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- Online e-sports event viewers' intention to visit the destination
- Overbooking and customer reactions in tourism: Evidence from restaurants
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Research article

Sustainability in tourism and hospitality: Artificial intelligence role in eco-friendly practices
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Madhu Kumari, Sandeep Guleria, Suneel Kumar

Sustainability in tourism and hospitality: Artificial intelligence role in eco-friendly practices in Indian hotels

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on the growth and competitiveness of regional tourism and hospitality destinations. AI's application has both positive and negative effects on sustainable tourism. On the positive side, AI enhances accessibility to tourist sites, provides detailed information about attractions, simplifies understanding of costs and amenities, boosts local economies, and increases federal income. A notable downside is the replacement of human workers by machine learning technologies, which may necessitate remedial measures such as training. This review examines AI's foundational IT principles, current applications, and systems in the industry, focusing on the hotel sector. It concludes with an overview of AI's challenges in this field, proposes a research agenda, and suggests future directions for AI development in tourism and hospitality.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Eco-friendly practices, Tourism competitiveness, Hospitality

1. Introduction

The tourism and hospitality industries are inherently focused on providing services and engaging with people. Therefore, to gain customers' loyalty and satisfaction, the aim is to guarantee that consumers maintain favorable perceptions concerning the caliber of services rendered by companies operating within this industry. In this context, providing tourists with excellent service is becoming increasingly crucial daily. Robotic technology and artificial intelligence applications are increasingly utilized in travel and hospitality to enhance operational efficiency and deliver superior services. These technologies are becoming increasingly prevalent, particularly in the lodging, food and beverage, travel, and transportation sectors. Despite some criticism from stakeholders, these technologies are becoming increasingly prevalent in various sectors. The benefits and drawbacks of these technologies on service quality in these industries are still debated, but businesses are increasingly adopting them. The use of robotic technologies in tour guiding and physical locations like airports and museums is also a significant aspect of these industries. Despite the debates, these technologies are crucial for businesses to adapt and thrive in the ever-evolving market. Furthermore, it is imperative to underscore

the utilization of these technologies in tour guidance and tangible environments like airports and museums.

The tourism and hospitality industries invest in robotic technology and artificial intelligence to maximize operations and improve service delivery. This research evaluates the domain of robotics and artificial intelligence by looking at the advancement of technologies and present uses. It includes chatbots and robots, the identification of faces, language translation, optimization of solutions, and other applications of artificial intelligence. The study aims to fill gaps in the literature and provide practitioners with valuable information. Big data, computing power, and algorithms are the foundation of artificial intelligence (AI). The last few years have witnessed noteworthy progress in all three of these domains because of several trends that have combined: (1) the development of AI algorithms; -, (2) a notable rise in processing power; -, and (3) The development of new, more efficient information sources and architectures for the processing and storage of massive quantities of data, within the context of big data. Due to these developments, the Fourth Industrial Revolution has witnessed substantial advancements in robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) systems (Li et al., 2019).

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Artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing travel and tourism by integrating various systems, such as voice recognition, natural language processing, robots, personal travel assistants, and language translation applications. These systems are crucial for travel, as they make travel decisions, such as destinations, transportation, lodging, and activities. Travel agencies and organizations need help matching products to demand due to the vast pool of potential clients. This can also help travelers navigate unfamiliar environments, such as customs, languages, habits, and food. It can also help businesses customize experiences to visitors' preferences.

Despite the rapid adoption of AI, there are few real-world examples of its use in the industry. Artificial intelligence (AI) is incorporated into systems for data processing in real-world scenarios. During the design stage, many configurations, including speech recognition, robots, conversational systems, and forecasting systems, will soon permeate every facet of the travel and tourist industry, emphasizing employment, privacy, and the provision of necessary connections. Intelligent automation and artificial intelligence are keywords in the tourism industry. Assessing the design, visualization, creation, and implementation of artificial intelligence solutions for travel and tourism companies is a complex task due to the intricacies of intelligent automation.

As discussed by Zhao et al. in their 2011 research, AI is aware of the kinds of systems that the tourism industry may rely on and how best to build them for visitors in the future. The issue is that AI systems require a lot of energy and focus to maintain the structure. This justifies developing an intelligent automated system to enhance the travel and tourism industries. The tourism sector is increasingly focusing on integrating intelligent automation, environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards, artificial intelligence (AI), and the Internet of Things (IoT) to enhance its operations. AI is transforming tourism by improving traveler experiences and understanding through advanced technologies. This study investigates how AI interacts with emerging technologies to uphold ESG standards and address common traveler issues, as well as its potential to boost enthusiasm for travel among tourism departments and clients, as suggested by Yue et al. (2012).

Integrating AI with other forms of intelligence is essential for creating sustainable, smart, automated systems in tourism. Various academic disciplines, including human-computer interaction, anthropology, psychology, behavioral science, and design research, are exploring AI automation's impact on the tourism industry (Ionescu et al., 2019; Martelaro & Ju, 2018). Researchers like Churchill et al. (2018) and Tuomi et al. (2019) advocate for an interdisciplinary approach that combines AI automation and speculative techniques to improve tourism. Designing tourist experiences should consider all phases of travel, from planning to post-trip evaluation, focusing on enhancing engagement and attendance. Lindvall et al. (2018) highlight the potential for AI to improve or replace visitor interactions, potentially transforming tourist destinations and social structures. Further

research is necessary to establish the causal relationship between AI and automation in tourism, even though AI systems, IoT, and ESG investments can contribute to a more sustainable tourism future. Designing intelligent automation environments using AI concepts could shape the future of travel.

2. Literature review

The focus of useful AI design is creating technological solutions for long-standing design issues in information systems, cognitive and behavioral sciences, and psychology. These solutions might provide insight into travelers' recurring behavioral issues, such as lack of self-control, inattentiveness, or cognitive decline. AI systems should be required to prevent users from making poor decisions that result in mediocre actions to address these problems (Tussyadiah, 2020). To achieve this objective, digital nudging (Schneider et al., 2018) and nudge theory aspect engagement (Thaler & Sunstein, 2009) may be implemented in the tourism industry (Tussyadiah et al., 2019; Tussyadiah & Miller, 2019). ESG investors should get ready for the deployment of human-computer interaction as a lens, according to Tussyadiah's (2017) quantitative analysis (Law & Tung, 2017). Loureiro et al. (2021) conducted a study that leverages guests' significance on intelligent voice assistants (IVAs), their relationship with them, and the human-VAT bond in the hospitality sector. Positive effects on customer satisfaction eventually lead to the desire to use digital platforms, corroborated by internet research on tourists' use of travel agencies and their ongoing development plan (Fileri et al., 2021).

It is essential to prioritize critical artificial intelligence technologies to ensure effective AI solutions' development, as Russell et al. (2015) and Tadapaneni (2020) emphasized. Here's a reframed version of your text with the citations integrated smoothly: "Various factors, including resilience to demands, vulnerabilities, errors, and cyber security risks, must be considered, as highlighted by He et al. (2019), Luo et al. (2020), Shao et al. (2020), Fan et al. (2021), Khan et al. (2021), and Wang et al. (2021). To optimize data usage, prevent privacy breaches, and promote a sustainable environment, ESG norms should be established, as suggested by Lords (2018), Sethu (2019), and Tussyadiah et al. (2019).

Theoretical frameworks such as the gravitational lensing theory by Mori (2017) and Murphy et al. (2019), technological phobia by Brosnan (2002), and social inclusion through technology by Wang and Wu (2021), among others, provide a foundation for understanding and advancing AI technologies." These theories provide a deeper understanding of how staff and visitors feel about intelligent robots in tourism service settings. According to Kurtessis et al. (2017), management or organizational support theories may persuade employees to accept intelligent automation in the workplace. Li et al. (2019) examined employee intentions, while Tussyadiah and Park (2018) and Lu et al. (2019) investigated customer opinions and intentions regarding the utilization of smart devices. The aspects that impact an organization's

acceptance of innovation must be identified to expedite and ease the introduction of smart automation in the tourist sector. Therefore, understanding the barriers to sector acceptance may be aided by being aware of the limitations on innovation dissemination inside enterprises.

The management literature has information on transformative leadership (Bass, 1990; Haeruddin et al., 2021). Research has shown that this type of leadership plays a role in expediting the advancement of company technology, as evidenced by studies conducted by Frambach and Schillewaert (2002), MacVaugh and Schiavone (2010), and El-Kassar et al. in a forthcoming publication. It also details the tenets that encourage innovation adoption and dissemination inside organizations. Integrating intelligent automation with the strategic aims of commercial and public tourism organizations and the competitive landscape across industry sectors should be the subject of further research (Rydzik & Kissoon, 2021). To encourage adoption, ESG investors work with the current administration to provide money and advocacy.

According to Oyewole (2021), offering training programs for prospective users can help break down barriers and encourage the responsible integration of intelligent automation within the organization. Before capitalizing on the potential benefits and drawbacks of intelligent automation in the tourism industry, it is essential to assess the effects of automation on society, employees, visitors, and the industry as a whole. To ensure sustainability, it is critical to acknowledge the effects and roles of intelligent systems within the tourism sector, as emphasized by Gretzel (2011) and Gajdošík and Valeri (2022). Furthermore, Lin et al. (2011) name safety and errors, law and ethics, and societal repercussions as the three domains of ethical concern that arise from the implementation of robotics. Visitor contact with intelligent devices is essential to guarantee service safety and reduce potential injury.

The changes smart automation can bring to the tourism industry are also a central research focus. These changes can include adjustments to organizational decision-making procedures when portfolio managers are replaced by artificial intelligence (Javelosa, 2017) and the inadvertent consequences of judgments made with AI assistance (Jarrahi, 2018). Collaborative decision-making, task distribution, and the involvement of specialized scientists are emphasized by Larivière et al. (2017) as crucial steps in evaluating the ethical implications and societal impact of intelligent systems before their development. Automation revolutionizes the travel industry, enhancing client and staff roles and work performance. It can increase profits, revenue redistribution, gender issues, and wealth.

However, concerns include potential unemployment and loss of knowledge due to over-reliance on technology (Chesell, 2018; Lin et al., 2011; Pham et al., 2018; Samuels, 2021). Let's make the sentence human-friendly: "*The idea of technological singularity sparks significant worries about*

what could happen as intelligent machines advance. It suggests that technology might get beyond our ability to manage, potentially surpassing human capabilities and leading to the downfall of human society" (Eden et al., 2012; Roli et al., 2021). The same is true when assessing the social impacts, especially those related to guest-host interactions and community support for expanding tourism. To make business estimation and forecasting more effective, combining machine learning with other strategies like envisioning future possibilities and influencing future developments (Hajer & Pelzer, 2018; Szántó, 2018; Szántó et al., 2020) can be helpful. This viewpoint is backed by Ahmed et al. (2010) and Kamolov et al. (2021).

Academic research could ideally uncover ways that clever automation may help the tourism sector become more resilient to future changes. The next stage is to identify the different approaches to minimizing adverse effects and optimizing the positive effects of automation in the tourist industry after learning about the numerous benefits and potential problems associated with deploying intelligent automation. The concept of sustainability transition, as discussed by Markard et al. (2012), Safarzyńska et al. (2012), Turnheim et al. (2015), Yue et al. (2021), and Bauer et al. (2022), is vital for researching how artificial intelligence (AI) can support eco-friendly progress in tourism. Intelligent automation may significantly impact tourism by reducing the need for in-person interactions between tourists and local personnel.

However, failure to address environmental conservation and social welfare, including adherence to ESG standards, could jeopardize the shared values necessary for a cohesive social structure (Bao et al., 2020; Han et al., 2019; Pan & Yue, 2021; Yue et al., 2020; Zhuma et al., 2020). This study explores how robots and AI can tackle emerging issues, emphasizing the need to shift perspectives on intelligent agents. Computational systems can enhance public understanding of physical and biological limits, promote responsible behavior, and educate individuals (Fusté & Jamal, 2021; Kopacek & Hersh, 2015). Research should focus on developing scientific, cultural, and technological tools to advance trends that benefit individuals and society while preventing the misuse of AI and robotics (Fusté & Jamal, 2021; Kopacek & Hersh, 2015). Creating resilient AI involves incorporating robotics principles to establish effective feedback loops (Tussyadiah, 2020).

3. Methodology

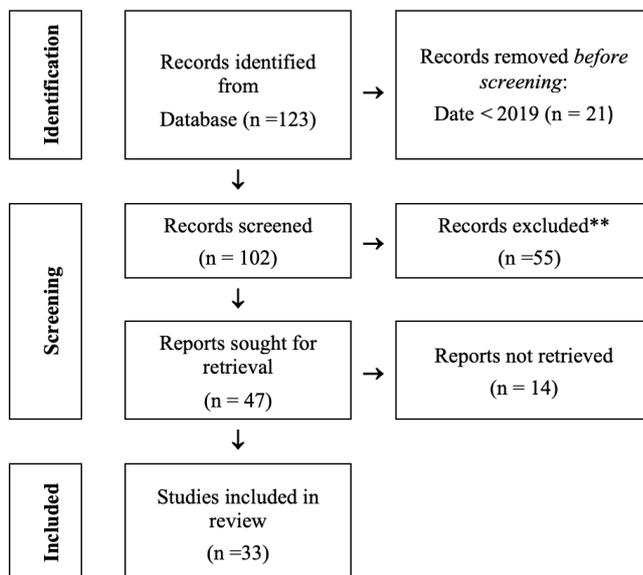
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The approach is to conduct a literature review. The author completes the vocabulary of concepts and theories during the literature study stage by reading and comprehending the theories used as guidelines and references, which they find in various books, journals, and online sources. This

gives them a solid foundation and knowledge base to solve the problems discussed in the research and acquire research pertinent to the issue. The author employs several methods, including the following, as beneficial supporting information to locate or gather the data required for this study: 1. A note. In February 2024, we thoroughly examined the Web of Science database to get first-hand information regarding tourism and hospitality. The formula that was ultimately applied was "artificial intelligence" or AI or robotics" and "tourism" or "hospitality" in the title, abstract, author keywords, and keywords plus. Afterward, the document type (review article) was used to narrow the search.

There were 123 manuscripts found in all. Following applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 102 citations were found in the literature search. Subsequently, evidence screening was done using the title and abstract examination. Working in pairs, the two researchers assessed the titles and abstracts of the papers that the search found relevant in order of relevance. Disputes over the choice of studies and data extraction were settled by debate and agreement. Fifty-five results were removed after screening because they didn't match the study's goal. The qualitative synthesis incorporated 33 documents into summaries, while 14 reports were irretrievable. The identification, screening, retrieval, and inclusion stages of the review decision process are depicted in the inclusion decision flowchart shown in Figure 1. This flowchart complies with the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) standard.

Figure 1. Identification of studies via databases and registers



4. Discussions

According to Garcia et al. (2023), the tourism and hospitality industry stands to gain significantly from AI advancements. AI-driven chatbots and virtual assistants can instantly and personally address consumer inquiries, boosting customer

satisfaction and reducing response times. Machine learning algorithms can analyze consumer preferences and behaviors to offer tailored travel recommendations, including suggestions for routes, accommodations, and activities. Additionally, AI can streamline operational efficiency by enhancing back-end functions such as inventory management and supply chain logistics. By analyzing historical booking data, occupancy rates, and pricing trends, AI provides critical insights for revenue management. Moreover, AI can assess environmental impacts, waste management, and energy consumption to identify areas for improvement and promote sustainable practices within the industry.

4.1. Defining artificial intelligence

It would be fascinating to define intelligence first before defining AI. The capacity to comprehend one's surroundings and the phenomena that arise, to make the most of prior learning, and to integrate existing knowledge to address novel challenges effectively are all considered components of intelligence (Rudas & Fodor 2008). Li and Hung (2018) state that a typical definition of artificial intelligence is a group of technologies capable of simulating human intellect in problem-solving situations. Similar to how aeroplanes achieve the same goal of flying as birds but employ entirely different processes, artificial intelligence (AI) aims to achieve the same goal of thinking as humans while employing distinct processes. The definition of artificial intelligence (AI) has changed over time (Buhalis et al., 2019). Initially, AI was defined as possessing intelligence. More recently, AI has been defined as having the capacity to act independently on vast data (Sterne, 2017).

The four categories of AI that Hintze (2016) described are referred to by Buhalis et al. (2019). Reactive AI is the first kind; it lacks memory and historical context. The finest illustration of reactive AI is Deep Blue. The second kind is AI with restricted memory or selective/limited recall. The way a self-driving automobile handles its surroundings is one example. The theory of mind is the third kind. Robots capable of simulating emotions and social interactions represent an advanced category of artificial intelligence (AI). The current challenges in AI involve enhancing system memory, emotional and intuitive processing, and decision-making abilities based on past experiences (Bhalidis et al., 2019; Gretzel, 2011; Hintze, 2016). A recent concept, "Hybrid AI," defined by Wirth (2018), describes AI as more advanced than weak AI but not as advanced as strong AI. The travel and tourism industry requires strong AI and hybrid AI to effectively manage the diverse tasks and components necessary to deliver optimal visitor experiences.

4.2. The present application of artificial intelligence in the travel and hospitality sectors

The study analyses the growing implementation of artificial intelligence systems, particularly in-service robots (Samala et al., 2020), in the travel and tourism sector to enhance production and gain a competitive edge, highlighting their

relevance (Tung & Au, 2018: 2685). The study highlights the growing importance of robotic technologies in travel and hospitality, with Japan's Henn-na Hotel being the first to use humanoids as robot receptionists. To assist visitors, handle their baggage, and offer reception services, the Henn-na Hotel uses very effective robots for transportation in the division front office (Lewis, 2016). Bell boy, the robot. One of the service robots, "Sacarino," welcomes guests like a robot bellhop (Zalama et al., 2014). Along with answering taxis, showing patrons to the restaurant or rooms, finding information they've requested online, providing information on things to do in the city and around the hotel (such as restaurant menus and opening hours), and offering video conferencing services, Sacarino also gives information to clients about hotel services. The hotel lobby has a dedicated charging station where it may be used to power itself (Park, 2020; Pinillos et al., 2016; Zalama et al., 2014).

In addition, Yotel New York has put into service YOBOT, the first robotic bag carrier in the world designed like an arm (Yotel New York, 2020). In collaboration with IBM and Robot Concierge Hilton, IBM developed "Connie," a robot whose informative abilities are powered by artificial intelligence with the Watson Foundation. A humanoid robot concierge named Connie gives visitors details about the hotel and surrounding neighborhood (Davis, 2016; Hilton Worldwide, 2016; Park, 2020). With the help of artificial intelligence, Connie can respond to questions from visitors about hotel amenities and suggest local activities. As a result of constant interaction with customers, Connie is always learning new information and becoming more equipped to handle queries in the future (Ivanov et al., 2017: 1506). Italy's first robot concierge, "Robby Pepper," debuted in 2018. Pepper was a Japanese creation from Softbank Robotics that spoke German, English, and Italian. The hotel was located close to Italy's Lake Garda, Barry, Pele, 2018 "Robby Pepper" and "Connie" offer visitors comprehensive advice on where to go, what to do, and when to remain at the hotel depending on the conditions and the dates of their check-out.

