milosz et al., 2024), augmented reality (AR) (Tom Dieck & Jung, 2018), and virtual reality (VR) (Büyüksalih et al., 2020) have the potential to create more immersive and engaging tourism experiences, which contribute to both visitor satisfaction and the sustainable preservation of archaeological sites.

In the field of tourism research, visit duration serves as a crucial indicator of visitor engagement. The length of time spent at a particular site often reflects the level of interest, participation, and overall satisfaction experienced by visitors (Brieber et al., 2014). Various factors, including immersive experiences, peer influence, and the overall quality of the attraction, significantly impact the duration of tourists' stay at a given location (Chen & Chen, 2010; Loureiro & Sarmento, 2019; Mikuni et al., 2022).

By leveraging digital archaeology tools, tourism operators can enhance visit durations and satisfaction levels. For instance, virtual or augmented reality applications offer immersive experiences that allow visitors to explore fragile or inaccessible areas without causing physical damage (Beck et al., 2019; Bekele et al., 2018). Additionally, digital tools can improve the educational aspect of visits by providing multilingual, interactive content that caters to various learning styles, further enriching the visitor experience (S. Jiang et al., 2023; Kounavis et al., 2012).

Moreover, the integration of digital archaeology into tourism practices supports better site management and conservation (Blasco López et al., 2018; Duval et al., 2020; McKeague et al., 2019). By directing visitors' attention to digital replicas or virtual experiences, site managers can control foot traffic and reduce wear on sensitive areas (Guttentag, 2010; Zubiaga et al., 2019). The data collected through these digital interfaces can offer valuable insights into visitor behavior and preferences, aiding in more informed decision-making in tourism development and conservation efforts (Galí & Aulet, 2019; Leask, 2016; Tchetchik et al., 2009).

3 Methodology

3.1 Data collection

This study employs a quantitative approach with a survey design, focusing on direct observation of tourist behavior at the Rock Art Information Center at Leang-Leang Archaeological Park, Maros, Indonesia. The research specifically examines visitor interaction with the 3D Printed Replica of Leang Bulu Sipong 4, measuring three key aspects: the duration of tourists viewing the 3D replica, the total length of tourists' visits to the Rock Art Information Center, and the identification of the most interesting artifacts for travelers within the center.

The research team was divided into two groups: one responsible for directing tourists and ensuring smooth flow through the center, and the other tasked with observing and recording tourist behavior, including time spent with the 3D Printed Replica and overall visit duration. Upon exiting the Rock Art Information Center, tourists were asked to identify the most interesting object they encountered during their visit.

The observation period lasted for 10 days, covering three consecutive weekends (Friday-Sunday) in June 2024. This timing was chosen to capture peak visitor periods and ensure a diverse sample of both local and international tourists. To determine the appropriate sample size for the survey, we first analyzed the historical visitor data to establish the average annual number of visitors to Leang-Leang Prehistoric Park over the past decade (2010-2020). The average visitor numbers derived from these data provided the basis for calculating the population size. This population data is detailed in Fig. 2.

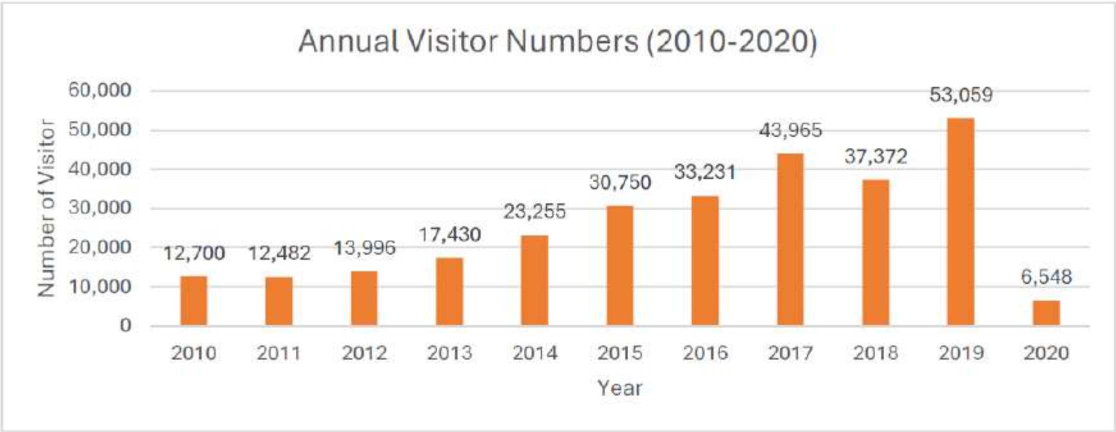

Fig. 2. Annual visitor numbers of Leang-Leang Archaeological Park in 2010-2020 (Source: Cultural Heritage Preservation Office of South Sulawesi, 2023)