"Mario" is the name of another robot concierge at the Ghent Marriott Hotel in Belgium (Chestler, 2016; Reviewer, 2016). Bartender Robot, Tussyadiah, et al. (2020) suggest that a robot bartender might resemble a humanoid or take the shape of a robotic arm. Its two robotic arms are located beneath the bottles in the center of the bar (Berezina et al., 2019: 205). Robotic Butler/Delivery Robot: One example of a robotic butler/delivery robot that brings orders to rooms instead of human workers is seen at Aloft Hotels, a branch of the Starwood hotel firm (Crook, 2014; Markoff, 2014; Park, 2020). Another illustration is "Wally," the Residence Inn Marriott LAX Hotel's delivery robot (Tung & Au, 2018: 2685). Hotel Jen in Tanglin also employs two delivery robots called "Jeno" and "Jena." Wearing uniforms, they are stationed in the lobby area and travel at an average speed of 2.5 km/h, slower than a person's walking pace, to fulfill guest orders (Lin, 2017). According to Ivanov et al. (2017:

1506), these robots can perform various tasks such as taking guest orders, alerting them upon arrival, navigating the hotel premises, and even operating the elevator.

In addition, hotel employees use an order delivery robot to process requests from guests for more towels or toothbrushes. In the hospitality industry, robots and drones increasingly enhance efficiency and customer experience. The "Robie" robot helps with tasks like moving trash and heavy goods, substituting the work of 3.5 full-time employees (Lin, 2017). The robot chef "Ausca" can prepare omelets and eggs at the M Social Singapore Hotel, potentially expanding its cooking capabilities (Crook, 2014; Lin, 2017). Other robots, such as those for making sushi, burgers, noodles, and sausages, are also employed in various food preparation tasks (Filloon, 2016; Sushirobo.com, 2020; Troitino, 2018). Additionally, robotic waiters and buses assist in busy eateries, though there are concerns about job displacement due to the excessive use of robots (Ivanov & Webster, 2020). The Tanuki restaurant in Dubai uses a robot host to enhance guest interactions and promote unique offers (Ivanov & Webster, 2020; Berezina et al., 2019), while robot guides provide information in museums and exhibitions (Yöldz, 2019). Drones are utilized for food and beverage delivery, as seen with Timbre @ The Substation and Domino's Pizza's commercial drone delivery in Auckland (Lui, 2016; Millward, 2015). Drones also support destination marketing and eco-friendly practices by improving energy efficiency (Donaire, Gal & Gulisova, 2020; Hwang & Kim, 2019; Hwang et al., 2019; Stankov et al., 2019).

4.3. Chatbots

Software that allows users or customers to speak with the system in their tongues is known as a Chabot. Abu Shawar and Atwell's study from 2007, on page 29, examines. It is a self-service technological application named "virtual agent" and "chatterbot." It may appear on the company's websites or mobile applications (Melián-González et al., 2019: 1-2). According to the same study's analysis of Trip-Advisor reviews, chatbots are widely used by patrons of lodging facilities, dining establishments, and transportation and entertainment hubs. Marriott International uses a chatbot on Facebook Messenger to facilitate reservations for any of its 4,700 properties (Phaneuf, 2020).

4.4. Facial recognition

Biometric technology relies on analyzing individuals' unique physiological or behavioral characteristics, such as the patterns in their eyes, iris, fingerprints, facial features, palm shape, and voice. These technologies enhance people's quality of life by eliminating repetitive tasks using biometric data. Among these biometric technologies is facial recognition technology. Within the tourist sector, users and customers make use of these technologies. At the UK's Gatwick Airport, travelers utilize facial recognition technology to self-scan their faces for passport checks (Ivanov & Webster, 2019). Similarly, customers at Maryland's Food Grill can

swiftly place orders and complete payments in fewer than 10 seconds thanks to face recognition technology (Marston, 2017). At a KFC restaurant in Beijing, a kiosk employs facial recognition technology to serve meals tailored to customers' gender, age, and mood (Wu, 2017). At Fairmont Singapore and Swissotel the Stamford, facial recognition technology enables Marriott Hotels in China (Revfine, 2020) and Marcus Hanna (Rajagopal, 2019) to check in and leave quickly. In China, visitors to Alibaba's Fly Zoo Hotel may choose and reserve their accommodations using face recognition technology (Wolfe, 2019). Assuming that the travel and hospitality sector will increasingly adopt facial recognition, technology might not be accurate, even though the global market for such technologies was valued at USD 4.05 billion in 2017 and is forecasted to reach USD 7.76 billion by 2022 (Hristova, 2019).

4.5. Language translators

A tourist's biggest issue while traveling overseas is the language barrier. A language translator is one of the most essential technological software for facilitating local-language communication and participation in tourism activities in a given place. These days, several apps may assist with language barriers; one of the most well-known is "Google Translate." When visiting a nation where they are not fluent in the language, tourists can use Google Translate to converse with locals in their tongue. Using Google Translate, tourists can translate sentences from their native tongue into the local language. Alternatively, people may translate phrases spoken by others into their language using the application, making conversation easier to understand. Apart from Google Translate, travelers can utilize other applications such as Say Hi (an Amazon company), Microsoft Translate (Microsoft, 2020), and i-Translate Translator (an Apple application) (i-Translate, 2020) to assist them in comprehending menus at restaurants and hotels.

4.6. Optimization services

According to Samala et al. (2020), service companies can leverage artificial intelligence to improve their offerings by employing the Maximum Likelihood Estimation approach. The travel and hospitality industries commonly employ optimization services, focusing on enhancing service for tourist demand forecasts and tariff and rate forecasting. Companies that implement a dynamic pricing strategy use this method to estimate and modify prices in response to spikes or dips in demand.

4.7. Fare and rate forecasting

Artificial intelligence technologies are optimization instruments in the tourism and hospitality sectors, particularly in fare and rate forecasting. Machine learning algorithms and AI applications now enable the evaluation of room occupancy rates. Various methods for predicting room occupancy rates are utilized, including the PRISMA model (Chow et al., 1998), the neural network approach (Law,

1998), big data analysis (Pan & Yang, 2017), and Bayesian compression approaches (Assaf & Tsionas, 2019). For hotel room rates, AI technologies offer advantages as well. In response to budget-conscious travelers, websites assist in determining the best time to purchase, ensuring tourists obtain the most value for their money (Martin, 2018; Schwahn, 2017). "Now is the right time to buy airline tickets for the best deals." According to Huang et al. (2019), corporate websites such as Hopper and Kayak help travelers foresee unpredictable prices in the travel and hospitality industry.

4.8. Tourism demand forecasting

Predictions of tourism demand frequently depend on models of artificial neural networks known as multi-layer perceptron networks and deep learning (Claveria et al., 2015; Kon & Turner, 2005; Law, 2000; Law & Au, 1999). Moreover, support vector machines (Chen & Wang, 2007; Chen et al., 2015; Hong et al., 2011), a composite search index (Li et al., 2017), fuzzy time series (Tsauro & Kuo, 2011; Wang, 2004), and support vector machines (Tsauro & Kuo, 2011; Wang, 2004) are additional techniques utilized to forecast tourism demand and Gaussian processes (Tsauro & Benoit, 2020). These techniques make it possible to regularly predict the demand for a given area, location, or company. Companies then use dynamic pricing to adjust their rates to these projections. To boost demand, destinations may do more advertising and marketing at times when it is anticipated that demand will be low.

4.9. Search engine

According to Fesenmaier et al. (2011), search engines are becoming a more crucial component of destination marketing organizations' marketing strategies for trip planning in the tourism and travel sector (p. 587). Travelers utilize search engines to organize their itinerary, which includes lodging, local attractions, excursions, dining options, and activities. They also use the search engine suggestions to choose which locations to visit. Travelers utilize them as optimization services while booking hotels or buying airline tickets. Samala et al., (2020). Search engines such as "Avvio" and "U-trip" use machine learning algorithms to assist destination marketing organizations, hotels, conference and visitor bureaus, and airlines deliver customized travel suggestions to their clientele. According to various factors, including their interests, preferences, regions, and budgets, U-trip offers its clients instantaneous travel options based on their requests. Clients may then purchase based on these recommendations (Abadicio, 2019).

4.10. Consultancy services

Businesses that provide advisory services to the travel and hospitality industries might also benefit from deploying AI applications. Similar to search engines, these firms offer suggestions. They collaborate closely with travel or lodging companies, which is the sole distinction. For instance, the Ukrainian B2BN company Altex Soft works closely with the

hotel and tourism industries to develop specialized software and solutions. The teams' proficiency with data and machine learning makes this feasible. Through automation, machine learning, and natural language processing, Altex Soft also provides consulting services to tourism-related businesses on booking and reservations, travel management, and airline management (Abadicio, 2019).

5. Other AI applications used in travel and hospitality industry

This section highlights common examples of self-service visitor technologies in the travel and hospitality industries and references other AI applications.

5.1. Automated machines for check-in and check-out

In the hotel sector, a relatively recent technology that saves customers from having to go to reception is the self-check-in and check-out information kiosk (Kim & Qu, 2014: 227). Yotel New York allows visitors to check in swiftly and conveniently without waiting at the reception desk by utilizing self-service kiosks that mirror those seen at airports, Yotel New York, (2020). Airports also make use of these kiosks. Travelers may check-in, print their boarding cards, and check in their luggage at airport self-service kiosks without needing assistance from a human (Future Travel Experience, 2013; Nicas & Michaels, 2012).

5.2. Virtual assistant with artificial intelligence

The Wynn Las Vegas 2016 intends to install Amazon's Echo system in every room, enabling voice commands for visitors to operate various devices. Virtual assistants can also handle reservations for travel, lodging, and activities at the destination (Ivanov et al., 2017). "Assista," a digital assistant provided by Divan Istanbul, enables visitors to manage lighting and temperature and obtain local information. Through the automated tourist information system supplied by SARA in Singapore, visitors may explore the city without needing help from a human (Niculescu et al., 2014).

5.3. The future of tourism and hospitality: Impacts of AI and robotic technologies

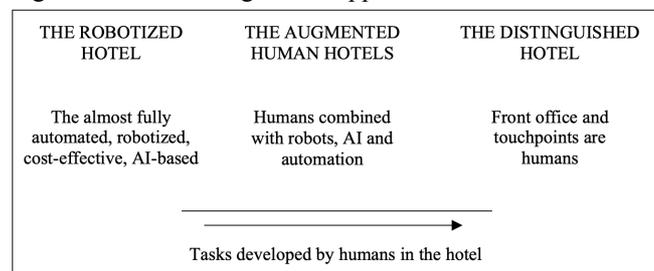
It is anticipated that in the upcoming decades, robotics and artificial intelligence will have a significant influence on the travel and hospitality sectors. Reception areas, food and beverage divisions, laundry facilities, cleaning services, and other areas will use these technologies more frequently. Virtual assistants will allow guests to operate the temperature control, television, air conditioning, lighting, curtains, and innovative room equipment (Yang et al., 2020). Artificially intelligent visual and audio systems will identify visitors' moods and produce scenes on the walls to help them feel more alert. Robotics and AI technologies are set to revolutionize the travel and hospitality sectors, transforming how businesses operate. These technologies include robot receptionists, bellboys, concierges, and self-service check-in

kiosks. They will also be used in food delivery services, meeting and event management, and golf tourism. Travel firms will use AI applications for robot guides, chatbots, and demand forecasts. In the cruise industry, robots will enhance the guest experience by cleaning decks and rooms. AI technologies will also benefit hot air ballooning and virtual guides for museums. However, ethical and risky issues such as staff acceptance, cultural differences, and potential cyber-attacks must be addressed.

5.4. Hospitality and AI's effects

Since the hospitality industry is one of the main drivers of tourism, we decided to look into the technologies and applications previously mentioned about hotels to perform a more in-depth examination of the impact of AI on the industry. The hotel industry embraces AI applications for operations and marketing, enabling robots for room cleaning, employee selection, facility maintenance prevention, resource allocation based on guest value, and guest-centric conversations (Demir & Demir, 2023). AI also improves inventory control, energy use, and financial management. It also enhances personalized services, forecasting, and CRM systems. However, the vast data sets available to hotels are small, and most data is limited to guest activity and website interactions. By the time AI is fully developed, most human activities will be automated, but humans will still play a limited role in the hospitality sector. An adequate hotel fully utilizing automation, robotics, AI, and technology is at one extreme of the spectrum. It operates with a restricted number of persons. Because they can cut the primary costs associated with the hospitality business, these cost-effective hotels will appeal to budget-conscious travelers (Bowen & Morosan 2018; Gursoy 2018). The distinct hotel is at the other end of the spectrum; human beings will be employed to differentiate themselves at many touchpoints. But even at these upscale hotels, visitors will always have the choice to use AI-based self-service technology. There will be a variety of hotel kinds in between that have various configurations of people and technology.

Figure 2. AI technologies and applications in tourism



Source: Bulchand-Gidumal, (2022).

6. Conclusions

The travel and hospitality sectors may only sometimes embrace robotics and artificial intelligence applications. Yet, these technologies have progressively been kept in our daily lives due to technological advancements. Currently, the

issue is, “With the aid of artificial intelligence, will robots be able to offer the services at least as well as humans?” The answer to this issue should be considered in light of the upcoming advancements in robotics and artificial intelligence applications covered in-depth in the study. In actuality, the facts are well known that the robotic technologies and AI applications described above are mostly anticipated, created, and implemented as a result of numerous scientific inquiries. In addition to encountering challenges in recruiting proficient personnel, stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality sectors also need to overcome the obstacle of adopting these technological advancements. Unmanned technologies are rapidly gaining popularity in travel and hospitality, aiming to replace human workers. However, the primary purpose of these technologies is to improve service quality by providing qualified staff. The human touch is crucial for meeting customer expectations and wants, and artificial intelligence cannot elicit these concepts like a human. Despite technological advancements, “service” and “hospitality” cannot exist without humans. Robots and AI programs may be essential components supporting tourist employees, potentially filling new roles. Despite the prevailing cautiousness, the general public exhibits conservatism concerning implementing robotics and artificial intelligence technologies. These technological advancements benefit management, businesses, operators, suppliers, employees, customers, and other stakeholders. Applications can provide accurate tourist policy and planning forecasts, aiding tourism revenue tax management. Service robots can reduce labor turnover and improve service quality, ensuring customer satisfaction and loyalty. They can also boost output and operational costs, enhancing marketing management and competitiveness. The need for a more customized experience among consumers, however, is what is driving the need for robots to provide service, particularly in the hospitality and food and beverage sectors.

Governments must develop infrastructure and legislative rules for these technologies, while further research is needed to maximize human-robot interaction and integrate them into higher education programs. New technologies that meet the needs and desires of customers can be developed by working with engineering departments and encouraging students to learn about robotics and AI applications (Dalgıç et al., 2024). For example, these technologies can be found in food and beverage management or hospitality applications such as automation tools, conveyor belts, or drones and in the service territory’s roles of cooks, serving staff, hosts/hostesses, and bussers. It is only via collaborative working groups between academic circles and industry practitioners that many innovations that have not been considered until now may be made possible. Similar trends may affect transportation businesses, museums, airports, and travel agencies, all crucial players in the tourist and hospitality sectors.

Last but not least, the issue of how well guests and staff accept new technologies should also be viewed as a severe threat. Potential roadblocks include not tech-savvy guests,

staff reluctance to use these technologies, and unwillingness to accept new technologies. The most significant barrier is that these internet-based technologies give rise to ethical concerns such as privacy and confidentiality due to their potential to compromise cybersecurity. These impediments to adopting robots and AI applications are now notable in tourism and hospitality. In the future, internal and external industry stakeholders will adhere to and use these technological advancements due to the absence of uncertainties.

6.1. Practical implications

The studies provide various proper marketing and hospitality takeaways. First, it draws attention to significant problems with the deployment and application of AI in hotel companies. Managers in the tourism and hospitality industries will need to prepare for changes in big marketing tactics in the upcoming years. The emergence of AI-driven services and the possibility for technology to supplant human roles are essential factors to consider. Through highly personalized experiences, AI offers chances to boost customer lifetime value (CLV), which can result in higher conversion rates (Loring, 2018). As Paschen et al. (2020) suggested, producing complicated, high-quality datasets will be essential to preserving a competitive advantage. Businesses will stand out and get a competitive edge if they can create and apply cutting-edge algorithms to leverage these datasets (Grossberg, 2016). The ability to make these databases is now limited to big digital companies like Google, Facebook, Amazon, and Booking.com. Given the circumstances, it is suggested that managers in the hospitality industry look into creative collaborations or alliances to create intelligent ecosystems. As Sivarajah et al. (2017) point out, small businesses may need help to compete effectively due to the high expenses connected with big data. One of the most anticipated innovations in the tourism sector is the disruption of AI-enhanced personal assistants or 24/7 digital butlers/concierges (Loureiro et al., 2020; Pereira et al., 2022). The tourism experience will likely be enhanced, and these AI systems will improve human performance.

Nonetheless, the research also highlights some drawbacks, such as adverse impacts on hotel staff members' job satisfaction, engagement, and intentions to leave the company (Koo et al., 2021; Kozinets & Gretzel, 2021). According to the literature, practical employee training is essential throughout this shift (Li et al., 2019). Employees should be able to use AI more productively and minimize any negative consequences with this training. However, the study also shows that the intricacy of these systems may make them more challenging for marketers to understand when AI is incorporated more deeply into hotel marketing departments (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2021). Managers must adopt novel training strategies that provide a deeper understanding of the underlying technology of AI in addition to covering its operational elements. One strategic way to help AI implementation and improve overall functionality could be to integrate technical experts strategically into marketing organizations.

6.2. Limitations and future research directions

Like every research project, this study has several limitations that point to areas that need to be looked at further. A significant constraint is the possible absence of industry-specific knowledge among the AI experts contacted. It would be advantageous for future studies to involve AI specialists with an in-depth understanding of the travel and lodging industries. These experts could offer more pertinent and valuable insights into how AI interacts with marketing strategies in these sectors, resulting in a more thorough comprehension of the topic (Smith & Jones, 2022). Furthermore, the particular market situation in which the research was carried out impacts the study's conclusions. Future studies should consider creating focus groups in various markets with different degrees of AI adoption to solve this. This methodology could reveal cultural and industry-specific subtleties that would not be seen within the confines of a single market. A more comprehensive understanding of how AI affects marketing strategies in various cultural and economic contexts will be possible by investigating these many situations (Lee et al., 2024).

Moreover, the study's depth may be improved by utilizing the Delphi approach, which entails repeated rounds of expert consultations. Researchers could get a more nuanced consensus on AI's function in marketing by involving marketing experts in this way, which could disclose insights that were missed in the early phases of the study (Williams, 2021). This iterative process may result in more reliable results and a better comprehension of AI's significance for marketing strategy.

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The author declares that they equally contributed to the design and implementation of the research, the analysis of the results, and the writing of the article.

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Research article

Online e-sports event viewers' intention to visit the destination

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Online e-sports event viewers' intention to visit the destination

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Abstract

The main aim of this study is to elucidate the impact of hedonic motivations and habits of e-sports viewers on their intention to visit. The second one is to test the mediating role of individuals' attitudes on this stated impact. The data were collected through face-to-face and online between May 26, 2022, and November 15, 2023. At the end of the data collection process, 438 survey forms were obtained. As a result of the conducted analyses, it was found that hedonic motivation and habit variables have a significant and positive impact on attitude and the intention to visit. Moreover, attitudes mediate the relationship between the intention to visit and both hedonic motivation and habit. In the context of the obtained findings suggested to emphasize aspects that bring fun, pleasure, and enjoyment in e-sports activities. Another recommendation is to provide information to e-sports viewers, especially through individual or social media channels, about e-sports events and the destinations where the events are organized in promotional activities.