Utilizing Cochran's formula, which is particularly suited for large populations where the exact population variance is unknown, we assumed a proportion (p) of 0.5 to ensure a conservative and reliable sample size. With a 90% confidence level, corresponding to a Z-value of 1.645, and a margin of error of 5%, the calculation yielded a required sample size of approximately 271 respondents. This sample size was determined to be sufficient for capturing a representative cross-section of park visitors, ensuring that the survey results are generalizable to the entire visitor population.

We employed a convenience sampling technique, which is commonly used in tourism studies due to its practicality and efficiency (Etikan, 2016). All visitors to the Rock Art Information Center during the observation period were invited to participate in the study. This approach allowed us to collect data from a wide range of tourists while working within the constraints of the center's operations and our research timeline. The final sample included both individual tourists and those visiting in groups, resulting in a total of 288 participants, which exceeded our target sample size. This sample size was sufficient to conduct our planned statistical analyses and draw meaningful conclusions about visitor behavior and preferences.

3.2 Data Analysis

The collected data will be analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics will provide an overview of visitor behavior patterns, while inferential statistics, including correlation analysis, will be used to test for significant relationships between variables such as viewing time and overall satisfaction. All statistical analyses will be performed using SPSS software. This approach to data analysis allowed for a thorough examination of visitor behavior patterns and the identification of significant relationships between key variables of interest, particularly the impact of the 3D replica on the overall visit experience.

In addition to the quantitative observations, we also employed qualitative methods to capture more nuanced aspects of visitor experiences and perceptions. As visitors exited the Rock Art Information Center, a subset of participants were invited to provide brief verbal feedback about their experience, particularly focusing on their interactions with the 3D Printed Replica of Leang Bulu Sipong 4.
We used a semi-structured interview approach, asking open-ended questions such as:

- What were your initial thoughts upon seeing the 3D-printed replica?
- How did interacting with the replica impact your understanding of the site?
- What aspects of the replica did you find most interesting or engaging?

These brief interviews were conducted with approximately 10% of the total sample (29 participants) to ensure a manageable amount of qualitative data while still capturing a range of perspectives. Responses were recorded through notetaking by the research team.
The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) which we found to be suitable for the purpose of this study. This involved familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, and finally defining and naming themes. This process allowed us to identify recurring patterns and significant insights from visitors' verbal feedback, complementing our quantitative findings with rich, descriptive data.

3.3 Ethical Considerations and Limitations

It is important to note that all observations were conducted with respect for visitor privacy. No personal identifying information was collected, and visitors were informed about the ongoing study upon entering the Information Center. Additionally, this study was conducted during a specific time period and may not represent visitor behavior during other seasons. The sample is also limited to visitors who chose to visit the Rock Art Information Center, which may not be representative of all tourists to the region.

4 Result and discussion

4.1 Duration of Tourist Engagement with 3D Printed Replica

The analysis of visitor engagement with the 3D Printed Replica of Leang Bulu Sipong 4 offers insightful patterns in viewing duration, shedding light on the effectiveness of this innovative display. Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of time visitors spent examining this exhibit.

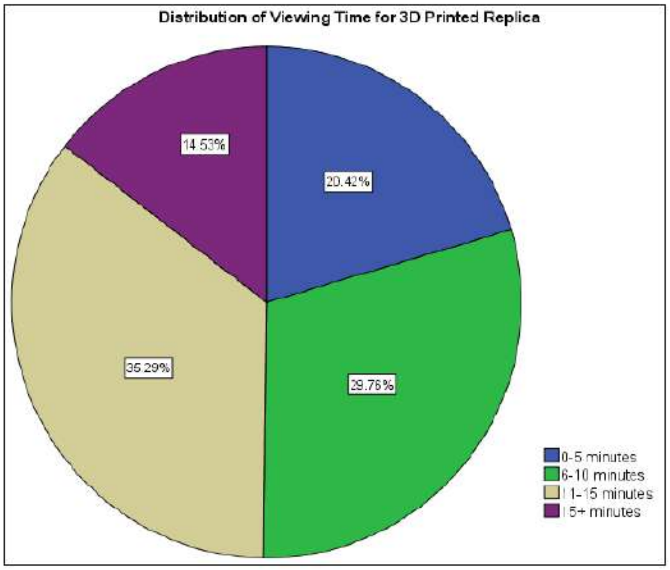

Fig. 3: Distribution of tourist viewing time for the 3D Printed Leang Bulu Sipong 4 Replica (N=288)