Keywords: Hedonic motivation, Habit, Attitude, Intention to visit, E-sport and tourism, SOR model

1. Introduction

Nowadays, technological advancements shape our lives in many areas and increase internet usage. Along with these developments, the tourism sector is also affected. Stakeholders in the tourism sector need to keep up with this progress. As people's interests change with new developments, different tourism areas are being explored according to these interests. In this context, a new type of tourism called e-sports tourism has begun to attract people's interest. E-sports is defined as "a new form of sport where digital games are played individually and/or as a team on any platform, online or offline" (Çavuş, 2020). E-sports events provide many individuals with a lifestyle and income source through prize pools in tournaments or corporate sponsorships. The e-sports industry is rapidly growing, with millions of online players and approximately 532 million virtual viewers worldwide (Statista, 2023). In addition to players, teams, and technical staff, spectators who want to meet players and others with similar interests and watch matches live also participate in e-sports events. This situation also highlights the connection between sports and tourism. In 2022, ticket revenue of \$107.9 million was generated from 14 major e-sports

events (Newzoo, 2022). These e-sports events have become a source of income in the destinations where they are held.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many events have been conducted online, including e-sports events. During this period, tournaments in which world-renowned e-sports teams participated were broadcast live on online platforms. Promotional activities related to the destination were carried out before, during breaks, and after the broadcasts of these events held in a specific destination. In addition, in recent years, although such events have been actively held in a specific destination with physical attendance, they are also broadcast live on the internet, and individuals interested in e-sports follow these broadcasts. The hedonic motivations and habits of e-sports tournament viewers can further encourage individuals to participate in these events. Hedonic motivation involves individuals' intrinsic motivation, mainly related to pleasure and enjoyment (Goossens, 2000). The potential for an activity or event to provide individuals with entertainment, pleasure, and enjoyment or to fulfill such expectations can influence individuals' attitudes (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Kim & Ritchie, 2014) and behaviors (Linderberg & Steg, 2007; Miao &

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** This study is derived from the master's thesis titled "Online e-sports event viewers' intentions to visit the destination where the event is held" presented and accepted by Toprak Kızıllırmak Pirci at the Department of Tourism Management, The Institute of Graduate Education, Isparta University of Applied Sciences.

Wei, 2016). On the other hand, habit refers to individuals exhibiting similar behaviors at regular intervals and continuously. Habits also play a role in shaping individuals' attitudes and intentions to visit. (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006; Kock et al., 2016). Both hedonic motivation and habit are significant variables in shaping individuals' thoughts and behaviors.

Individuals experience specific emotions and thoughts in response to organized e-sports events. These emotions and thoughts are influenced by the conditions described as hedonic motivation or habit (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Hudson & Ritchie, 2006; Kock et al., 2016). These emotions and thoughts can become semi-standardized by being influenced by specific factors. It is possible to characterize these standardized emotions and thoughts as "attitudes." Attitude is described as the set of thoughts individuals have about a specific event, object, living being, or person. Positive attitudes can prompt individuals to act (Jang & Feng, 2007). If individuals have positive attitudes towards e-sports events, through these attitudes, they may desire to visit the venues where e-sports events are held. In other words, attitudes are among the most important factors influencing the intention to visit (Petrick, 2004). The intention to visit is the final step before individuals visit, following certain considerations. Planning to attend a specific event or destination can also be included in the intention to visit (Hunter, 2006).

Hedonic motivation and habit can predominantly motivate individuals internally to generate specific emotions and thoughts. In other words, they can shape individuals' attitudes. As attitudes form, it is natural for individuals to act. Attitudes can also influence visiting intention (Jang & Feng, 2007). These circumstances are based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Model. Hedonic motivation and habits, acting as stimuli, will affect individuals' internal evaluations or organisms. In other words, they will be significant in shaping individuals' attitudes. As an organism, attitude will influence the response, which we can describe as the intention to visit. This research will evaluate e-sports events, which have become increasingly popular in recent years and are expanding their market share daily, within the scope of the study. The main objective of the research is to demonstrate the impact of individuals' hedonic motivation and habits on their intention to visit the venue where the event will be held by shaping their attitudes. This research is essential in filling existing gaps in the context of e-sports and tourism. Another significant aspect is that the model created for the research will be tested for the first time. The results obtained serve as a guide for both academics and practitioners.

2. Literature review

2.1. Hedonic motivation

Hedonic motivation entails consumption involving behaviors developed concerning senses, perceptions, fantasies,

and emotions (Akturan, 2012). In other words, hedonic motivation is associated with entertainment and pleasure. Consumers may consume the same products or services for different purposes, such as hedonic purposes, or they may act to obtain benefits to achieve a higher-level goal (Botti & McGill, 2011). Examining consumer purchase and buying behavior based on geographical, demographic, behavioral, psychological variables, and motivation is important in hotel business segmentation. This is because tourists' purchasing decisions involve a variety of purposes such as holidays, health, sports, sightseeing, and experiencing new cultures. Therefore, tourists have specific expectations.

On the one hand, tourists have expectations such as satisfaction with tourism products or seeking luxury (Kozak, 2014); on the other hand, they are motivated by accessible hedonic and utilitarian outcomes (Chen & Schwartz, 2010). Motivated consumers may prefer brands or companies that meet consumer needs such as emotional pleasures, social status pursuit, and social needs, offering products and services that can be enjoyed through experiences (Baş & Sam-sunlu, 2015). One of the fundamental reasons for consumers to enjoy such shopping experiences is hedonic motivations (Eken & Yazıcı, 2015). Thus, products evaluated primarily based on hedonic consumption value serve as a means for consumers to control their mood (Spangenberg et al., 1997).

In tourism, hedonic motivation is primarily associated with factors related to pleasure, relaxation, and entertainment (Dolnicar et al., 2019). Dann (1977) and Goossens (2000) have examined motivational factors in the context of tourism as push and pull factors. Push motivation factors arise from individuals' internal motivating factors. Among these factors are elements such as the desire for relaxation, entertainment, escapism, and the search for novelty. On the other hand, pull factors emerge in the context of the abstract and concrete elements a destination possesses. Attractions such as facilities, activities, and amenities are evaluated within the scope of pull factors. Hedonic motivation, as it is mainly related to pleasure and enjoyment, is influenced by both push and pull motivational factors. Hedonic motivation is primarily associated with seeking pleasure and enjoyment, and when fulfilled, it can evoke emotional satisfaction. Individuals' feelings of pleasure and enjoyment after activities can also influence their attitudes (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009). Pine and Gilmore (1998) have stated that in the experience economy, consumers increasingly seek pleasure and enjoyment, thus emphasizing the importance of hedonic motivation. Kim and Ritchie (2014) found in their studies examining the impact of hedonic motivation on tourists' attitudes that tourists who derive pleasure and enjoyment have a positive attitude towards the destination. Chen and Tsai (2007) noted that hedonic motivation affects tourist attitudes. It has been suggested that in entertainment-focused visits by tourists, experiencing entertainment will lead to a positive attitude. Individuals' enjoyment of activities will influence their attitudes and behaviors (Lindenberg & Steg, 2007; Miao & Wei, 2016).

2.2. *Habit*

According to Turkish Language Association (TDK, 2006), habit is defined as "conditioned behavior that occurs consistently due to internal and external influences." Güney (1998) defines habit as "attitudes or behaviors acquired by a living being as a result of repeated exposure to an effect and performed automatically." Based on these definitions, it is characterized as regular and repeated behaviors. In environments where competition is intense, firms need to gather information about consumers' purchasing habits before making decisions about products, prices, distribution channels, and sales promotion (Varinli & Çakır, 1999). Business and destination managers should know their customers' characteristics, desires, and expectations, as well as their holiday habits to determine appropriate marketing strategies for profit generation, competition, product positioning, and brand creation. In other words, segmenting the market and learning factors such as travel habits, consumption levels, and product preferences of target market consumers are important for obtaining a homogeneous market (Boz & Yıldırım Saçılık, 2018).

It is noted that through the curiosity aroused by destinations as a result of habits and the acquisition of information about the destination, a certain attitude forms, leading to the intention to visit the destination. The products and services offered in the context of individuals' habits can especially influence their intention to visit (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006). Anything that individuals regularly use, participate in, or engage with is a significant factor in determining subsequent behavior. Along with exploring destinations through habits, the intention to visit is also positively influenced (Bigne et al., 2001). Habits also influence the attitudes individuals hold. Habits are important in shaping semi-standardized thoughts about any object, individual, living being, or behavior. This factor will increase individuals' intention to visit by influencing their attitudes (Backman & Crompton, 1991; Kock et al., 2016).

2.3. *Attitude*

Attitude is described as the crystallized form of individuals' positive or negative evaluations towards an object, living being, person, or event. These evaluations lead individuals to cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). In other words, individuals' knowledge, emotional approach, or behaviors towards any object, living being, person, or event can influence their behaviors. These patterns that influence behavior are characterized as attitudes (Hagger, 2019). Attitudes are phenomena characterized as crystallized patterns that are somewhat resistant to change. However, any situation individuals encounter in their daily lives (cognitive, emotional, and behavioral) can shape attitudes (Torabi et al., 2022). Factors such as attractiveness and entertainment are important in shaping attitudes. In this case, the perception of activities or events as enjoyable due to hedonic motivation shapes attitudes (Guadagno et al., 2013).

One of the fundamental factors influencing attitude is demographic characteristics. Features such as gender, educational level, age, and marital status impact attitude (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004). Perceived value and satisfaction are also important factors in shaping attitudes. If individuals perceive benefits from visiting a destination and are satisfied with their experience, their attitude is positively influenced (Petrick, 2004).

On the other hand, it has been noted in the relevant literature that destination image also affects attitude (Beerli & Martin, 2004). From a tourism perspective, it can be stated that individuals' attitudes can affect their spending, travel decisions, satisfaction levels, and intentions to revisit (Fodness & Murray, 1999). It can also be said that attitudes toward a destination influence the decision to choose or not choose that destination. The evaluations of the destination that emerge as positive or negative semi-standardized assessments can also affect the selection of the destination by influencing attitudes towards it (Jang & Feng, 2007). With the visitation of a destination, individuals' attitudes are reshaped.

2.4. *Intention to visit*

Intention is the individual's desire and effort to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). According to another definition, intention measures a person's inclination to exhibit a specific behavior (Turan, 2011). Generally, intention is described as the final step before behavior occurs and as a fundamental factor influencing behavior (Hunter, 2006). Intention is shaped by individuals' attitudes toward the behavior (Wang & Ritchie, 2012). Individuals' awareness and knowledge shape attitudes. Similarly, the attitude towards a destination can also influence the intention to visit that destination (Shin & Jeong, 2022). The desire or likelihood of visiting a destination indicates the intention to visit (Luo & Ye, 2020). Additionally, planning to visit a destination in the future can also fall within the scope of visitation intention (Horng et al., 2012).

Factors influencing the intention to visit a destination have a complex structure. Factors such as attractions (man-made, natural formations, activities, etc.), motivation, and satisfaction are fundamental factors influencing the intention to visit (Crompton, 1979). On the other hand, cultural factors also significantly impact the intention to visit. Cultural characteristics can shape perceptions of the destination, thereby positively affecting the intention to visit (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004). In addition to these, destination image, destination awareness, perceived value, and similar aspects can shape the intention to visit (Wang & Hsu, 2010). One of the most important variables affecting the intention to visit is attitude. Various factors shape individuals' attitudes positively or negatively. As a result of this shaping, individuals may express an intention to visit a destination. A positively shaped attitude towards a destination will positively influence the intention to visit (Bieger et al., 2011; Chen & Tsai, 2007).

3. Model and hypotheses

3.1. SOR model/paradigm

The SOR paradigm was introduced by Mehrabian and Russell in 1974. According to this model, environmental stimuli and emotions influence individuals' behaviors. The model consists of three components: Stimulus, Organism, and Response. As Mehrabian and Russell (1974) described, the SOR model represents the Stimulus (S) component, which characterizes the informational load encompassing all sensory variables in a specific environment and the perceived objects and temporal relationships among them. The Organism (O) reflects individuals' internal structures and emotional responses to environmental stimuli, while the Response (R) represents approach or avoidance behaviors. The SOR paradigm, initially recognized as a psychological theory, has become widespread in consumer behavior rooted in psychology (Wu & Li, 2018:77). According to this paradigm, consumers planning to travel undergo a mental process triggered by specific stimuli, resulting in certain responses.

3.2. Development of hypotheses

The SOR model has been considered in the development of hypotheses (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In the SOR model, precursor variables represent stimuli. Considering the research model, these stimuli identified as "hedonic motivation" and "habituation" variables. Additionally, within the context of the organism influenced by stimuli, the variable of "attitude" can be identified. Finally, within the context of the outcome variable, influenced by stimuli and organism, the "intention to visit" variable is present. Furthermore, hypotheses have been developed considering the research findings in the literature.

3.2.1. Relationship between hedonic motivation and attitude

Motivation is one of the most significant factors in driving individuals towards achieving their goals. In tourism, motivation defined as the motivating factors that prompt individuals to act, stemming from both internal and external factors. In tourism, motivational factors are generally classified into push and pull motivational factors (Dann, 1977; Goossens, 2000). Push motivational factors encompass internal motivators such as escape, relaxation, novelty-seeking, and enjoyment. On the other hand, pull motivational factors include the attractions, facilities, and activities offered by the destination, both tangible and intangible (Dann, 1977; Goossens, 2000). Hedonic motivation pertains more to factors related to providing pleasure and entertainment to individuals. The satisfaction derived from activities undertaken can influence individuals' attitudes (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009). Relevant research indicates that individuals whose expectations are met through pleasure and enjoyment tend to have positively influenced attitudes (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Kim & Ritchie, 2014; Lindenberg & Steg, 2007; Miao & Wei, 2016). When evaluated within the framework of the

SOR model, hedonic motivation as a stimulus can influence the attitude of the organism. Based on the SOR model and relevant research findings, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H₁: Hedonic motivation significantly and positively affects individuals' attitudes.

3.2.2. Relationship between habit and attitude

Habit is characterized as behaviors repeated regularly. Individuals who habitually engage in e-sports may become curious about destinations through events held in different locations and research those destinations (Backman & Crompton, 1991; Kock et al., 2016). Satisfying with activities performed at a certain frequency can positively influence individuals' attitudes (Backman & Crompton, 1991; Kock et al., 2016). Considering the SOR model, the habit variable, acting as a stimulus, may influence the attitude of the organism. Based on the SOR model and relevant research findings, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H₂: Habit significantly and positively affects individuals' attitudes.

3.2.3. Relationship between attitude and intention to visit

The relationship between attitude and visit intention was examined bidirectionally. Individuals' attitudes may be influenced by their expectations being met and their satisfaction after visiting a destination (Petrick, 2004). On the other hand, it has been indicated in research findings that positive or negative attitudes towards a destination can also affect the intention to visit that destination (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Fodness & Murray, 1999; Jang & Feng, 2007). Considering the SOR model, the attitude, categorized as the organism, may impact the intention to visit in the context of the outcome variable. Based on the SOR model and relevant research findings, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H₃: Individuals' attitudes significantly and positively affect their intention to visit.

3.2.4. Mediate role of attitude

Attitude is defined as the set of semi-permanent feelings and thoughts individuals possess (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). It is common for individuals with an interest in e-sports to watch and participate in such events through their hedonic motivation and habits (Jang & Fen, 2007; Petrick, 2004). Individuals' enjoyment and pleasure from these activities are significant factors in their subsequent participation. Additionally, their habits may lead them to intermittently or continuously seek out such events. Curiosity about venues where e-sports events are held may arise from hedonic motivation and habit. Consequently, an intention to visit a specific event or destination may emerge. However, it should be noted that this effect could also be mediated by an intermediary variable, individuals' attitudes in the context of their emotions and

thoughts. Relevant research findings support this notion (Bieger et al., 2011; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Jang & Feng, 2007; Shin & Jeong, 2022). Furthermore, considering the SOR model, it is possible to evaluate hedonic motivation and habit variables as stimuli. In the organism context, attitude is assessed. Lastly, the response variable is the intention to visit. Based on the SOR model and relevant research findings, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H4: Attitude mediates the effect of hedonic motivation on individuals' intention to visit.

H5: Attitude mediates the effect of habit on individuals' intention to visit.

4. Methodology

This study was conducted “the decision of Isparta University of Applied Sciences Ethics Committee at its meeting dated 25.04.2022 and numbered 104/01.”

The population of the study consists of individuals who follow online e-sports tournaments. The population is defined as a set from which data collected for the research is generalized through specific analyses (Büyüköztürk et al., 2012). The population is a group that is easy to define but difficult to reach (Karasar, 2014). Therefore, reaching all individuals who watch e-sports tournaments online is nearly impossible. In this context, sampling and sampling method selection processes have been conducted. The sample is described as a subgroup representing the identified population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). The study sample consists of individuals who have actively or passively participated in e-sports tournaments physically. This sample is representative of the population.

Although there is no specific number of participants for this sample, these individuals are assumed to be 100,000 or more. According to the approach stated by Sekaran and Bougie (2013), reaching 384 participants may be sufficient for generalization. The study data were collected through convenience sampling between May 26, 2022, and November 15, 2023. Convenience sampling is one of the non-probability sampling methods. Convenience sampling is described as a method where anyone who wants to participate in the survey in the determined sample is included until the researcher reaches the desired sample size (Altunışık et al., 2007). As a result of the data collection process, 438 survey forms were obtained. The data were collected through face-to-face and online contact methods (online survey form, email, social media channels, etc.).

4.1. Measures

The survey form for collecting data for the research consists of two parts. The first part includes categorical and open-ended questions to reveal the participants' demographic characteristics. The second part comprises scales related to the variables of the research purpose. The Hedonic Motivation Scale, adapted from the study by Jang (2020), is

included in the survey form. The reliability coefficient of this scale, formed in three expression forms by Jang (2020), was found to be 0.78 by the author. Similarly, the Habit Scale, adapted from the research conducted by Jang (2020), is included in the survey form. The reliability coefficient of this scale, determined by Jang (2020), is 0.85. The Attitude Scale was created based on the study by Bozkurt and Avcıkurt (2019). These researchers reported the reliability coefficient of this scale, consisting of seven statements, as 0.85. Lastly, the Intention to Visit Scale was also developed based on the research by Bozkurt and Avcıkurt (2019). The reliability coefficient of this scale, determined by Bozkurt and Avcıkurt (2019), is 0.86. Response categories for the scales are established in a 5-point Likert rating format (1=Strongly Disagree; 5=Strongly Agree).

4.2. Data analysis

The obtained data was primarily transferred to the SPSS analysis program. After the data transfer, missing data analysis was conducted. In the Hedonic Motivation Scale, three data points, in the Habit Scale, seven data points, in the Attitude Scale, six data points, and in the Intention to Visit Scale, five data points were filled by assigning the averages of the relevant statements. The mean imputation method is among the most preferred social sciences methods (Şencan, 2005). Following the imputation of missing data, outlier and multicollinearity analyses were conducted. As a result of these analyses, 30 data points were removed from the analysis. Consequently, the analysis continued with 408 data points. The participants' demographic characteristics, descriptive statistics of the statements, exploratory factor analyses, correlation analysis, and other relevant aspects were analyzed using the SPSS analysis program. Additionally, confirmatory factor analysis, discriminant validity analysis, hypothesis testing, and other relevant aspects were analyzed using the LISREL package program and presented to the readers.

5. Results

According to the findings presented in Table 1, when examining the distribution of genders among the participants, it is observed that 85.3% are male and 14.7% are female. Regarding age distribution, it is noted that 22.6% are 19 years old or younger, 41.6% are in the 20-24 age range, 27.4% are in the 25-30 age range, 5.6% are in the 31-35 age range, and 2.3% are 36 years old or older. As for the educational backgrounds of the participants, 0.2% have completed primary education, 16.9% have completed high school, 25.2% have completed associate degrees, 47.3% have completed undergraduate degrees, and 10.3% have completed graduate degrees. When examining the income status, it is observed that 21% have incomes of 5,000₺ or less, 11.8% have incomes between 5,001 - 10,000 ₺, 5% have incomes between 10,001 - 15,000₺, 6.6% have incomes between 15,001 - 20,000 ₺, and 27.9% have incomes of 20,001 ₺ and above. Finally, in terms of the frequency of watching online e-sports events,

32% watch once a month, 25.9% watch 2-3 times a month, 30.8% watch 4-5 times a month, and 11.3% watch six times or more per month.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants

Gender (n=408)	n	%
Female	60	14.7
Male	348	85.3
Age (n=407)	n	%
19 and below	92	22.6
20-24 years old	170	41.6
25-30 years old	112	27.4
31-35 years old	23	5.6
36 and above	10	2.3
Education (n=408)	n	%
Primary School	1	0.2
High School	69	16.9
College	103	25.2
University	193	47.3
Master & PhD	42	10.3
Income per month (n=293)	n	%
5.000 TL and below	85	29
5.001 - 10.000 TL	48	16.4
10.001 - 15.000 TL	19	6.5
15.001 - 20.000 TL	27	9.2
20.001 TL and above	114	38.9
Watching Frequencies (n= 406)	n	%
One time per month	130	32
Two or three times per month	105	25.9
Four or five times per month	125	30.8
Six or more per month	46	11.3

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the scales. Factor analysis is defined as “a multivariate analysis technique that reduces a large number of variables to a smaller number of variables based on relationships between variables” (İslamoğlu and Almaçık, 2014:395). When determining the number of factors, it was decided that “the eigenvalue should be greater than one and the corresponding factor loading should be at least 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010), the factor should consist of at least three items, the difference in loadings between two factors in case of overlap should be at least 0.10 (Büyüköztürk, 2002), and Varimax rotation should be applied”. Table 2 presents the results of the exploratory factor analysis for the Hedonic Motivation Scale. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy for the Hedonic Motivation Scale is 0.737, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity indicates statistical significance ($\chi^2=731.203$; $p<0.001$). These results suggest that the overall structure of the Hedonic Motivation Scale is suitable for factor analysis.

The eigenvalue of the single-factor structure emerging for the hedonic motivation of e-sports spectators is 2.470. The explained variance ratio, which is considered the adequacy of scale explanation, is 82.333%, and the reliability coefficient Cronbach's Alpha is 0.892. This single dimension formed by the items in the scale is named "Hedonic Motivation." Table 3 presents the results of the exploratory

factor analysis for the Habit Scale. The KMO value for the Habit Scale is 0.738, and Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant ($\chi^2=725.748$; $p<0.001$), indicating that the data are suitable for factor analysis. The eigenvalue of the single-factor structure that emerged for the habits of e-sports spectators' habits is 2.470. The explained variance ratio, which represents the adequacy of scale explanation, is 82.346%, and the reliability coefficient Cronbach's Alpha is 0.903. This single dimension is formed by the items in the "Habit" scale.

Table 4 presents the results of the exploratory factor analysis for the Attitude Scale. The KMO value for the Attitude Scale is 0.868, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant ($\chi^2=1335.556$; $p<0.001$), indicating that the data are suitable for factor analysis. However, two items were removed from the analysis because their factor loadings were less than 0.500. The eigenvalue of the single-factor structure that emerged for e-sports spectators' attitudes is 3.687. The explained variance ratio, which represents the adequacy of scale explanation, is 73.748%, and the reliability coefficient Cronbach's Alpha is 0.906. This single dimension is formed by the items in the "Attitude" scale.

Table 2. Exploratory factor analysis results of hedonic motivation scale

Hedonic motivation scale	FL	Mean	SD	EV	Ei
		4.33	.760	82.333	2.470
I would be happy to watch e-sports tournaments.	.925	4.30	.733		
Watching e-sports tournaments gives me pleasure.	.913	4.46	.773		
I feel excitement while watching e-sports tournaments.	.883	4.23	.776		
KMO Value: 0.737; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: 731.203; Total Explained Variance: 82,333%; Cronbach's Alpha: 0.892 FL: Factor Loadings; SD: Standard Deviation; EV: Explained Variance; Ei: Eigenvalues					

Table 3. Exploratory factor analysis results of habit scale

Habit scale	FL	Mean	SD	EV	Ei
		3.78	1.092	82.346	2.470
Watching e-sports tournaments has become routine/natural for me.	.928	3.65	1.129		
Watching e-sports tournaments is one of my first choices in my spare time.	.898	3.89	1.138		
I make special time to watch e-sports tournaments.	.896	3.79	1.007		
KMO Value: 0.738; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: 725.748; Total Explained Variance: 82.346%; Cronbach's Alpha: 0.903 FL: Factor Loadings; SD: Standard Deviation; EV: Explained Variance; Ei: Eigenvalues					

Table 4. Exploratory factor analysis results of attitude scale

Attitude scale	FL	Mean	SD	EV	Ei
	3.96	.929	73.748	3.687	
I think e-sports tournaments are amazing to watch.	.873	4.05	1.056		
I think it is useful to watch e-sports tournaments.	.871	3.89	.848		
I think it is good to watch e-sports tournaments.	.870	4.27	.799		
I think it makes sense to watch e-sports tournaments.	.849	3.98	.878		
I think it is necessary to watch e-sports tournaments.	.830	3.62	1.065		
KMO Value: 0.868; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: 1335.556; Total Explained Variance: 73.748%; Cronbach's Alpha: 0.906 FL: Factor Loadings; SD: Standard Deviation; EV: Explained Variance; Ei: Eigenvalues					

Table 5. Exploratory factor analysis results of intention to visit scale

Intention to visit scale	FL	Mean	SD	EV	Ei
	3.52	1.175	83.960	2.519	
I intend to travel to destinations where e-sports tournaments are held.	.938	3.39	1.136		
I plan to travel to destinations where e-sports tournaments are held.	.916	3.41	1.251		
I hope to travel to destinations where e-sports tournaments are held.	.895	3.75	1.139		
KMO Value: 0.737; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: 808.006; Total Explained Variance: 83.960%; Cronbach's Alpha: 0.903 FL: Factor Loadings; SD: Standard Deviation; EV: Explained Variance; Ei: Eigenvalues					

Table 5 presents the results of the exploratory factor analysis for the Intention to Visit Scale. The KMO value for the Intention to Visit Scale is 0.737, and Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant ($\chi^2=808.006$; $p<0.001$), indicating that the data are suitable for factor analysis. The eigenvalue of the single-factor structure emerged that for the intention of e-sports spectators to visit destinations is 2.519. The explained variance ratio, which represents the adequacy of scale explanation, is 83.960%, and the reliability coefficient Cronbach's Alpha is 0.903. This single dimension formed by the items in the scale is named "Intention to Visit."

Table 6 displays the results of the confirmatory factor analysis for the variables. In the confirmatory factor analysis, "standardized factor loadings above 0.50 and t-values

greater than 1.96 were considered" (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993). Additionally, the criteria of "Average Variance Extracted (AVE) greater than 0.50 and Composite Reliability (CR) greater than 0.70 were considered" (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2010). Furthermore, the goodness-of-fit indices indicated satisfactory fit as they fall within the reference values ("*Normalized Chi-Square: 2.99; RMSEA: 0.073; AGFI: 0.91; GFI: 0.96; CFI: 0.98; NFI: 0.97; SRMR: 0.034*") (Wheaton, 1987; Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 1998; Zikmund, 2003).

Table 6. Results of the confirmatory factor analysis

Items	SL	t	ME	AVE	α / CR
<i>Hedonic motivation</i>				0.68	0.89/0.89
HM1	0.80	18.14	0.35		
HM2	0.90	21.08	0.19		
HM3	0.78	17.17	0.40		
Habit				0.70	0.89/0.89
HBT1	0.89	21.90	0.21		
HBT2	0.78	17.85	0.39		
HBT3	0.85	20.46	0.27		
<i>Attitude</i>				0.67	0.90/0.90
ATT1	0.85	20.84	0.27		
ATT3	0.83	19.76	0.31		
ATT5	0.84	20.04	0.29		
ATT6	0.80	19.07	0.36		
ATT7	0.78	18.13	0.40		
<i>Intention to visit</i>				0.76	0.90/0.90
IV1	0.94	24.29	0.12		
IV2	0.87	21.33	0.25		
IV3	0.81	19.34	0.34		
SL: Standardized Loadings; AVE Average Variance Extracted; ME: Margins of Error					

Table 7. Correlation analysis

	Hedonic motivation	Habit	Attitude	Intention to visit
Hedonic motivation	(1)			
Habit	.622**	(1)		
Attitude	.575**	.679**	(1)	
Intention to visit	.384**	.513**	.501**	(1)

**p<0.01

Table 7 presents the correlation values between the variables. Significant and positive relationships were found between hedonic motivation and habit ($r = 0.622$; $p < 0.01$), attitude ($r = 0.575$; $p < 0.01$), and visit intention ($r = 0.384$; $p < 0.01$). There were significant and positive relationships between habit and attitude ($r = 0.679$; $p < 0.01$) as well as visit intention ($r = 0.513$; $p < 0.01$). Finally, a significant and

positive relationship was observed between attitude and visit intention ($r = 0.501$; $p < 0.01$).

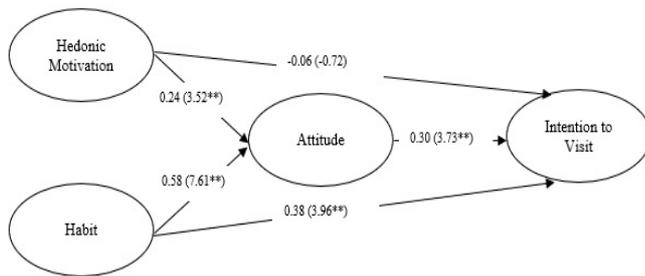
Table 8. Direct effect results

		β	t
Hedonic motivation	→ Attitude	.67	19.56**
Habit	→ Attitude	.76	27.84**
Hedonic motivation	→ Intention to visit	.43	9.21**
Habit	→ Intention to visit	.57	14.59**
Attitude	→ Intention to visit	.56	14.35**

** $p < 0,01$

The results of the direct effects between variables are detailed in Table 8. It was found that the hedonic motivation variable has a significant and positive effect on attitude ($\beta = 0.67$; $p < 0.01$). Similarly, the habit variable is seen to have a significant and positive effect on attitude ($\beta = 0.76$; $p < 0.01$). Regarding the intention to visit, hedonic motivation ($\beta = 0.43$; $p < 0.01$), habit ($\beta = 0.57$; $p < 0.01$), and attitude ($\beta = 0.56$; $p < 0.01$) were found to have significant and positive effects. In this context, Hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 are supported.

Figure 1. The mediating role



In Figure 1, the test results for the mediating role are observed. Before examining the mediating role, the requirements suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) were checked. As there were “significant relationships between the independent and dependent variables, between the independent and mediating variables, and between the mediating and dependent variables, a test for mediation role was conducted”. Since the interaction of the effect value between hedonic motivation and attitude, and the effect value between attitude and intention to visit is greater than the effect between hedonic motivation and intention to visit, a mediation role is inferred ($|0.24 * 0.30| > |-0.06|$). Considering the insignificant effect of hedonic motivation and intention to visit, the first mediation role is interpreted as complete mediation. On the other hand, since the interaction of the effect value between habit and attitude, and the effect value between attitude and intention to visit is smaller than the effect between habit and intention to visit, a partial mediation role is suggested ($|0.58 * 0.30| < |0.38|$). Furthermore, considering the significant effect between habit and intention to visit, it is stated as a partial mediation role. In this context, H4 is

supported due to the mediation role, while H5 is partially supported due to the partial mediation role.

6. Conclusion

This study's findings exhibit similarities with research results in the relevant literature. Hedonic motivation predominantly emerges as a concept related to individuals' pleasure and enjoyment sensations (Goossens, 2000). Relevant research findings have indicated that hedonic motivation, which internally motivates individuals, also influences their attitudes (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009; Kim & Ritchie, 2014). The engagement of individuals in watching e-sports events is shaped not only by their interests but also by pleasure and enjoyment. Individuals derive pleasure and enjoyment from such activities, so their attitudes toward e-sports events will become more positive (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009; Kim & Ritchie, 2014). In other words, in line with the SOR model, as indicated in this study's results, hedonic motivation is a significant stimulant for attitude. Consequently, individuals' enjoyment and pleasure from their activities will affect their organismic attitude state.

In addition to pleasure and enjoyment, individuals' habits, whether intermittent or continuous, can also influence their attitudes. This study has found that habits can have a positive impact on attitudes. This finding aligns with research results in the relevant literature (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006; Kock et al., 2016). Individuals' habits of watching e-sports events emerge as a factor that can affect their attitudes. Therefore, any situation affecting individuals' habit levels can significantly affect their emotions and thoughts. As these emotions and thoughts shape, individuals are more easily motivated to act (Jang & Feng, 2007). The impact of habits on attitudes, as found in this study, can also be considered within the context of the SOR model. When considering individuals' habits in the context of stimulation, they can potentially influence attitudes at the organismic level.

When considering stimuli, both hedonic motivation and habit can also be variables that may affect the intention to visit. Another finding of this study is the positive impact of both variables on the intention to visit. Therefore, in the context of a new area or destination to be visited for the first time, conveying situations such as pleasure, enjoyment, and fun to individuals can increase their intentions (Lindenberg & Steg, 2007; Miao & Wei, 2016). On the other hand, intermittent or continuous activities are also important for the intention to visit (Backman & Crompton, 1991; Kock et al., 2016). When considered within the SOR model, hedonic motivation and habit variables are evaluated as stimuli. However, in this case, it should be noted that individuals' emotional and cognitive state as mediator variables will also be important. Therefore, it is evident that both hedonic motivation and habit can shape the intention to visit through attitude (Jang & Feng, 2007; Petrick, 2004). With the evaluation of attitude as the organismic component, the intention to visit, which is considered as a response, is positively or negatively influenced. In this context, whether attitude plays

a mediating role has been tested. Attitude fully mediates the effect of hedonic motivation on the intention to visit. This finding suggests that individuals will have a positive attitude toward visiting, influenced by meeting their needs such as entertainment, pleasure, and enjoyment through such events, and this positive attitude can positively affect the intention to visit. Therefore, highlighting elements of entertainment and pleasure, especially in e-sports events, may influence individuals to act by overshadowing other factors. On the other hand, habit alone may be insufficient to prompt action through such events. Apart from attitude, which was found to be a partial mediator between habit and the intention to visit, different factors may also be effective.

This study's findings have important theoretical implications. Additionally, it is important to provide recommendations to practitioners based on the results. Here are some suggestions for practitioners:

- When organizing events related to e-sports, particular attention should be paid to the "entertainment" factor. If the entertainment factor provides pleasure and enjoyment to individuals, shaping their emotions and thoughts positively towards the event, it can facilitate their engagement.

- In the online organization of such events, especially attention should be given to the "entertainment" element in the program. Before the event starts, interactive "chat" areas where participants can engage should be active, experienced individuals can share insights along with visuals from previous events, during the event, information about the venue and destination should be provided along with elements that can evoke "entertainment" during breaks in the program, and gifts, raffles, etc., should be included in the event program. Also, post-event programs that can entertain participants should be offered. Paying attention to these aspects can positively influence the attitudes and intentions of individuals.

- It is important to turn watching such events into a habit for individuals. For this purpose, practitioners may need to focus on reminder and encouragement activities to encourage individuals to participate. Especially through social media channels, announcements are made, visuals, videos, etc., from past events and the venue are shared, and situations like interviews and statements of popular e-sports players are utilized.

- Attitudes of individuals are important factors that prompt action. Therefore, practitioners should highlight elements that can influence individuals' emotions and thoughts in promotional activities. Particularly, sharing positive aspects by leveraging past events is an effective solution. This can make it easier to prompt individuals to act.

- Practitioners should highlight the attractions, facilities, and activities done in the destination where the event is held. This will increase individuals' intentions to visit the destination.

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Author contributions

The authors contributed equally to the research design and implementation, analysis, and the manuscript's writing.

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Overbooking and customer reactions in tourism: Evidence from restaurants

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Overbooking and customer reactions in tourism: Evidence from restaurants

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Abstract

This study explores the practice of overbooking in restaurants and its impact on customer reactions, drawing on insights from interviews with 15 participants. The research aims to understand the nuances of these customer experiences and the challenges restaurant staff face in managing overbooked situations. Through qualitative interviews, participants shared their experiences and perceptions, highlighting a range of emotional and practical difficulties. Participant opinions revealed transparency and effective communication are crucial in mitigating negative reactions. The findings suggest that while overbooking can financially benefit restaurants, maintaining customer satisfaction and loyalty necessitates a delicate balance. The study provides for restaurant managers, emphasizing customer relationship management's importance in accurately predicting and managing reservation flows.

Keywords: Overbooking, Customer reactions, Restaurants, No-show

1. Introduction

Overbooking in service industries such as restaurants, airlines, and hotels is crucial in maximizing revenue and optimizing resource utilization. Overbooking involves accepting more reservations than available capacity (Alexandrov & Lariviere, 2012), anticipating a certain percentage of customers will not show up. This strategy helps service businesses avoid losses due to no-shows and cancellations, ensuring that resources are fully utilized and revenue opportunities are noticed (Antonio et al., 2017, 2019). Understanding customers' reactions to overbooking is crucial as it directly affects customer satisfaction, loyalty, and overall business reputation.

The main reason for overbooking in restaurants is to provide service at maximum capacity by compensating customers for no-show rates (Chan et al., 2007; Kimes & Robson, 2004). No-show refers to customers who made a reservation but have yet to come to the restaurant, which causes restaurants to lose revenue. The overbooking strategy is applied to minimize this loss and prevent tables from remaining empty. In this way, restaurant businesses aim to maximize their income by continually working at close to total capacity. Overbooking is more important than revenue growth. It also ensures efficient use of resources. Restaurants can efficiently plan and manage staff, food, and other resources (Chen, 2016; Roy et al., 2022). This increases profitability by

reducing operating costs. Additionally, better-managing customer flow during busy times is critical to maintaining service quality.

Similar overbooking strategies are implemented in other service sectors (Demir et al., 2023; Sierag et al., 2017; Vinod, 2022). Airlines and hotels, particularly, overbook customers, considering their no-show rates. Overbooking airline tickets ensures that each flight is close to total capacity. Hotels, on the other hand, apply similar strategies to maximize room occupancy rates (Ivanov, 2015; Phumchusri & Maneesophon, 2014). These practices target efficient use of resources and income increase in all service sectors. One main factor that forces restaurants to overbook is the highly competitive environment. Restaurants use this strategy to avoid losing customers and ensure constant occupancy. Additionally, tight margins in the food and beverage industry drive restaurants to generate maximum revenue from each customer. Overbooking is an effective method used for this purpose.

Overbooking is a strategy that businesses must carefully manage, considering customer satisfaction (Chiang, 2023; Tyagi & Bolia, 2021). If customers are still looking for a seat even though they have made a reservation or have to wait a long time, this can lead to negative customer experiences and loss of loyalty. Therefore, restaurants must develop effective communication strategies to provide customers with

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accurate information and offer alternative solutions. Overbooking is a critical strategy for restaurants and other service businesses (Haynes & Egan, 2020; McGuire & Kimes 2006). In addition to advantages such as increased revenue and efficient use of resources, customer satisfaction and loyalty should also be considered. Restaurants must constantly analyze and optimize their overbooking strategies to achieve this balance. In this way, they can increase their financial performance and maintain customer satisfaction.