The data reveals a nuanced pattern of visitor engagement with the 3D replica. The largest group, comprising 35.3% of visitors, spent between 11-15 minutes examining the exhibit, indicating a substantial level of interest and engagement. This was closely followed by 29.8% of visitors who engaged for 6-10 minutes. Interestingly, 20.4% of visitors had briefer interactions lasting 0-5 minutes, while 14.5% demonstrated extended engagement of over 15 minutes.

These findings offer several valuable insights into visitor behavior and the effectiveness of the 3D replica as an engagement tool. The concentration of viewing times in the 6-15 minute range, accounting for 65.1% of visitors, suggests that the replica successfully captures and maintains visitor interest for a significant period (Fig. 4). This level of engagement is particularly noteworthy in a museum context, where competition for visitor attention is high and attention spans can be limited.

The substantial proportion of visitors (49.8%) spending more than 10 minutes with the replica is especially encouraging. It indicates that the exhibit not only attracts initial curiosity but also rewards closer inspection, potentially facilitating a deeper understanding of the Leang Bulu Sipong 4 site and its significance. This extended engagement could be attributed to several factors, including the novelty of the 3D printing technology, the level of detail provided by the replica, or the effectiveness of accompanying interpretive materials (Fig. 5).

At the same time, the diversity in viewing durations highlights the varied needs and interests of museum visitors. The 20.4% of visitors with brief engagements may represent those who prefer a quick overview or who are managing time constraints. Conversely, the 14.5% spending over 15 minutes with the replica likely represents highly engaged visitors who may be seeking more in-depth information or have a particular interest in prehistoric art or archaeological techniques.

Fig. 4: Tourists interacting with the 3D Printed Replica of Leang Bulu Sipong 4

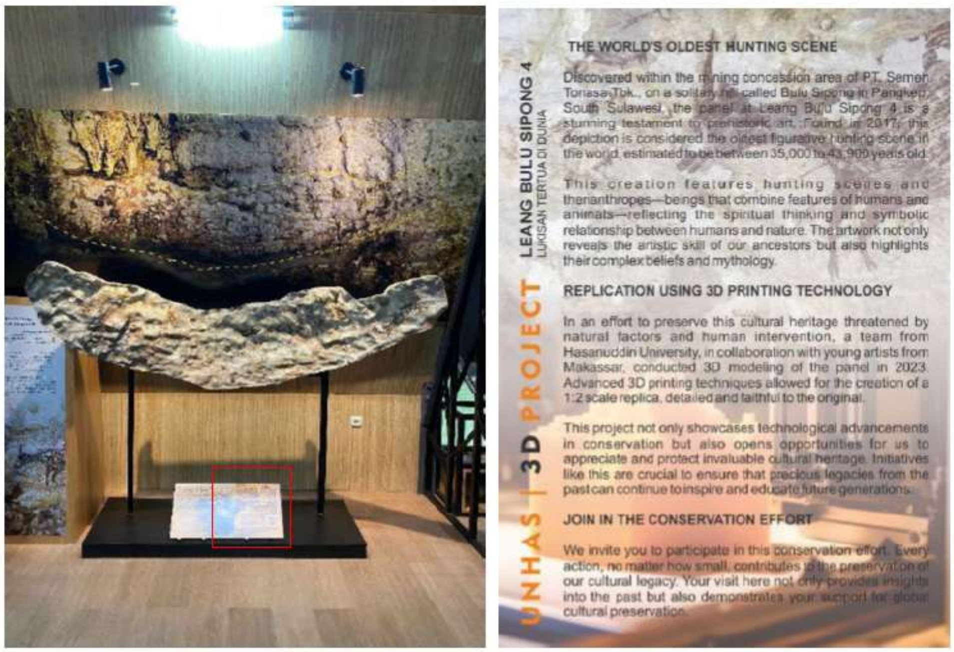

Fig. 5: Information display for the 3D Project Leang Bulu Sipong 4 (left) and the label of the 3D replica (right) marked with a red square in the left photo

These findings have important implications for exhibit design and museum management. The strong engagement levels suggest that 3D replicas can serve as effective centerpieces in archaeological exhibitions, potentially increasing overall visit duration and satisfaction. However, the range of viewing times also indicates the need for layered information provision, catering to both casual and deeply interested visitors. Moreover, these results support the potential of digital archaeological techniques in promoting sustainable tourism practices. By providing an engaging and detailed representation of sensitive archaeological sites, such replicas can offer a satisfying visitor experience while reducing the need for direct access to fragile original locations.