2. Literature

Overbooking is a strategy that businesses frequently use to maximize their revenue, especially in the service sector (Hayes et al., 2021; Krawczyk et al., 2016; Zhang & Pippins, 2021). Overbooking in restaurants means accepting reservations beyond the capacity available at a particular time. In other words, overbooking is when a business undertakes to provide services by taking more reservations than its capacity. Although this strategy is widely used, especially in the airline and hotel industries, it also has an important place in the restaurant business. This strategy is used to offset customer cancellations or no-shows (Tse & Poon, 2017; Wangenheim & Bayón, 2007). When implemented correctly, overbooking minimizes revenue losses by increasing the occupancy rates of restaurants.

Overbooking strategy plays an important role in ensuring the economic sustainability of restaurants (Gregorash, 2016; Oh & Su, 2022). No-shows and last-minute cancellations can cause restaurants to lose unexpected revenue. Overbooking helps prevent such losses and allows restaurants to manage operational costs more efficiently (Heo et al., 2013; Thompson, 2002). Additionally, accepting reservations above capacity during periods of high demand helps restaurants optimize their occupancy rates.

The biggest challenge in implementing the overbooking strategy is its negative effects on customer satisfaction and loyalty (Fasone & Faldetta, 2013; Guo et al., 2016). Reservations that exceed capacity may extend customer wait times and even result in some customers not receiving service (Chen et al., 2018; Parsa et al., 2020). This can lead to customer complaints and negative feedback. There may also be long-term negative consequences, such as repeat customer loss and bad reputation (Wangenheim & Bayón, 2007). Restaurants that practice overbooking should develop effective customer relationship management strategies to minimize such risks (Tang et al., 2019; Tse & Poon, 2017).

The overbooking strategy, which means that businesses such as hotels and restaurants in the tourism sector receive reservations above their current capacity, aims to ensure that businesses reach maximum occupancy rates by protecting against reservation cancellations and no-show situations (Hwang 2008; Wangenheim & Bayón, 2007). However, overbooking has various positive and negative aspects for both businesses and customers (Kimes et al., 1998; Thompson & Kwortnik Jr, 2008).

The biggest advantage of overbooking for businesses is that it minimizes revenue loss (Vajpai, 2018; Vidotto et al., 2007). Reservation cancellations and no-show rates may be high in hotels. For example, a business may experience a 10 percent rate of cancellations and no-shows. Through overbooking, it can compensate for these losses and reduce the likelihood of its capacity remaining vacant. On the other hand, overbooking also has some risks for businesses. A hotel that overbooks its capacity may be forced to divert customers to other hotels when all rooms are full, and fewer cancellations are expected. This may lead to customer dissatisfaction and loss of the business's reputation. Similarly, restaurants may face complaints from customers who need help finding a seat despite making a reservation, which may negatively affect customer loyalty in the long run.

Table 1. Reasons for overbooking and its challenges

Cancellation and no-show situations	Businesses overbook to compensate for these losses by anticipating that some of the customers who made reservations will cancel or not come.
Financial efficiency	Overbooking helps businesses maximize their revenue so that empty tables do not lead to revenue loss.
High demand periods	Overbooking is used more frequently due to high demand, especially during holidays or special days.
Customer dissatisfaction	Customers who cannot find a seat despite reservation may express dissatisfaction on social media and online platforms, which may negatively affect the business's reputation.
Operational challenges	Overbooking can cause operational difficulties and put extra pressure on staff, especially during busy times.
Customer loyalty	Businesses that overbook frequently may experience a loss of loyal customers. Customers tend not to choose businesses whose reliability they question.

Sources: Adapted from Katz (1997), McDougall and Levesque (1999)

From the customers' perspective, the negative aspects of overbooking are more obvious (Phumchusri & Maneesophon, 2014; Toh & Dekay, 2002). When a hotel customer cannot find a room at his booked hotel, he may be disappointed, and his holiday plans may be ruined. Similarly, a person who makes a reservation for a private dinner will be very disappointed if they cannot find a seat when they go to the restaurant, which will seriously negatively affect the customer experience. However, overbooking can sometimes have positive consequences for customers as well. For example, if a hotel customer cannot find a room at the hotel he has booked, he may be directed to a more luxurious hotel by the hotel, which may be an advantage for the customer. Likewise, restaurants may compensate for overbooking by offering free drinks or discounts to their customers, which can increase customer satisfaction.

Overbooking significantly affects both businesses and customers in the tourism industry (Liang & Anderson, 2023). While businesses use this strategy to maximize their revenues and minimize empty capacity, they must also consider customer satisfaction. Customers, on the other hand, should be prepared for possible disappointments in case of overbooking and evaluate the compensation efforts of the businesses. Managing overbooking in a balanced way can produce positive results for both parties.

3. Methodology

This study was carried out according to the decision of the University of South Africa, Scientific Ethics Committee, which met on 20.03.2024 and was numbered 2024/03-01.

3.1. Research design

This study used qualitative research methods to interview 22 restaurant managers. Qualitative research aims to understand people's experiences, perceptions, and emotions deeply. This method allows participants to express their opinions and experiences more freely. The interviews were designed to understand how restaurants implement overbooking strategies, their challenges in the process, and how they manage customer reactions. The research data collection process was carried out face-to-face and through online platforms. Interview questions were open-ended and designed to allow participants to share their experiences in detail.

3.2. Participant profile

The 22 restaurant managers who participated in the research worked in restaurants of different types and sizes operating in Johannesburg. Participants were selected from managers who had at least five years of experience in restaurant management and implemented the overbooking strategy.

3.3. Data collection

Interviews were conducted face-to-face at times convenient for the participants. Each interview lasted an average of 45-60 minutes, and the participants were asked questions about the overbooking strategy, customer reactions, difficulties encountered, and methods of dealing with these difficulties. The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed and analyzed.

3.4. Data analysis

The data obtained was analyzed using the thematic analysis method. The thematic analysis enables the identification of the main themes in the data and the examination of patterns of these themes. The data were coded in this process, and main themes were created by combining similar codes. These themes offered essential clues in understanding the different dimensions of the overbooking strategy and customer reactions.

Research questions:

RQ-1: What are the reasons that push overbooking?

RQ-2: What kind of reaction does the overbooking cause from customers?

RQ-3: What are the solution suggestions for the problems encountered with overbooking?

4. Findings

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of the participants

Participants					
No	Role	Gender	Age	Experi- ence	Education level
P1	GM	Male	45	30	High school
P2	GRM	Female	35	10	University
P3	DGM	Male	39	14	High school
P4	RM	Male	33	16	University
P5	Chief	Male	41	24	High school
P6	Chief	Male	32	14	University
P7	RM	Female	38	18	University
P8	GRM	Female	40	21	High school
P9	RM	Male	36	20	University
P10	RM	Male	35	19	University
P11	GRM	Female	39	17	University
P12	Chief	Male	42	24	High school
P13	Chief	Female	39	22	High school
P14	Chief	Male	34	24	University
P15	GRM	Male	32	11	University

P: Participants, GM: General manager, GRM: Guest relations manager, DGM: Deputy general manager, RM: Reservation manager.

These demographic data show no gender balance within the analyzed group, with men being more represented. The average age of the participants is concentrated in the middle age group, and their professional experience is relatively high. In terms of education level, it is observed that the majority are university graduates. In distributing duties, guest relations manager and chef positions are at the forefront (Table 2).

Data from the interviews provide essential information about restaurant managers' challenges when implementing overbooking strategies and customer reactions. Participants stated that overbooking strategies are especially effective during high-demand periods (P4, P5, P8, P11, P15). However, they also emphasized that this strategy created dissatisfaction among some customer groups (P1, P3, P6, P9, P13). Overbooking also puts severe pressure on restaurant staff. As the customer density increases, the workload and stress level of the staff also increases. This situation can both reduce service quality and lead to employee dissatisfaction.

4.1. Customer reactions

Most participants stated that overbooking practices lead to customer complaints. These participants (P3, P4, P7, P8, P9, P10, P12, P14, P15) stated that dissatisfaction was the most severe difficulty they experienced with customers due to overbooking. Especially customers who make reservations but need help finding a seat experience great disappointment

(P2, P7, P14). Such situations result in customer dissatisfaction and negative feedback. Two participants (P10 and P13) said, "Customers who make a reservation and come to our restaurant and cannot find a seat usually damage our reputation by making negative comments on social media."

Some prominent comments on this theme are as follows:

P-4: "We understand that customers have to wait due to overbooking, but this practice is financially necessary for us. No-show rates are high, and we must compensate for these losses."

P-9: "We always try to provide the best service possible to minimize customer reactions. However, leaving empty tables due to no-show rates means a great loss for our business."

P-13: "Some customers have difficulty understanding the reason for overbooking, so we clearly explain the situation and why we do this practice. Most of the time, our explanations are met with understanding."

P-1: "To minimize negative reactions from customers, we notify them beforehand that we are overbooking. We offer them free drinks or dessert when they have to wait."

P-7: "We do our best to reduce waiting times, but it is impossible to prevent all customer reactions. Still, as a business, we have to take this risk because we cannot afford to lose revenue."

4.2. Customer loyalty

Some participants (P4, P6, P9) stated that the overbooking strategy could negatively affect customer loyalty in the long term. Customers who encounter frequent overbooking tend to turn to other restaurants, questioning their reliability. This can lead to restaurants losing loyal customers. Some prominent comments on this theme are as follows:

P-3: "We know customer loyalty is important, but losing revenue can lead to bigger problems in the long run. We carefully overbook to maintain this balance."

P-10: "We alleviate the effects of overbooking by offering special privileges to our loyal customers. We provide special discounts and priority booking opportunities to make them feel less like this."

P-14: "We explain that overbooking is essential to maintain customer loyalty. Customers who understand how this affects operating costs can tolerate the situation."

P-5: "We win the hearts of our customers with loyalty programs. By offering special offers to customers victimized by overbooking, we ensure that they return."

P-12: "To not lose customer loyalty, we produce fast and effective solutions in overbooking cases. In this way, our customers' loyalty to us increases instead of decreasing."

4.3. Solution suggestions

Some managers (P1, P2, P5, P7, P11, P13) emphasized the importance of effective customer communication in case of overbooking. Restaurant managers have developed

various strategies to minimize customer dissatisfaction caused by overbooking. These strategies include reviewing reservation policies, improving customer information systems, increasing staff training, using customer relationship management (CRM) software, handling customer complaints quickly and effectively, and offering alternative solutions offers (for example, complimentary drinks or discounted meals). Additionally, some restaurants aim to ensure customer satisfaction by providing alternative solutions in case of overbooking (for example, directing them to another branch). Some participants (P2, P5, P8, P12, P15) said, "We track customer complaints through our CRM system and resolve them quickly to minimize customer dissatisfaction."

Some prominent comments on this theme are as follows:

P-2: "To reduce the negative effects of overbooking, we provide customers with more accurate information. For example, we indicate the possibility of wait times when booking and offer alternative options."

P-8: "We make customers more comfortable by creating waiting areas. Additionally, we aim to increase customer satisfaction by offering free drinks and snacks during the waiting period."

P-11: "We are making more accurate predictions by improving our reservation system. We are trying to minimize the effects of overbooking by better-analyzing no-show rates and reservation cancellations."

P-6: "To maintain customer loyalty, we offer them alternative time slots. We also give customers discounts and priority on future bookings in case of overbooking."

P-15: "We organize information campaigns explaining to customers why overbooking is necessary. In this way, our customers can understand this situation better and act more tolerantly."

5. Discussion and conclusion

Food and beverage services and restaurant features are important in international events (Demir & Alper, 2021). Therefore, overbooking in restaurants is an important issue that cannot be ignored. The findings of this study reveal both positive and negative aspects of the overbooking strategy in restaurants. Overbooking can help restaurants maximize their revenue and increase operational efficiency. However, its negative effects on customer dissatisfaction and loyalty should be addressed. Although the overbooking strategy in restaurants has the potential to improve business efficiency, it carries significant risks in terms of customer satisfaction. Therefore, managers must manage this strategy carefully and develop solutions to minimize customer reactions.

Overbooking in restaurants offers some important advantages for businesses (Alexandrov & Lariviere, 2012). First, it helps restaurants minimize revenue loss. Customers who make reservations but don't show up or cancel at the

last minute can leave restaurants with empty tables, resulting in lost potential revenue. Overbooking allows restaurants to compensate for such situations and increase their income by maximizing occupancy rates. On the other hand, overbooking also carries some risks for businesses. Receiving reservations that are within the restaurant's capacity may cause customer dissatisfaction. Customers still looking for a seat despite making a reservation, especially during busy times, may experience great disappointment, damaging the business's reputation. People's complaints and negative comments can cause the restaurant to lose customers in the long run.

The negative aspects of overbooking for customers are obvious (Antonio et al., 2017). Not finding a seat at a restaurant you have booked can be a huge disappointment, especially when a special event or important dinner is planned. This negatively affects the customer experience and may raise questions about the restaurant's reliability. Customers may need help finding another alternative when faced with such a situation (Kimes & Robson 2004). However, overbooking can sometimes have positive consequences for customers. For example, restaurants may try to compensate by offering free drinks, desserts, or discounts to customers who need help finding a seat due to overbooking. Such gestures can increase customer satisfaction and strengthen customers' loyalty to the restaurant. Additionally, customers can be made to feel special with such offers.

Restaurants should manage their overbooking strategy carefully (Tang et al., 2019; Tse & Poon, 2017). While they try to maximize their revenues without ignoring customer satisfaction, they should be careful not to affect customer experience negatively. It is important for restaurant employees to be trained and to approach customers politely and understanding to maintain customer satisfaction in case of overbooking (Kimes, 2004, 2011; Nazifi et al., 2021). Additionally, handling customer complaints quickly and effectively can protect the business's reputation. As a result, overbooking in restaurants requires a careful balance for both businesses and customers. While businesses use this strategy to increase their revenues and minimize empty tables, they should prioritize customer satisfaction. On the other hand, customers should be prepared for possible disruptions in case of overbooking and evaluate the company's compensation efforts. Managing this balance well can produce positive results for both businesses and customers.

5.1. Theoretical implications

This study significantly contributes to the existing literature on implementing overbooking strategies. To fill the gaps in the literature, it details how restaurant managers implement overbooking strategy and their effects on customer reactions. In addition, practical applications of customer relationship management and complaint management are also discussed within the theoretical framework.

This study shows that the overbooking strategy is important in restaurant management in terms of customer

satisfaction and business efficiency. The literature's mention of overbooking and the reasons for its implementation reveal this strategy's potential benefits and risks for businesses. Additionally, this study contributes significantly to understanding the effects of overbooking on customer reactions.

5.2. Practical implications

Restaurant managers should take various measures to increase customer satisfaction when implementing overbooking strategies. This study's findings emphasize the importance of restaurants effectively managing customer complaints using CRM software. Additionally, proactive communication strategies should be developed to minimize customer dissatisfaction. Restaurants must adopt more flexible and customer-focused approaches to manage customer expectations and anticipate possible dissatisfaction.

When implementing an overbooking strategy, restaurant managers should develop strategies that balance customer satisfaction and business efficiency. In this context, improving customer communication and information processes is very important. Additionally, staff training and optimizing operational processes are critical in reducing the negative effects of overbooking.

This study provides valuable information to restaurant managers on implementing overbooking strategies more effectively. As competition increases in the restaurant industry, innovative and customer-oriented strategies are inevitable to increase customer satisfaction and ensure loyalty.

5.3. Limitations and directions for future research

Since this study is limited to restaurants operating in Johannesburg, the generalizability of the findings can be increased by conducting similar studies in different cities and countries. Additionally, studies can be conducted on larger sample groups using quantitative research methods, and different dimensions of the overbooking strategy can be examined in more detail.

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Author contribution

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Ethics committee approval

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Research article

Examining the contribution of tourism to employment in the European Union

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Examining the contribution of tourism to employment in the European Union

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Abstract

This paper explores the significance of the tourism industry in generating employment within the European Union (EU). Using data from tourism industries (2021), employment across various economic activities was analyzed. It provides an overview of employment effects by economic activity, highlighting the substantial role of tourism in the labor market. This study indicates the proportion of individuals employed in the total and selected tourism industries relative to the total non-financial business economy. It also delves into the employment distribution by enterprise size within different economic activities in the EU, providing insights into how small, medium, and large enterprises contribute to employment in tourism compared to other industries. Additionally, this study presents data on hourly labor costs and gross hourly wages and salaries in the accommodation industry for 2020.

Keywords: Tourism, Employment, European Union

1. Introduction

Tourism's economic and social contributions can be examined in a wide range. In economic terms, tourism is an industry that directly generates income (Adeola & Ezenwafor, 2016; Hutchings et al., 2020). Tourists' spending contributes to local economies through accommodation, food and beverage, transportation, and entertainment services. These expenditures also trickle down to other industries in the supply chain, indirectly stimulating economic growth. From a social perspective, tourism increases cultural interaction, improves the living standards of local communities, and contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage. Tourism helps increase tolerance and understanding by building bridges between different cultures.

The economic contributions of tourism can generally have direct and indirect impacts (Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2020; Vukovic et al., 2023). Direct economic impacts occur through tourists' spending on services such as accommodation, food and beverage, transportation, and entertainment. These expenditures provide significant revenue to the local economy. For example, while tourism contributes significantly to GDP in developed countries, it can also be an important driver of growth in developing countries. The indirect economic effects of tourism occur through expenditures and investments reflected in other supply chain industries (Alrwajfah et al., 2020; Dogru et al., 2020). For example,

when a hotel is built, it provides jobs for the construction industry. It contributes to other industries, such as food and beverage suppliers, cleaning services, etc., operating the hotel.

Social contributions are related to the effects of tourism on communities. Tourism contributes to the promotion and preservation of local cultures. Tourists experience cultural elements such as local handicrafts, music, dance, and traditional dishes, which help them understand the value of these cultures. This increases the motivation of local people to protect and maintain their cultural heritage. Additionally, the tourism industry promotes social equality and increases social welfare by creating employment opportunities, especially for women and youth.

Tourism is crucial for its employment creation capacity (Demir et al., 2021; Zhang, 2023). Millions of people worldwide are directly or indirectly employed in the tourism industry. Tourism's contribution to employment generally occurs through jobs in the service industry. Hotels, restaurants, tour guides, travel agencies, and transportation services are the primary sources of employment in the tourism industry. In addition, employment is also created in sub-industries supported by tourism (Camargo et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2022), such as agriculture, fishing, construction, and handicrafts. The contribution of tourism to employment becomes more evident, especially in times of economic crisis and

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regions with high unemployment rates (Figini & Patuelli, 2022; Ladkin et al., 2023).

The tourism industry requires relatively low capital investment and has the potential to create employment quickly. For this reason, tourism policies are considered an important component of the fight against unemployment and economic development strategies. Understanding how tourism's contribution to employment varies in different countries allows us to understand better the place and importance of this industry in the global economic system (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2013; Frye et al., 2020). While in developed countries, tourism is generally associated with high-quality services and luxury consumption patterns, in developing countries, it is seen more as a means of economic development and poverty reduction. In this context, it should be remembered that tourism's employment-creation capacity may vary depending on local economic conditions, tourism policies, and industrial dynamics. Tourism, a rapidly growing and developing industry worldwide, plays a vital role in the economic development strategies of many countries (Ioannides et al., 2021; Jung & Yoon, 2016). It is a dynamic industry that significantly contributes to employment through its economic and social dimensions. In this context, tourism attracts attention not only with its economic return but also with its capacity to create employment. This research aims to determine the effects of the tourism industry on employment and analyze how these effects vary in different countries.

2. Literature

Tourism is one of the important industries providing direct employment worldwide. Direct employment includes working in areas where tourists receive services, such as hotels, restaurants, tour guide services, travel agencies, and transportation services. Many studies (e.g., Demir, & Demir, 2023; Melián-González & Bulchand-Gidumal, 2020; Self et al., 2016) show that the tourism industry has a high capacity to create direct employment. For example, according to World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) reports, the tourism industry provides direct employment to approximately 300 million people worldwide. This amounts to 10% of total global employment. One of the regions with the highest direct employment in the tourism industry is Europe. Europe is one region that attracts the most tourists globally, and the tourism industry is an essential source of employment here. Especially in countries such as Spain, France, Italy, and Greece, the tourism industry significantly contributes to GDP and offers employment opportunities to millions of people (Eurostat, 2024). The Asia-Pacific region also has a rapidly growing tourism industry, and the impact of tourism on direct employment is increasing, especially in countries such as China, Japan, Thailand, and Indonesia.

The tourism industry not only creates direct employment but also indirectly in many industries (Baum et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2024). Indirect employment refers to job opportunities in other industries that develop depending on

tourism (Baum, 2015; Moreo et al., 2023). These industries include agriculture, food and beverage, construction, handicrafts, transportation, logistics, retail, and entertainment (Aprigliano Fernandes et al., 2021; Goh & Jie, 2019). For example, hotel operations create jobs in many industries, from cleaning services to food supply. The agricultural industry is one of the important areas where tourism indirectly creates employment. The food and beverages tourists consume are provided by local agricultural products, which increases employment in the agricultural industry. Similarly, increasing accommodation and food and beverage demands in tourism regions increase the need for local food producers and suppliers. The construction industry is another vital area where tourism creates indirect employment. The construction, maintenance, and repair of tourist facilities create job opportunities for those in the construction industry.

Tourism services have an important role in terms of their impact on employment (Frey & Osborne, 2017; Sibanyoni et al., 2015). Tourism services such as accommodation, food and beverage, entertainment, guidance services, and transportation directly create employment. The quality and diversity of these services increase the attractiveness of tourism, contributing to attracting more tourists and, therefore, creating more employment. Large tourist facilities such as luxury hotels, holiday villages, and thematic parks especially offer wide employment opportunities.

The impact of tourism services on employment becomes stronger by increasing service quality (Law et al., 2013; Ramkissoon & Sowamber, 2020). Training and professional development of employees in the service industry increase the tourism industry's competitiveness and expand employment opportunities. For example, vocational training programs organized for those working in the field of tourism increase tourist satisfaction by improving the service quality in the industry, which in turn contributes to the creation of more employment by increasing the demand for the industry. Sustainable tourism policies should support raising the quality of service in tourism (Autor, 2015; Griffin, 2022), and it is important to include local people in these processes.

Tourism's contribution to employment varies regionally. Since the tourism industry develops differently in different regions, its effects on employment also vary. In developed countries, the tourism industry generally stands out as well-structured and professionally managed, providing high-quality services (Bowen & Morosan, 2018; Marcolin et al., 2019). Tourism contributes to qualified and permanent employment in these countries by offering higher wages and better working conditions. Tourism is important for economic development and poverty reduction in developing countries (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Liu et al., 2021). In these countries, tourism stands out as an industry that generally has lower wages but provides employment to larger masses. Especially in rural and poor regions, employment opportunities provided by tourism significantly contribute to economic and social development by increasing the income level of local people (Sahadev & Islam, 2005; Segovia-Pérez

et al., 2019). Tourism's impact on employment in these regions helps local people become economically empowered and improve their living standards. Regional differences also affect tourism's employment-creation capacity. For example, the Mediterranean region is vital in world tourism, and the tourism industry offers vast employment opportunities. Similarly, tropical regions such as the Caribbean and Southeast Asia have intense tourism activities throughout the year, creating significant employment opportunities in the tourism industry (Fieger et al., 2024; Ou et al., 2009). Tourism contributes significantly to employment in these regions and local economies' growth and development (Khan et al., 2021; Zhang & Zhang, 2021).

3. Methodology

The study received approval from the E.L. University's Publication and Ethics Review Committee under protocol number SSR/2021:27 and adhered to the guidelines outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki for research involving human subjects.

In this research, the data from European Union (EU) countries were evaluated through the employment statistics published by Eurostat (2024) to examine the contribution of tourism to employment. First, a literature review and previous studies were examined to understand the relationship between tourism and employment. In this process, the areas where tourism directly and indirectly creates employment, the impact of tourism services on employment, and regional differences were evaluated. The literature review was carried out to create the theoretical framework and determine the research questions by updating the existing information. The data covers direct and indirect employment rates in the tourism industry (e.g., accommodation services for visitors, other accommodation services, food and beverage serving activities, passenger transportation, travel agencies, other reservation services activities, and other tourism industries).

The research covers the areas where tourism directly and indirectly creates employment, the effects of tourism services on employment, and regional differences. In this way, the contribution of tourism to employment has been evaluated in various dimensions. However, the research also has some limitations. The statistical data used in the data collection process may be incomplete or outdated for some countries, which may affect the accuracy of the analyses. Particularly in developing countries, the lack or low reliability of data on tourism and employment may limit the research results. The results obtained should be interpreted within the framework of the accuracy and timeliness of the available data.

4. Results

The total number of people working in the tourism industry in the EU is more than 11 million (Table 1). More than half of them are employees in food and beverage businesses. These are followed by accommodation, transport, car rental,

and travel agency businesses. Food and beverage (F&B) establishments are crucial in generating employment within the tourism industry. These establishments range from high-end restaurants and cafes to street food vendors and bars, all contributing to the overall tourist experience. F&B establishments require a diverse workforce, including chefs, waitstaff, baristas, bartenders, managers, and cleaners. This creates many job opportunities for individuals with varying skill sets. Moreover, F&B outlets often hire seasonal workers to handle peak tourist seasons, providing temporary employment to local communities and students.

In addition to direct employment, F&B businesses indirectly stimulate job creation by supporting related industries such as agriculture, transportation, and hospitality. The demand for fresh produce, beverages, and logistical services boosts these industries, leading to further employment opportunities. Moreover, well-established F&B outlets can significantly enhance a destination's appeal, attracting more tourists and increasing demand for local services and products. This multiplier effect underscores the critical role of F&B establishments in providing jobs and bolstering the broader economy through tourism.

Figure 1 indicates the share of persons employed in total tourism industries and selected tourism industries in the total non-financial business economy. Greece has the highest tourism employment rate in the general economy (25.7%). The top five countries following Greece are Cyprus (17.5%), Malta (15%), Spain (12%), and Croatia (11.9%). A high proportion of employment in the tourism industry within a country's total employment indicates significant economic and social impacts. The tourism industry requires a diverse workforce, creating numerous job opportunities across various skill levels. Hotels, restaurants, tour operators, and transportation services employ many individuals, contributing to economic growth. High tourism employment directly and indirectly boosts the local economy. Tourists' spending stimulates local businesses, leading to new job opportunities and economic development.

The tourism industry often demands seasonal workers, providing temporary employment for students and those seeking short-term jobs. However, excessive reliance on tourism poses risks. Economic crises, natural disasters, or political instability can lead to sudden drops in tourist arrivals, causing high unemployment rates. Therefore, countries with high tourism employment should maintain economic diversification to mitigate these risks. A high proportion of employment in tourism holds great potential for economic growth and social development. However, a balanced and sustainable approach is essential to ensure long-term stability and resilience.

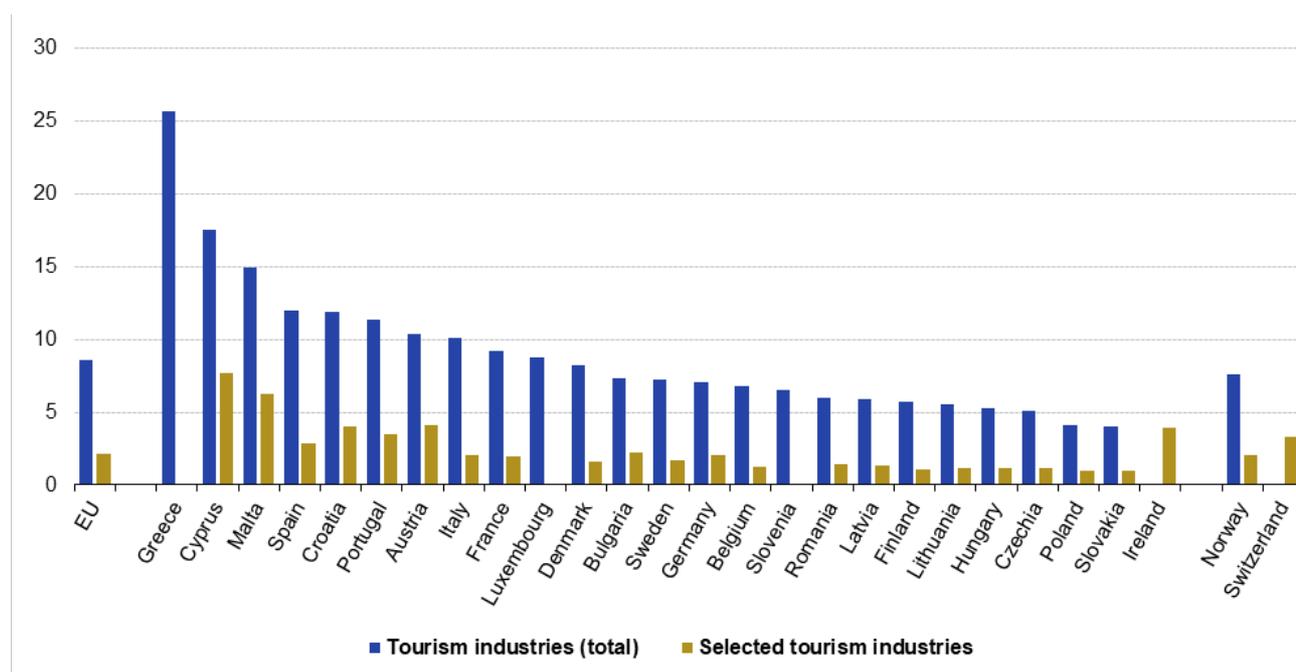
Figure 2 indicates the share of persons employed by enterprise size class by economic activity in EU countries. It is understood that businesses in air transportation generally have more than 250 employees and that there are businesses of different sizes in accommodation and travel services.

Table 1. Number of persons employed by economic activity, 2021

	Total non-financial business economy ⁽¹⁾	Services ⁽²⁾	Tourism industries (total) ⁽³⁾	Transport (total) ⁽⁴⁾	Accommodation (scope of Reg. 692/2011) ⁽⁵⁾	Food and beverage (total) ⁽⁶⁾	Car and other rental (total) ⁽⁷⁾	Travel agency, tour operators (total) ⁽⁸⁾	Selected tourism industries ⁽⁹⁾
EU	130 944 373	55 043 006	11 290 627	1 785 993	2 134 000	6 800 000	208 512	362 122	2 822 481
Belgium	2 989 482	1 465 234	202 233	48 839	23 170	118 058	5 217	6 949	36 612
Bulgaria	1 926 446	680 921	140 425	15 530	35 261	82 235	2 950	4 449	42 774
Czechia	3 768 898	1 236 192	190 456	29 560	28 433	120 135	2 353	9 976	42 560
Denmark	1 805 602	797 631	148 305	25 771	20 673	95 795	2 030	3 465	28 400
Germany	30 113 633	12 445 745	2 132 870	250 014	471 604	1 288 255	43 836	79 161	625 530
Estonia	465 205	189 423	:	:	5 191	15 385	839	1 318	:
Ireland	1 602 369	777 640	:	:	48 623	105 511	2 257	4 575	63 419
Greece	2 732 159	1 346 797	702 029	55 302	158 715	461 511	8 909	17 592	:
Spain	12 569 941	5 818 203	1 509 317	177 350	269 158	988 914	23 082	50 813	356 297
France	16 824 772	7 573 675	1 542 526	360 562	231 666	871 116	40 509	38 673	336 632
Croatia	1 099 216	404 029	130 452	17 312	34 441	68 712	3 676	6 311	44 042
Italy	15 351 442	6 372 960	1 545 706	166 060	253 498	1 064 286	19 640	42 222	316 263
Cyprus	289 386	137 999	50 700	2 312	20 486	25 385	920	1 597	22 266
Latvia	609 293	251 228	35 758	5 494	5 081	21 934	1 738	1 511	8 236
Lithuania	1 068 096	443 857	59 135	10 271	8 860	34 242	3 278	2 484	11 964
Luxembourg	302 179	157 725	26 517	:	:	14 115	:	:	:
Hungary	2 921 317	1 149 524	155 372	19 071	24 838	101 470	5 025	4 968	33 379
Malta	180 761	98 174	27 045	6 029	7 225	11 600	915	1 276	11 337
Netherlands	6 012 245	3 083 113	:	:	81 189	315 719	11 189	:	:
Austria	3 049 514	1 219 101	316 905	39 816	104 315	158 684	3 732	10 358	125 162
Poland	10 217 156	3 284 504	419 911	97 607	77 892	211 516	14 278	18 618	102 985
Portugal	3 567 806	1 600 898	404 129	46 463	100 872	238 478	6 103	12 213	125 397
Romania	4 321 564	1 504 047	260 252	77 673	42 761	126 134	5 510	8 174	60 976
Slovenia	677 344	237 872	44 290	3 903	13 321	24 484	669	1 913	:
Slovakia	1 618 562	578 125	64 849	8 708	10 920	40 714	1 893	2 614	16 375
Finland	1 434 713	632 058	82 238	21 847	7 719	48 013	1 617	3 042	15 888
Sweden	3 424 816	1 556 331	249 458	45 072	46 664	147 163	2 527	8 033	59 635
Norway	1 566 834	628 484	118 586	29 086	24 448	58 512	2 214	4 326	32 767
Switzerland	2 971 020	1 329 473	:	:	69 714	139 336	:	15 464	97 645

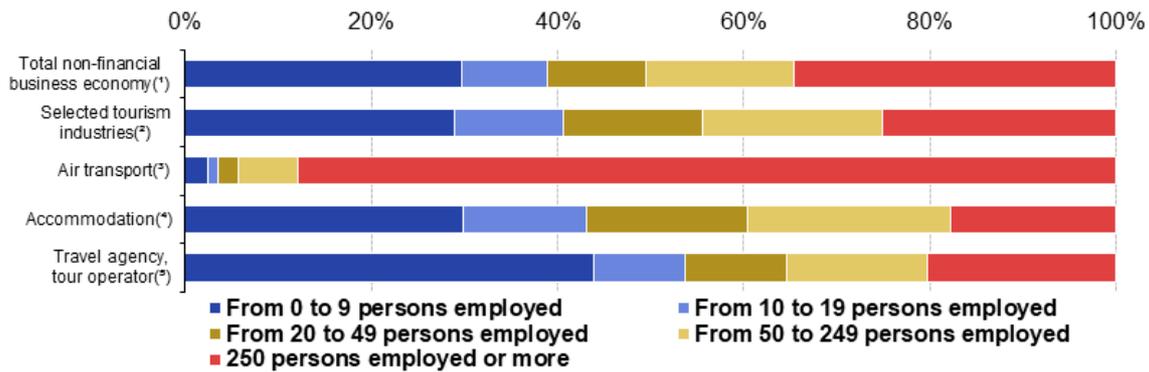
Source: Eurostat (2024).

Figure 1. Persons employed in total tourism industries and in selected tourism industries as share of those employed in total non-financial business economy, 2021



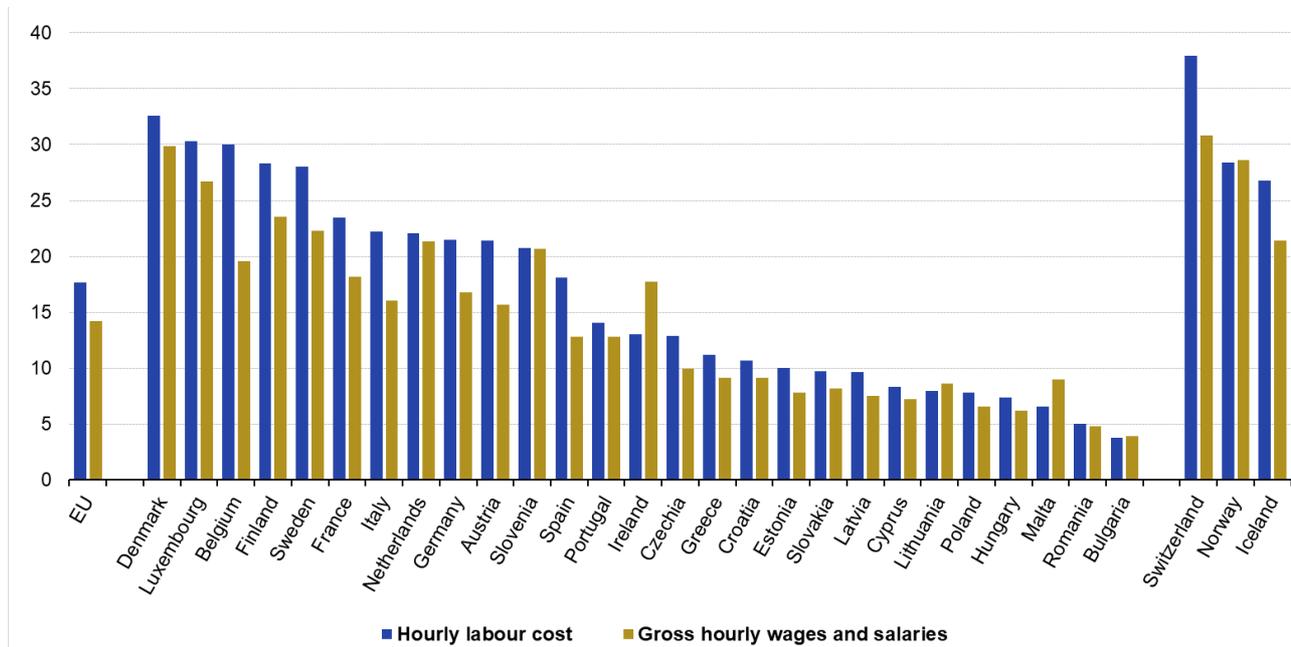
Source: Eurostat (2024).

Figure 2. Share of persons employed by enterprise size class, by economic activity, EU, 2021 (%)



Source: Eurostat (2024).

Figure 3. Hourly labor cost and gross hourly wages and salaries in the accommodation sector (NACE division I55), 2020



Source: Eurostat (2024).

Figure 3. indicates the accommodation industry's hourly labor cost and gross hourly wages and salaries. The highest wages appear to be in Switzerland, Norway, Denmark and Luxembourg. A high wage level in an industry significantly influences employment within that industry. Attracting skilled workers becomes easier as competitive salaries draw individuals seeking better compensation for their expertise and efforts. This influx of talent can boost the industry's productivity and innovation, further enhancing its growth and competitiveness. However, they may also challenge smaller firms and influence pricing dynamics.

5. Conclusion and implications

The literature review has comprehensively discussed the direct and indirect effects of the tourism industry on employment, the employment creation potential of tourism services, and the role of regional differences in these effects. In

addition to creating direct employment, the tourism industry stands out as an essential economic and social development tool by providing indirect employment opportunities in many sub-industries. Increasing service quality, providing vocational training, and involving local people in the process will further strengthen tourism's employment creation capacity.