4.2 Visitor Interest in Exhibits

An analysis of visitor preferences among the exhibits at the Rock Art Information Center revealed distinct patterns of interest, providing valuable insights into the effectiveness of different display methods and content types. Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of visitor interest across the various exhibits.

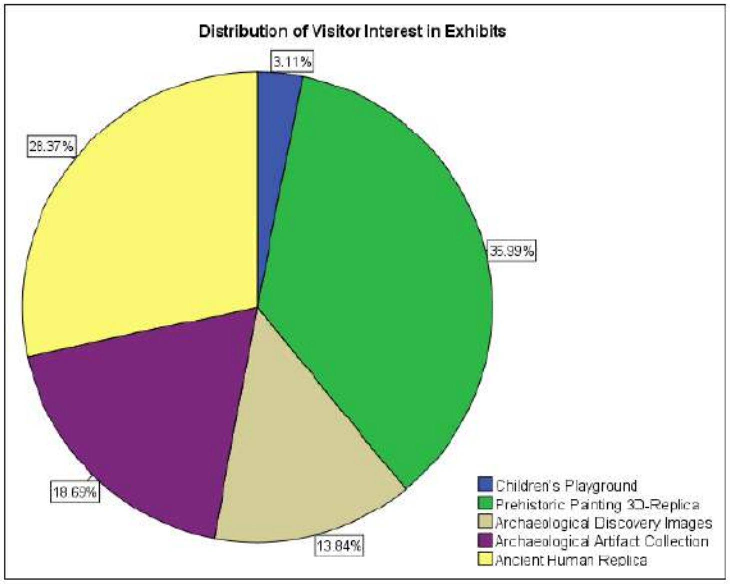

Fig. 6: Distribution of visitor interest in various exhibits at the Rock Art Information Center of Leang-Leang (N=288)

The data demonstrates a clear hierarchy of visitor preferences. The 3D Printed Prehistoric Painting emerged as the most captivating exhibit, garnering the interest of 36.0% of visitors. This strong preference aligns with the center's focus on innovative display techniques, suggesting that the investment in 3D printing technology significantly enhances the visitor experience.

Fig. 7: Replica of Ancient Human remains from Leang JariE Site made using resin casting techniques

Following closely, the Ancient Human Replica attracted 28.4% of visitor interest, indicating a strong fascination with tangible representations of human prehistory (see Fig. 7). This high level of engagement with both the 3D printed painting and the human replica, accounting for a combined 64.4% of visitor preference, underscores the power of three-dimensional, tactile exhibits in capturing visitor imagination and facilitating a more immersive learning experience.

Fig. 8: Tourist photographing prehistoric site paintings from Maros Pangkep Geopark

The Archaeological Findings Collection and Discovery Images, garnering 18.7% and 13.8% of visitor interest, respectively, demonstrate the continued relevance of traditional display methods. These exhibits likely appeal to visitors seeking a more conventional museum experience or those with a particular interest in the physical artifacts and visual documentation of archaeological discoveries (see Fig. 8). Interestingly, while the Children's Playground attracted the least interest at 3.1%, its inclusion in the exhibit mix is crucial for creating a family-friendly environment and potentially nurturing future generations of archaeology enthusiasts.

These findings have significant implications for exhibit design and museum management strategies. The strong preference for the 3D printed replica and ancient human replica suggests that visitors highly value immersive, tangible experiences that bring prehistoric artifacts to life. This preference aligns with current trends in museum studies that emphasize the importance of experiential learning and multi-sensory engagement in enhancing visitor understanding and retention of information. At the same time, the distribution of interest across all exhibit types highlights the importance of maintaining a diverse range of display methods to cater to varied learning styles and visitor preferences. While innovative technologies clearly play a crucial role in attracting and engaging visitors, traditional exhibits still hold significant value in providing comprehensive and varied educational experiences.

4.3 Overall visit duration and exhibit preferences

An analysis of the total visit duration at the Rock Art Information Center revealed intriguing patterns in visitor behavior, offering valuable insights into engagement levels and the effectiveness of the exhibit layout. Figure 8 illustrates the distribution of overall visit durations.

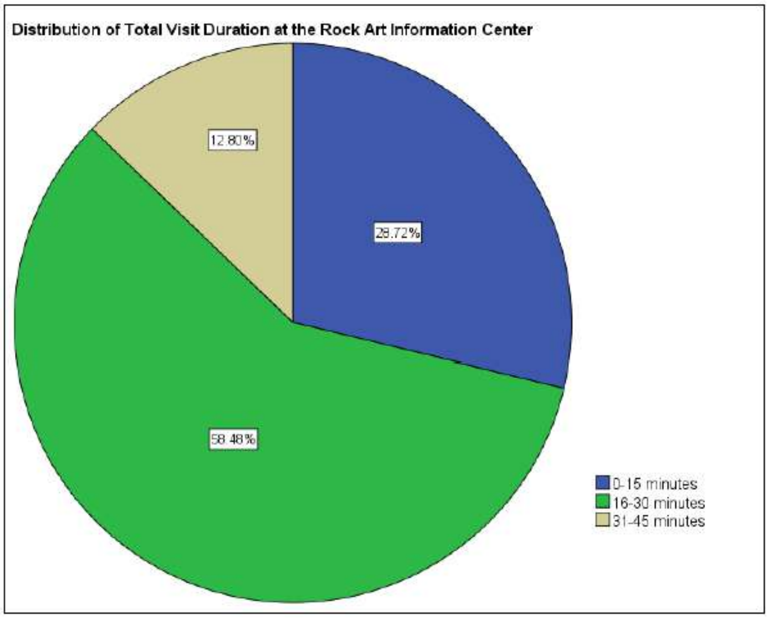

Fig. 9: Distribution of total visit duration at the Rock Art Information Center of Leang-Leang (N=288)

The data shows that the majority of visitors, 58.5%, spent between 16-30 minutes at the center, indicating a substantial level of engagement. This suggests that the center has successfully created an experience that captures and holds visitor interest for a meaningful period. Thus, the exhibit design appears to balance information delivery with the natural limits of visitor engagement. Interestingly, 28.7% of visitors had relatively brief encounters, spending 0-15 minutes at the center. This group likely represents visitors who prefer a quick overview or those constrained by time. Despite their shorter visits, the importance of providing easily accessible, high-impact content for this segment of visitors remains clear, ensuring that even brief interactions are satisfying. On the other end of the spectrum, 12.8% of visitors spent 31-45 minutes engaging with the exhibits. This group reflects highly engaged visitors, demonstrating the center's capacity to provide rewarding, in-depth experiences for those with a keen interest in the subject matter or those who prefer a more leisurely pace.

These findings have several important implications for exhibit design and center management. The concentration of visit durations in the 16-30 minute range suggests that this might be an optimal duration for many visitors to engage meaningfully with the exhibits without experiencing fatigue or information overload. Additionally, the diversity in visit durations underscores the importance of creating a layered experience that caters to different visitor needs and time constraints. For those with limited time, key information and highlights should be easily accessible, while visitors who wish to delve deeper should find additional content and interactive elements that reward extended exploration.

When considered alongside the earlier findings on exhibit preferences, these results gain additional significance. The popularity of the 3D-printed prehistoric painting and the Ancient Human Replica likely contributes to longer visit durations, as these immersive and innovative exhibits encourage more time spent engaging with the content. The substantial proportion of medium and extended visits also suggests that visitors find significant educational value in the exhibits, taking time to read information and engage deeply with the content. This highlights the center's role not just as a tourist attraction, but as an important educational resource, fostering a deeper understanding of archaeological and cultural heritage.

4.4 Correlation Analysis

To further explore the relationship between visitor engagement with the 3D printed replica and overall visit duration, we conducted a partial correlation analysis (see Table 1). This analysis controlled the effect of visitors' preferences for different exhibits, allowing us to isolate the specific relationship between time spent viewing the 3D replica and total time spent in the museum.

Table 1: Partial correlation analysis.