For employees, working in hotels and similar establishments can provide steady income and job stability, particularly in regions with high tourism rates (Claudio-Quiroga et al., 2023; Sun et al., 2021). Employment in this industry often includes roles in management, housekeeping, front desk operations, and hospitality services, offering diverse career paths. For businesses, thriving accommodation services can lead to increased profitability and opportunities for expansion. Cities benefit from the influx of tourists who spend money on lodging, dining, and local attractions, boosting the local economy. On a national level, a robust accommodation

industry can enhance a country's attractiveness as a tourist destination, leading to greater foreign exchange earnings and improved global economic standing.

Employment in this industry can provide flexible and diverse job opportunities (Baum et al., 2016; Li & Wu, 2022), often in smaller, independently-owned businesses. Employees may enjoy a more personal work environment and engage closely with guests. For businesses, offering unique accommodation experiences can differentiate them in a competitive market and attract niche segments of tourists. Cities with diverse accommodation options can appeal to a broader audience, from budget-conscious travelers to luxury seekers, thereby enhancing tourism revenues. Nationally, the proliferation of varied lodging options can boost tourism, contribute to rural and urban development, and spread economic benefits across regions.

Employees in this industry benefit from numerous job opportunities, from chefs and waitstaff to management and logistics roles. This industry is known for its entry-level positions, providing a stepping stone into the workforce (Liang et al., 2017; Torres et al., 2017). For businesses, thriving food and beverage establishments can generate significant revenue and foster brand loyalty. Cities benefit from a vibrant dining scene that attracts visitors, enhances the local culture, and creates jobs. On a national scale, a strong food and beverage industry can enhance the country's culinary reputation, promote cultural tourism, and stimulate agricultural and food production industries, leading to broader economic growth.

Employment in the passenger transportation industry offers a range of opportunities, from drivers and pilots to maintenance and customer service roles. These jobs often provide good benefits and job security (Autor & Salomons, 2018; Williams, 2021). For businesses, efficient and reliable transportation services can increase patronage and profitability. Cities with robust transportation networks become more attractive to tourists and businesses, fostering economic development and enhancing the quality of life for residents. A well-developed passenger transportation system is crucial for economic integration, regional development, and international trade, contributing significantly to overall economic stability and growth.

Employment in travel agencies and reservation services offers careers in customer service, sales, and travel planning. These roles can provide job satisfaction by helping clients achieve their travel goals. For businesses, streamlining travel arrangements can enhance efficiency and client satisfaction. Cities benefit from increased tourism facilitated by these services and the local employment opportunities they create. A strong network of travel agencies can boost domestic and international tourism, increase foreign exchange earnings, and support allied industries such as hospitality, retail, and entertainment, contributing to economic diversification and resilience. Employment in these industries offers a variety of roles, from tour guides and entertainers to

management and operations staff (Book et al., 2019; Campanella et al., 2017). These jobs appeal to those passionate about culture, sports, and recreation. These industries present opportunities for businesses to capitalize on unique attractions and events, driving profitability and growth. Cities with vibrant tourism industries can become major tourist destinations, boosting local economies and creating many job opportunities. Diverse tourism industries enhance the country's appeal as a travel destination, support cultural preservation, and stimulate economic activity across various industries, fostering overall economic development and cultural exchange.

Regional differences play an important role in determining the effects of tourism on employment. The contribution of tourism to employment in developed and developing countries varies depending on local economic conditions, tourism policies, and industrial dynamics. Therefore, developing tourism policies that consider regional characteristics and needs is important in maximizing the contribution of tourism to employment. As a result, tourism is a dynamic industry that provides employment opportunities to millions worldwide. This industry's employment creation capacity should be considered an important component of economic development strategies. A better understanding of tourism's contribution to employment will contribute to the development of more effective and sustainable policies in this field.

5.1. Limitations and future research directions

The data used to examine the effects of tourism on employment are limited to the publications of Eurostat (2024). Although these methods effectively determine the relationship between tourism and employment, more is needed to reveal causal relationships. Therefore, it is recommended that the contribution of tourism to employment be examined more comprehensively by using more advanced statistical analysis techniques and methods in future research. Additionally, the scope of the research was limited to economic data only. Although tourism's social and cultural effects on employment are also important, this research does not address these dimensions. The employment creation capacity of tourism should be evaluated not only by economic indicators but also by social and cultural impacts. Therefore, future studies need to conduct more comprehensive analyses considering tourism's social and cultural dimensions.

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Author contribution

The author carried out the research design and implementation, analysis, and writing of the article himself without using AI applications.

Disclosure statement

The author reported no potential competing interest.

Ethics committee approval

The study received approval from the E.L. University's Publication and Ethics Review Committee under protocol number SSR/2021:27 and adhered to the guidelines outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki for research involving human subjects.

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Research article

Expected benefits segmentation of international tourists participating in Zimbabwe safari tourism

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Expected benefits segmentation of international tourists participating in Zimbabwe safari tourism

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Abstract

The study aims to categorize tourists visiting national parks in Zimbabwe into clusters that are similar to each other according to their expected benefits and to determine different tourist profiles in terms of the expected benefits. For this purpose, data was collected through convenience sampling between 1 February and 30 April 2019 in Hwange National Park, Mana Pools National Park, and Gonarezhou National Park. It was 307 usable questionnaires were obtained. In the research, descriptive statistics and t-tests, ANOVA, factor analysis, cluster analysis, and chi-square analysis were utilized. Three benefit factors were named "Socialization & self-improvement," "Recognizing nature & wildlife," and "Relaxing." In addition, two market segments (clusters) were identified and termed "socialization seekers" and "nature & wildlife seekers."

Keywords: Market segmentation, Benefit sought, Zimbabwe, Safari tourism, National parks

1. Introduction

Tourism has emerged as a global industry that contributes to the growth of national, regional, and international businesses. Tourism is a significant industry in both developed and developing nations (Goodall & Ashworth, 2013). Tourism plays a major role in Zimbabwe's economy, with safari tourism being one of the developing sectors in the Zimbabwe tourism industry (Woyo & Woyo, 2016; Zhou, 2018). Tourists from all over the world visit Africa for safari tourism opportunities. Zimbabwe, one of the forty-eight countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, is mainly known for its Safari tourism. While the number of international tourist visitors in Zimbabwe was 1.2 million in 2009, it reached 2.1 million in 2015 (Zimbabwe-Visitor Exit Survey Report 2015/16, 2019). Zimbabwe was visited by 2,567,000 international tourists in 2018 and 2,290,000 in 2019. For Zimbabwe, safari tourism is seen as an even more significant driver of the economy as it offers tourists unique game and safari experiences (Manrai et al., 2020).

The "Big 5" animals, namely elephant, lion, leopard, rhinoceros, and buffalo, are essential in safari tourism in the Sub-Saharan Africa Region (Skibins et al., 2016). Spread

over an area of 390,757 km², Zimbabwe is home to more than 100 animal species, including the "Big 5" (except rhinoceros), African wildcat, serval, honey badger, civet, and hyena, and over 400 hundred bird species. This region offers unique safari opportunities such as game drives, safari hunting, sightseeing, walking safaris, hiking, and various accommodation (tents, bungalows, luxury lodges) (Manrai et al., 2020).

This study aims to determine the expected benefits of international safari tourists visiting Zimbabwe's national parks and categorize them into groups based on market segments. Understanding the expected benefits of foreign tourists participating in safari tourism in Zimbabwe is very important for managers in developing the marketing mix and strategies and meeting tourist demands and expectations.

2. Literature

2.1. Market segmentation

Market segmentation is dividing consumers with different needs into groups according to their similar characteristics (Birdir, 2015). Common and data-driven segmentation are

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two different approaches to segmenting the market (Birdir, 2009; Dolnicar et al., 2018). Markets may require separate marketing strategies or mixes for different needs and characteristics (Holloway, 2004). This segmentation divides the market into distinct buyer groups with different behaviors, characteristics, and needs, which may require separate marketing strategies or mixes (Dalgıç et al., 2016; Kotler et al., 2017).

Buyers in the market differ in their wants, resources, positions, purchasing attitudes, and purchasing practices. The fundamental principle of market segmentation is that markets are not homogeneous, and it is commercially essential to distinguish marketing offers for different customer groups (Baker 2003). Through market segmentation, companies can divide large and heterogeneous markets into smaller segments that can be reached more efficiently and effectively with products and services suited to their unique needs (Hunt & Arnett, 2004).

Segmentation can also be applied to different subjects, such as segmenting of business markets, segmenting of international markets, segmenting of consumer markets, and the requirements of effective segmentation. There is no universal consensus on segmentation characteristics in the tourism industry, but variables are generally classified as geographical, demographic, and behavioral (Middleton & Clarke, 2012). Different needs must be fulfilled for a market segment to be helpful to managers. The criteria identified for the usefulness of segments should be considered when selecting one or more of the many possible segments for active targeting (Dolnicar et al., 2018; Dolnicar, 2004).

According to the literature, the marketing segmentation process consists of different stages, with most literature having different numbers of steps (Lopez-Guzman et al., 2018). According to Goyat (2011), the marketing segmentation is a 7-step process. However, some authors state that this process consists of 10 steps (Dolnicar et al., 2018): (1) Deciding on the segment, (2) Determining the ideal target segment, (3) Data collection, (4) Exploring data, (5) Segment extraction, (6) Creation of segment profiles, (7) Describe segments, (8) Select target segment(s), (9) Customize the marketing mix, (10) Evaluation and monitoring. On the other hand, some studies approach the market segmentation process in three stages: (1) research phase, (2) analysis phase, and (3) group- ing phase (Kotler, 2000).

Consumers can be grouped in various ways based on geographic, demographic, psychographic, and behavioral variables (Baloglu et al., 2004; Nduna, 2017; Papadimitriou & Gibson, 2008). However, other types of segmentation include situational segmentation, sought benefit segmentation, usage rate, user status, and loyalty status segmentation (Armstrong et al., 2017; Frochot, 2005; Marques et al., 2010; Won & Hwang, 2009). A market segment consists of consumers who respond similarly to given marketing efforts. For example, tourists who like to travel independently and have a luxurious experience regardless of price represent a

specific segment. In contrast, tourists who care about their budgets will form another part, and an organization should be aware of all these variations. It is a challenge to offer the same service as people have different reasons for traveling (Dolnicar et al., 2018; Holloway & Humphreys, 2016; Huang & Sarigöllü, 2012; Middleton & Clarke, 2012; Van Der Merwe & Saayman, 2008).

2.2. Safari tourism

Safari tourism takes tourists to the African continent to explore culture, geography, landscape, and wildlife (Akama et al., 2011; Stone & Stone, 2013; Stone, 2015; Stone, 2017). Safari is a term from Swahili, meaning travel, and is the most common term for wildlife viewing tourism (Mbaiwa, 2007). When used in English or German during colonial times, it referred to hunting expeditions (UNWTO, 2015). It is a form of tourism that can be attended all year round, regardless of the season. However, seasonal factors such as rain or drought impact the number of animals seen on a given day. Safari has changed over the years and has become one of the largest industries in East and Southern Africa, contributing to citizens' economies and social well-being through job creation (Carmago & Maingi, 2015). Safari tourism contributes more to the economy than traditional industries such as farming in Southern African countries (Mbaiwa, 2007; Stone & Stone, 2013; Stone, 2017).

Safari experiences include guided tours, mobile, self-drive, walking, fly-in and fly-back safaris, elephant watching, river cruises, primate viewing, horseback safaris, hot air ballooning, night game drives, and photography (Akama et al., 2011; Stone & Stone, 2013). African wildlife Safaris have started to focus more on the big five animals: buffalo, elephant, leopard, lion, and rhino. Safari tourism benefits many stakeholders, particularly national parks, local tourism providers, and local communities. Safari tourism contributes considerably to the local communities, considering the poor living conditions experienced by most Africans. It also employs host communities and contributes 80% of all African sales. On a typical safari tour, the average stay is ten days, the average tour price is \$433 per person per day, and the daily out-of-pocket expenditure is \$55 (UNWTO, 2015). With such economic and social benefits, safari tourism is now highly competitive between Eastern and Southern African countries. However, effective marketing can make a destination successful, and therefore, through market segmentation, the needs of current and potential tourists can be better met.

2.3. Zimbabwe tourism industry

Several iconic national parks in Africa attract millions of tourists, such as Table Mountain, The Serengeti, Hwange, and Gorongosa National Park (Nhamo et al., 2023). National parks have played a significant role in Zimbabwe's tourism industry. In general, the National parks sector consists of Safari tourism. In the last 30 years, Zimbabwe has seen economic, social, political, technological, and climatic changes

in the management of its national parks. Zimbabwe has 11 national parks, which the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority manages. The Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority operates under the Parks and Wildlife Act, 1975 Act of Parliament (Child et al., 2008; Matura & Mapira, 2018). Zimbabwe National Parks cover approximately an area of 5 million hectares, which is about 13% of Zimbabwe's total land area. Most parks are in economically deprived areas with hot and mountainous climatic conditions (Cameron, 2018; Mutanga et al., 2017; Nyaruwata & Runyowa, 2017).

Zimbabwe is also part of the Peace Parks initiative in South Africa. The Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park is a collaboration that involves the management of shared natural resources between South Africa, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. Gonarezhou, which was also included in the current study, is part of the cross-border initiative, has a size of 5000 km², and the name "Gonarezhou" means "Place of Many Elephants." Mana Pools is part of the Lower Zambezi initiative between Zambia and Zimbabwe. Mana Pools is a UNESCO World Heritage Site famous for its beautiful flora and fauna, home to a wide variety of mammals, over 350 bird species, and aquatic wildlife. It is home to more than 16,000 buffalo and more than 12,000 elephants. Hwange National Park is the largest park in Zimbabwe, covering approximately 14650 square kilometers. Hwange boasts a wide range of wildlife, with over 100 species of mammals and nearly 400 species of birds. Hwange is renowned for its distinct elephant sounds, and the Park's elephant population is one of the largest in the world (Cameron, 2018; Mutanga et al., 2017).

3. Methodology

This study was produced from Emmanuel Brighton T. Muraicho's thesis, which was prepared under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Kemal Birdir at Mersin University. The Ethics Committee Approval was obtained from OU Research Center, Milton Keynes, UK, with the decision numbered 2024/8-1E dated 19.08.2024.

This research aims to categorize tourists visiting the national parks in Zimbabwe based on the expected benefits and identify different tourist characteristics in terms of the benefits they expect. The research was conducted using a quantitative research design, and both descriptive and exploratory research models were used.

3.1. Research questions

RQ₁: What are the demographic and travel characteristics of tourists participating in safari tours in Zimbabwe's national parks?

RQ₂: What factors influence tourists' decision to participate in safari tours in Zimbabwe's national parks?

RQ₃: What are the dimensions of the benefits tourists expect from tours in Zimbabwe's national parks?

RQ₄: How many segments does the tourist market in

Zimbabwe's national parks consist of according to the expected benefit from safari tours? What are the profiles of these segments?

RQ₅: What are the complaints and likes of tourists participating in safari tours in Zimbabwe's national parks?

3.2. Population and sample of the study

The research population consists of tourists who visited Zimbabwe for summer vacation. In 2018, 2,579,974 foreign tourists visited Zimbabwe. It was noted that the National Parks in the country attracted 957,752 visitors in 2018. 33,305 foreign tourists visited the Hwange National Park, 3,041 tourists visited Mana Pools National Park, and Gonarezhou National Park was visited by 2,554 foreign tourists (Letley et al., 2019; Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, 2019). However, due to time constraints, the study sample only includes tourists who visited Hwange, Mana Pools, and Gonarezhou National Parks in January, February, and March 2019. The tourists participating in the study on these dates from the study sample. The research used a non-probability convenience sampling method (Fricker, 2008).

3.3. Data collection tool

The relevant literature was reviewed to collect data, and the questionnaire was adapted. To determine the expected benefits of a safari holiday, a scale developed benefiting from the work of Akama & Kieti (2003), Huang & Sarigöllü (2012), Jang et al. (2002), Nduna & Zyl (2017). This first scale consists of 17 items. The second scale in the survey aimed to determine the factors influencing foreign tourists' decision to choose Zimbabwe's National as their destination, and it consisted of a total of 19 items. The scale was adapted from the studies of Huang & Sarigöllü (2012), Jang et al. (2002), and Nduna & Zyl (2017). Both scales are importance scales and are rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The survey consists of 23 questions in total. The questions in the survey focus on determining the demographic and travel characteristics of tourists, and the questions are open-ended, closed-ended, and multiple-choice. The questionnaire was administered in Turkish and English. The survey was administered to tourists visiting the Gonarezhou, Hwange, and Mana Pools national parks during their summer holidays through face-to-face and web-based Hypertext Markup Language (HTML).

The study's pilot test was conducted in January 2019 on a group that shared similar characteristics with the target population. According to the data obtained from foreign tourists, the Cronbach's Alpha value of the scale measuring the expected benefits of a safari holiday was determined as 628, and the Cronbach's Alpha value of the second scale with 19 items was calculated as 855. Factor analysis was performed to determine the construct validity of the scales. The sample size was sufficient, with 307 questionnaires deemed sufficient for the study, and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test showed a value of .810. Bartlett's test was significant for

the scale "Expected benefits from Safari tour during the summer vacation." As a result of factor analysis, three factors were identified that explained 55.211% of the total variance. On the second scale, "Factors influencing tourists' decision to choose Zimbabwe's National Parks for a Safari tour," the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test was found to be .827, and Bartlett's test was significant, resulting in a three-factor structure, explaining a total variance of 54.64%. The study used different analyses, such as arithmetic mean, mode, median, and standard deviation, to evaluate data. In addition, t-test, ANOVA, factor analysis, and clustering analysis were applied.

4. Findings

4.1. Research question 1

What are the demographic and travel characteristics of tourists participating in safari tours in Zimbabwe's national parks?

The demographic characteristics of foreign tourists visiting Zimbabwe's national parks for Safari Tourism during summer vacation are presented in Table 1. According to the research findings, of the tourists who participated in the study, 49.2% are "women," and 48.9% are "men." When the ages of the tourists participating in the research were examined, it was determined that 44.3% were between the ages of "20-37" and 39.1% were between the ages of 38-53. Regarding marital status, it was determined that 41% of the tourists were "married," and 45.6% were "single," 11.4% emphasized that they live together. Regarding educational background, 42% of the tourists hold "undergraduate" degrees, and 26.7% are "master's" graduates. 18.9% of the tourists participating in the research are "college" graduates, and 10.4% are "high school" graduates.

In terms of occupation, 21.5% of the tourists are "students," 15% are "self-employed," 12.7% are "managers," 11.7% are "civil servants," 11.4% are "other," 9.8% are "academics," and 8.5% are "artists/mechanics/workers". When the income levels of foreign tourists visiting national parks were evaluated, it was found that 51.1% were in the "middle" income group and 28% were in the "upper middle" income group. Additionally, it was determined that 10.4% of the participants were in the "lower middle" income group, and 8.5% were in the "high" income group. When the nationalities of foreign tourists participating in the research are analyzed, the proportion of British tourists visiting national parks in Zimbabwe is 16.6%. South African tourists follow them at 14%, Americans at 11.1%, Australians at 9.1%, 6.5% Germans, 4.9% Canadians, 3.9% Chinese, Mozambicans at 3.9%, South Koreans at 2%, and 1.3% Japanese.