Control Variable	Variables	Statistic	3D Replica Viewing Duration	Total Visit Duration
Interesting artifacts for travelers to see while visiting the Rock Art Information Center of Leang-Leang.	3D Replica Viewing Duration	Correlation	1.000	0.644
		Sig. (2-tailed)	-	<0.001
		df	0	286
	Total Visit Duration	Correlation	0.644	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.001	-
		df	286	0

Notes:

3D Replica Viewing Duration: The duration of tourists viewing the 3D Printed Leang Bulu Sipong Replica

Total Visit Duration: The duration of tourists visiting the Rock Art Information Center of Leang-Leang

Sig.: Significance level

df: Degrees of freedom

The Pearson Correlation test indicates a strong positive correlation between the duration of viewing the 3D printed replica and the overall visit duration ($r = 0.644$, $p < 0.001$, $df = 286$). This robust correlation suggests that visitors who spend more time engaging with the 3D replica also tend to spend more time in the museum overall. The strength of this relationship is particularly noteworthy, as it highlights the significant role the 3D replica plays in shaping the overall visitor experience.

This finding has several key implications. Firstly, it underscores the effectiveness of the 3D-printed replica in capturing and maintaining visitor interest. The strong correlation suggests that the replica not only draws initial attention but also encourages deeper engagement, potentially leading visitors to explore other exhibits more thoroughly. This supports the idea that innovative technologies like 3D printing can serve as anchor points in museum experiences, drawing visitors in and encouraging them to spend more time engaging with various exhibits. Moreover, this correlation aligns with the earlier findings on exhibit preferences, where the 3D-printed replica was rated as the most interesting exhibit by a significant portion of visitors. The strong relationship between time spent with the replica and overall visit duration suggests that this preference translates into tangible behavioral outcomes, influencing how visitors allocate their time within the museum.

From a practical standpoint, these results provide valuable insights for museum curators and designers. The strong appeal of the 3D replica suggests that similar technologies could be strategically employed across other exhibits to enhance visitor engagement. Additionally, the correlation between replica viewing time and overall visit duration indicates that investments in such innovative displays could have broader benefits for the museum, potentially increasing the overall time visitors spend engaging with various exhibits.

It is important to note that while this correlation is strong, it does not imply causation. Other factors, such as individual interest in archaeology or available free time, could influence both the time spent with the 3D replica and the overall visit duration. Nevertheless, the strength of the correlation, even when controlling for exhibit preferences, strongly suggests that the 3D replica plays a significant role in shaping visitor behavior and engagement.

4.5 Visitor perceptions and feedback

The qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews with 29 participants (10% of the total sample) provided rich insights into visitor perceptions and experiences with the 3D-printed replica of Leang Bulu Sipong 4. Thematic analysis of the interview data revealed several key themes: initial impressions, enhanced understanding, engagement and interactivity, and preservation awareness.

Many visitors expressed initial surprise and excitement upon encountering the 3D replica. A significant number of participants initially believed the replica to be an actual artifact from the site, indicating the high level of realism achieved. As one visitor noted:

"When I first saw it, I thought it was the real thing! It's amazing how detailed and authentic it looks." (Participant 7)

This perception of authenticity aligns with the quantitative data showing that 36% of visitors found the 3D replica to be the most interesting exhibit, suggesting that the replica successfully captured and held visitor attention.

Participants frequently mentioned how interacting with the replica enhanced their understanding of the original site and its historical context. The ability to closely examine the details of the artwork seemed to provide a deeper appreciation for the skill of the original artists and the significance of the site. One participant explained:

"Being able to see it up close, to really study the details... it gave me a whole new appreciation for the complexity of the artwork and the people who created it." (Participant 15)

This enhanced understanding may contribute to the longer viewing times observed in the quantitative data, with 36% of visitors spending 11-15 minutes examining the replica.

The interactive elements of the exhibit, including the ability to touch the replica and take selfies with it, were frequently mentioned as positive aspects of the experience. Many visitors appreciated the opportunity for a more hands-on, immersive experience than traditional museum displays typically allow. A young visitor enthusiastically shared:

"I loved being able to touch it and take pictures with it. It made me feel like I was really there at the actual site!" (Participant 22)

This high level of engagement is reflected in the quantitative data showing that 14.5% of visitors spent more than 15 minutes with the replica, suggesting that the interactive elements successfully encouraged prolonged engagement.

Interestingly, many visitors expressed an increased awareness of preservation issues after interacting with the replica. The experience seemed to prompt reflections on the fragility of the original artifacts and the importance of conservation efforts. As one visitor commented:

"Seeing this replica makes me realize how important it is to protect the original site. It's great that we can experience it this way without risking damage to the real thing." (Participant 3)

This increased awareness aligns with our research objective of promoting sustainable tourism practices and suggests that the use of replicas can indeed contribute to conservation efforts by raising visitor awareness.

While our study primarily focused on general visitors, an unexpected encounter provided an additional perspective on using 3D replicas in archaeological tourism. During the data collection phase, our enumerators had the opportunity to gather feedback from a couple visiting from the Netherlands, who appeared to have a background in research or academia (Fig. 10). This chance encounter offered a unique perspective on using 3D printing technology in public spaces. The visitors strongly approved the approach, noting its potential to mitigate direct tourist impact on sensitive prehistoric sites.

Fig. 10: International researchers examining the 3D printed replica of Leang Bulu Sipong 4

While this feedback was not part of our planned data collection and represents an isolated incident rather than a systematic gathering of expert opinions, it provides an interesting additional layer to our findings. It suggests that the approach taken at the Leang-Leang Archaeological Park aligns with international best practices in heritage management and sustainable tourism. This serendipitous insight, combined with the overwhelmingly positive response from local visitors, reinforces the potential of digital archaeological techniques in promoting sustainable tourism practices at sensitive historical sites. It also hints at the possibility for future research to more systematically explore international perspectives and comparisons in the application of such technologies in archaeological tourism.

The qualitative insights gathered from visitor feedback provide context and depth to our quantitative findings. They suggest that the 3D replica not only attracts and holds visitor attention (as evidenced by the viewing time data) but also enhances understanding, promotes engagement, and raises awareness about preservation issues. These outcomes align closely with our research objectives and support the potential of digital archaeological techniques in promoting sustainable tourism practices at sensitive historical sites.

5 Conclusion

This research study explored how digital archaeology, particularly macro-scale 3D printing, can be integrated into sustainable tourism practices at archaeological sites. The study focused on the impact of a 3D-printed replica of a prehistoric painting from Leang Bulu Sipong 4, which was placed at the Rock Art Information Center of Leang-Leang in Indonesia. The study aimed to answer two main questions: the influence of the 3D replica on visitor satisfaction and the role of digital archaeology in promoting sustainable tourism.

Our research shows that using digital archaeological technologies can greatly improve visitor satisfaction and help preserve cultural heritage. We identified three key signs of success. First, visitors spent a significant amount of time (11-15 minutes on average) looking at the 3D-printed replica, indicating high interest and engagement. Second, the presence of the 3D replica positively affected the overall visit duration, with 58.5% of visitors spending 16-30 minutes on site. Third, data on exhibit preference revealed that the 3D-printed replica was the most captivating artifact, capturing the interest of 36% of visitors.

Statistical analysis demonstrated a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.644$, $p < 0.001$) between the time spent viewing the 3D replica and the overall visit duration. These results emphasize the potential of digital archaeology to balance cultural preservation and engaging tourist experiences. In addition, feedback from visitors indicates a growing understanding of the importance of preservation and education about the vulnerability of cultural heritage. This approach minimizes the physical impact on actual archaeological sites while providing educational experiences. It also aligns with the principles of sustainable tourism by reducing environmental impact, enhancing visitor education and appreciation of cultural heritage, and potentially increasing economic benefits through improved visitor satisfaction and longer visit durations.

The positive reception of the Leang Bulu Sipong 4 replica implies that similar initiatives could yield positive results at other archaeological sites in Indonesia and beyond. This study lays the groundwork for future research on the enduring effects of such technologies on sustainable tourism and cultural heritage conservation. It's important to acknowledge the limitations of this study, however. The research was carried out over a relatively brief period (10 days) and at a single location, potentially limiting the broad applicability of the findings. Additionally, the use of convenience sampling may not fully reflect the diverse array of visitors to archaeological sites. Subsequent research could benefit from longer-term studies spanning multiple sites and employing more varied sampling methods.

In conclusion, by prioritizing visitor satisfaction through the use of digital archaeological technologies, we can promote sustainable tourism, protect historic sites from degradation, and offer more immersive and meaningful experiences for visitors. This approach not only benefits the tourism industry but also contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage for future generations. Further research and collaboration among tourism stakeholders, conservation organizations, and technology developers will be crucial in refining and expanding these practices to create a more sustainable and enriching approach to archaeological tourism.

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