When the accommodation places used by foreign tourists visiting Zimbabwe National Parks for Safari Tour were evaluated, it was determined that 35.8% stayed in "Safari Lodge." Additionally, 25.1% of the participants are in "other" accommodation, with 11.7% in "4-star" hotels, 9.1%

in "5-star" hotels, 8.5% in "3-star" hotels, and 7.8% with "friends/relatives". The travel characteristics of the tourists participating in the research are as follows: 38.1% of the tourists spent an average of 4-6 days per year on safari tourism. On the other hand, 30.3% of the tourists spent "1-3" days on safaris, 18.9% spent "7-9" days, and 10.7% spent "10 days or more". The percentage of tourists who had previously visited Zimbabwe for holiday purposes was 34.2%. The percentage of tourists coming to Zimbabwe for the first time with this trip is 63.8%. 11.7% of the tourists who participated in the survey stated that they had visited Zimbabwe "7 times or more" before. 10.4% of the tourists stated that they had come to Zimbabwe "1-3 times," and 9.8% said they came to Zimbabwe "4-6 times". On the other hand, 76.2% of Safari visitors said they would like to revisit Zimbabwe, while 21.8% will not visit Zimbabwe's national parks after their last tour.

It was determined that 59.3% of the tourists participated in the Safari Tour through tour packages, while 38.3% did not use tour packages. It was determined that 30.3% of the tourists went on vacation with their "friends," followed by those who went on holiday with their spouses, with a rate of 15.6%. The rate of tourists who go on vacation "alone" is 11.4%, and 8.5% "with their families." Regarding the total amount of money spent on this holiday, it was determined that 25.7% of the tourists spent "\$1-1000". The percentage of tourists spending "over \$4001" is 23.5%. This is followed by tourists spending between "\$1001-2000" with 19.9% and between "\$2001-3000" with 13.7%. Additionally, it was determined that 12.1% of the tourists spent between "3001-4000\$". When analyzing the tourists' satisfaction with Zimbabwe national parks, it was found that 45.6% are "delighted" and 36.2% are "satisfied." Therefore, 81.8% of the tourists were satisfied with the national parks. The percentage of those unsatisfied with the national parks is 4.2%, and the rate of those dissatisfied is 3.3%. The rate of those who are undecided is 8.8%.

When the activities of the tourists during their holidays are examined, the top five activities are (1) "safari walks" with a percentage of 64.2%, (2) "bird watching" with 52.1%, (3) "walking and camping" with 39.7% (4) "game viewing (painted dogs, lions)" with 34.8 and (5) "river rafting" with 28.3%. Other activities included "fishing" with 27.7%, "safari education" with 13.6%, "hiking trails" with 12.1%, and 11.7% visiting local and regional events". The most used source of information in choosing a holiday was "travel agencies" with 63.8%. This was followed by "internet/social media" with 56.7%, "friends/family/colleagues" with 40.7%, "travel magazine" with 40.1% and 36.8% "documents/movies."

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of foreign tourists

	n	%		n	%
<i>Gender</i>			<i>Marital status</i>		
Female	151	49,2	Single	140	45,6
Male	150	48,8	Married	126	41,0
Unspecified	6	2	Living together	35	11,4
Total	307	100	Unspecified	6	2
			Total	307	100
<i>Age</i>			<i>Teaching status</i>		
18-19	21	6,8	High school	32	10,4
20-37	136	44,3	College	58	18,9
38-53	120	39,1	Undergraduate	129	42
54 and above	21	6,8	Postgraduate	82	26,7
Unspecified	9	2,9	Unspecified	6	2
Total	307	100	Total	307	100
<i>Nationality</i>			<i>Profession</i>		
Germany	20	6,5	Academician	30	9,8
English	51	16,6	Self-employment	46	15
South African	43	14	Craftsman/Mechanic/Worker	26	8,5
Chinese	12	3,9	Officer	36	11,7
Canadian	15	4,9	Retired	9	2,9
Mozambican	12	3,9	Student	66	21,5
South Korean	6	2	Unemployed	14	4,6
Australian	28	9,1	Manager	39	12,7
Japanese	4	1,3	Others	35	11,4
American	34	11,1	Unspecified	6	2
Others	69	22,5	Total	307	100
Unspecified	13	4,2			
Total	307	100			
<i>Income status</i>			<i>Where did you stay this holiday?</i>		
Below-middle	32	10,4	5-star hotel	28	9,1
Middle	157	51,1	4-star hotel	36	11,7
Above-middle	86	28	3-star hotel	26	8,5
High	26	8,5	Friends/Relatives	24	7,8
Unspecified	6	2	Safari Lodge	110	35,8
Total	307	100	Others	77	25,1
			Unspecified	6	2
			Total	307	100

Table 2. Factors influencing tourists' decision to go on a safari tour in Zimbabwe National Parks

Factors	Load	Eigen-value	Explained variance	Mean	Reliability coefficient
<i>I. Comfort and affordability</i>					
6.Friendly and responsive parking staff	,564	3,941	30,318	3,7749	,722
9.Value of money	,798				
15.Affordable admission price	,733				
17. Prices in park restaurants and shops	,669				
<i>II. Security and Quality Service</i>					
1.Adaptation of the infrastructure to the natural environment	,708	1,599	15,448	4,1462	,700
2.First aid services in the national park	,777				
3.Security and security services in the national park	,741				
4.Knowledge level of guides/park staff	,514				
10. Accommodation Quality	,523				
<i>III. Access to entertainment and education</i>					
8.Nightlife and entertainment	,619	1,365	8,874	3,3372	,738
14.Information panels about flora and fauna	,730				
18.Number and accessibility of parking spaces	,663				
19.Information panels about cultural and historical features	,776				

Varimax rotated principal component analysis. Total variance explained: %54,640; KMO: ,827; Chi-Square for Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: 1013,290; SD: 78; p<0.0001; Overall average: 3.7830; Cronbach's Alpha for the entire scale: ,804; Reaction Categories: 1: Not important at all ... 5: Very important.

Table 3. Factor analysis according to the expected benefits of the foreign tourists visiting Zimbabwe National Parks from the safari tour

Factors	Load	Eigen-value	Explained variance	Mean	Reliability coefficient
<i>I. Socialization and self-improvement</i>					
4. Interact with local people during my vacation	,833	4,213	32,411	3,5269	,773
3. Meeting people from different cultural backgrounds	,748				
11. To learn about new cultures on holiday	,664				
5. Meet people looking for similar holiday experiences	,631				
15. To increase my knowledge on this holiday	,522				
<i>II. Getting to know nature and wildlife</i>					
16. Learn about wildlife on the go	,830	1,599	12,303	4,0108	,729
14. Learning nature during the journey	,721				
8. Spending time in a natural environment	,703				
17. Enjoying an environmental ecology trip	,519				
<i>III. Relaxation</i>					
13. Experience a change from a busy business life	,784	1,365	10,496	3,9668	,649
12. To experience a speed change from my daily life	,741				
6. Rejuvenating after this visit	,581				
2. To discover new places	,522				

Varimax rotated principal component analysis. Explained total variance: %55,211; KMO Sample Adequacy: ,810; Chi-Square for Bartlett's Sphericity Test: 1105,335; s.d. 78; p<0.0001; Overall mean: 3,8110; Cronbach's Alpha for the whole scale: ,822 Reaction categories: 1: Not important at all ... 5: Very important.

Table 4. Cluster analysis applied to benefit dimensions

Factor	Marketing segment I (n=156)	Marketing segment II (n=144)	F value	I-II	I-III	II-III
Socializing and self-improvement	17.42	11.52	471.938	***	***	***
Getting to know nature and wildlife	14.03	12.18	49.284	***	***	***
Clusters	13.87	11.63	75.332	***	***	***
Clusters	Those seeking socialization	Those seekers of nature and wildlife				

***p<0.001; *The mean values are calculated based on a 5-point Likert scale (1: Not important at all ... 5: Very important)

Table 5. Distribution of Market Segments by Gender

Gender	Those seeking socialization		Those seeking nature and wildlife	
	f	%	f	%
Female	75	48,1	76	50,3
Male	81	51,9	68	49,7
Total	156	100	144	100

Not: X²: 0,662; SD: 1; p=0,416

Table 6. Distribution of market segments by nationality

Nationality	Those seeking realization		Those seeking nature and wildlife		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Germany	11	7,1	9	6,5	20	6,8
English	25	16,2	26	18,7	51	17,4
South African	21	13,6	22	15,8	43	14,7
Chinese	9	5,8	3	2,2	12	4,1
Canadian	11	7,1	4	2,9	15	5,1
Mozambican	6	3,9	6	4,3	12	4,1
South Korean	3	1,9	3	2,2	6	2,0
Australian	11	7,1	17	12,2	28	9,6
Japanese	2	1,3	2	1,4	4	1,4
American	16	10,4	18	12,9	34	11,6
Others	39	25,3	29	20,9	68	23,2
Total	154	100	139	100	293	100

Note: X²: 8,638; SD: 10; p=0,567

Table 7. Distribution of market segments by satisfaction levels

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with this national park	Socializing seekers		Nature and wildlife seekers	
	f	%	f	%
Not satisfied at all	6	3,8	7	4,9
Not Satisfied	6	3,8	4	2,8
Undecided	10	6,4	17	11,8
Satisfied	56	35,9	54	37,5
Very satisfied	78	55,7	62	43,1
Total	156	100	144	100

Not: X2: 3.683a; SD.: 4; p=0,451

Table 8. Analysis results of foreign tourists' likes and complaints about Zimbabwe National Parks

(n=260)	n	%	(n=259)	n	%
Preferences of tourists who go on a safari tour in Zimbabwe's national parks			Complaints of tourists who go on a safari tour in Zimbabwe's national parks		
-variety of animals	101	38,8	Transportation and infrastructure	74	28,5
-Good management	80	30,7	-Everything is expensive	59	22,7
-Good parks	60	23	-Aggressive staff	31	11,9
-Delicious food	42	16,1	-Unable to see animals	21	0,8
-Knowledgeable staff	31	11,9	-No electricity	11	0,4
-Safety	24	0,9	-No petrol	8	0,3
-Well-trained guides	19	0,7	-Animals causing damage to belongings	9	0,3
-Weather	3	0,1	-Lack of water	7	0,2
			-Poachers	4	0,1

Note: The total exceeds 100% because multiple options were selected.

4.2. Research question 2

What factors influence tourists' decision to participate in safari tours in Zimbabwe's national parks?

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to determine the factors influencing tourists' decision to go on a safari tour in Zimbabwe's national parks. While conducting the factor analysis, attention was paid to the items having a correlation level of .500 or higher, and the factors with an eigenvalue more significant than one were processed. The validity of the factor analysis is assessed through the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test, where a KMO test score above 60% is desired (Nakip, 2003). In the study, the KMO sampling adequacy ratio of the scale of "Factors Influencing Tourists' Decision to Go on a Safari Tour in Zimbabwe National Parks" was determined to be 82% (Table 2).

Table 2 shows the findings of the factor analysis. The analysis determined that the items were grouped into three factors. The total variance explained is 54.64%. The factors were named "comfort and affordability," "safety and quality service," and "access to entertainment and education."

4.3. Research question 3

What are the dimensions of the benefits tourists expect from tours in Zimbabwe's national parks?

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to determine the dimensions of the benefits expected from the safari tour by foreign tourists making safari tours in Zimbabwe's national parks. It was observed that the expected benefits were

grouped under three dimensions (Table 3). In the factor analysis, it was determined that four items did not fit into any factor. The remaining 13 items were subjected to factor analysis again. According to the factor analysis, the KMO test score for the scale was 81% (Table 3). The total variance explained was determined as 55.211%. The factors were named "socialization and self-development", 'knowing nature and wildlife' and 'relaxing.'

4.4. Research question 4

How many segments does the tourist market in Zimbabwe consist of according to the expected benefit from safari tours? What are the profiles of these segments?

Hierarchical Clustering and K-means Cluster analyses were performed on the three benefit factors obtained through factor analysis to find the answer to the fourth research question. In the study, a hierarchical clustering analysis was conducted first. Upon examining the clustering coefficients, it was determined that there could be either 3 or 4 clusters. Subsequently, K-means cluster analysis resulted in 2 market segments (clusters). While forming these clusters, care was taken to ensure that each cluster contained a minimum of 30 participants. The clusters were named according to the factor with the highest mean within each cluster. The results of the clustering analysis are presented in Table 4.

Market Segment I: The first market segment comprises 156 foreign tourists. This segment is named "seekers of socialization" because the factor with the highest mean among the three factors in this market segment is "socializing and self-improvement" ($\bar{x} = 17.42$). The other factors have lower means.

Market Segment II: The second tourist market segment is named "seekers of nature and wildlife ($\bar{x} = 12.18$)" because it has the highest mean among the dimensions considered. This segment is composed of 144 foreign tourists. It has been found that tourists in this segment try to relax, socialize, and engage in self-improvement during the safari tour.

The research showed that 48.9% of international safari tourists are male, and 49.2% are female. However, when considering the distribution of gender within market segments, it is noted that the proportion of female respondents who are "seeking socialization" was 48.1%, and 51.9% were male (Table 5). On the other hand, in the "seekers of nature and wildlife" segment, 50.3% are females, and 49.7% are males. Based on these results, during marketing activities, it can be concluded that both male and female participants should be equally addressed in both market segments.

The characteristics of the market segments based on age show that the ages of foreign tourists in both market segments are close to each other. It was determined that 36.5% of the foreign tourists "seeking socialization" foreign tourists were "married," 35.3% were "single," and 10.3% were "living together." On the other hand, among the "seekers of nature and wildlife" foreign tourists, 47.2% are "married," 29.9% are "single," and 13.2% are "living together." According to the research, among the foreign tourists in the "seekers of socialization" market segment, 41.7% are "undergraduate" graduates, 25.6% are "graduate" (master's) graduates, 20.5% are "associate degree" graduates and 9.6% are "high school" graduates. On the other hand, among the foreign tourists in the "seekers of nature and wildlife" market segment, 43.1% are "undergraduate" graduates, 20.8% are "graduate" (master's) graduates, 18.1% are "associate degree" graduates and 11.8% are "high school" graduates. According to these results, it can be said that marketing managers should primarily focus their marketing activities mainly on "undergraduate," "graduate," and "college" graduates for both market segments.

Based on the cross-tabulation results shown in Table 6, it is determined that most foreign tourists in both market segments are "students" and have "middle" income levels. When analyzing the market segments according to nationality, it is observed that tourists from "other" nationalities make up the most considerable portion in both market segments. The highest proportions of tourists in the "seekers of socialization" segment are tourists from the following nationalities: "British (16.2%)", "South African (13.6%)", "American (10.4%)", "Australian (7.1%)", "German (7.1%)", "Canadian (7.1%)", "Chinese (5.8%)", "Mozambican (3.9%)", "South Korean (1.9%)", and "Japanese (1.3%)". When examining the nationalities of foreign tourists in the "seekers of nature and wildlife" market segment, the following proportions have been determined, respectively: "British (18.7%)", "South African (15.8%)", "American (12.9%)", "Australian (12.2%)", "German (6.5%)", "Mozambican (4.3%)", "Canadian (2.9%)", "Chinese

(2.2%)", "South Korean (2.2%)", and "Japanese (1.4%)". Table 7 shows the satisfaction of foreign tourists who have taken a safari vacation in Zimbabwe's National Parks. In the, 55.7% of foreign tourists in the "Seeking Socialization" segment expressed that they were "very satisfied." The percentage of foreign tourists who stated they were "satisfied" is 35.9%. As for the foreign tourists in the "nature and wildlife seekers" segment, 43.1% of them mentioned being "very satisfied." Following them are 37.5% of foreign tourists who reported being "satisfied."

4.5. Research question 5

What are the complaints and likes of tourists participating in safari tours in Zimbabwe's national parks?

After visiting Zimbabwe's national parks during the summer vacation, foreign tourists who participated in the research were asked open-ended questions about what aspects of Zimbabwe's national parks they liked or had complaints about. The results are shown in Table 8. It was determined that the most liked aspect by the foreign tourists who took a safari tour in Zimbabwe's national parks was the variety of animals (38.8%). 30.7% of the tourists liked the "good management," 23% liked the "good parks," 16.1% liked the "delicious food," 11.9% liked the "knowledgeable staff," 0.9% liked the "security," 0.7% liked the "educated guides," and 0.1% liked the "weather."

When the data relating to the complaints of foreign tourists was analyzed, it was noted that the most complained-about aspect was "transportation and infrastructure" (28.5%). The percentage of participants who stated that everything was expensive is 22.7% of the complaints. This was followed by 11.9% of the participants complaining about "aggressive staff" and 0.8% complaining about "not being able to see animals." In addition, 0.4% of tourists complained about "lack of electricity," 0.3% about "lack of fuel," 0.3% about "animals damaging belongings," 0.2% about "experiencing water scarcity," and 0.1% about "the presence of people hunting in the national parks."

5. Results, discussion and recommendations

African countries have long supported biodiversity conservation through the sustainable use of natural resources and have achieved tremendous success in protecting and restoring wildlife populations (UNWTO, 2015). Safari tourism has become immensely popular in Africa as it drives sustainable development (UNWTO, 2015). This study aims to identify the expected benefits of foreign tourists visiting Zimbabwe's national parks by categorizing them into similar groups, profiling them, and offering solutions and suggestions based on the findings obtained from the evaluations of the data obtained from 307 international tourists.

It was determined that the ratio of "female" and "male" foreign tourists visiting Zimbabwe and participating in safari tours is evenly distributed, with 45.6% being "single." Most

fall within the age group of "20-37." Based on the nationalities of the foreign tourists participating in the study, it was observed that British tourists had the highest percentage of 16.6%. "South Africans" followed with 14%, and Americans with 11.1%. Approximately 42% of the tourists were university graduates. Regarding income levels of foreign tourists visiting the national parks, 51.1% were confirmed to be "middle-income" tourists. In addition, 15% of the foreign tourists were "self-employed." Similar demographic results were found in Huang & Sarigöllü (2012) research on tourists visiting Latin America. They noted that more women than men visited Latin America, with most visitors falling within the "20-34" age group, followed by the "35-54" age group. Most tourists had received a university education and were of middle-income level.

When the travel characteristics of the tourists are examined, it was found that most of the tourists participating in the safari tour spend an average of "4-6 days (38.1%)" per year for safari tourism. While 34.2% of the tourists had previously visited Zimbabwe National Parks for holiday purposes, 63.8% had never been to Zimbabwe before. It was found that 59.3% of foreign tourists purchased package tours during their visit to Zimbabwe's national parks. The rate of tourists acting individually is 38.8%. It has been determined that the decision-making process for 27.7% of the tourists took "1-4 months".

It has been determined that 63.8% of foreign safari tourists use "travel agencies" as information for their travel preferences. 30.3% of foreign safari tourists went with their "friends." For accommodation preferences, 35.8% of the tourists stayed in a "safari lodge," and 25.1% preferred "other" accommodation facilities. During the safari tour, 64.2% of the tourists participated in "walking safari," 52.1% in "bird watching," and 39.7% in "hiking and camping" activities. Most tourists spend between "\$1-1000" during the trip. Additionally, the % of tourists who are very satisfied and satisfied with the national park is 81.8%.

In the research, factor analysis was used to determine the characteristics that influence the decision-making of foreign tourists who spend their summer holidays in Zimbabwe's national parks and participate in safari tours. Three factors were identified based on the results of the factor analysis. These are 1) comfort and affordability, 2) safety and quality service, and 3) access to entertainment and education. Jang et al.'s (2002) study has similar findings.

Factor analysis was applied to determine the benefits expected from the safari tour by foreign tourists who take safari tours in national parks during the summer vacation, and 3 benefit factors were determined. The factors obtained were (1) socialization and self-improvement, (2) understanding nature and wildlife, and (3) relaxation. A similar study by Nduna (2017) in the literature obtained nine benefit factors named (1) Spending time with loved ones, (2) Social bonds, (3) Relaxation, (4) Natural environment, (5) Outdoor adventures, (6) History, (7) Culture, (8) Escape and (9) Learning, and factors 2, 3 and 4 support the factors in this study.

Cluster analysis determined the number of market segmentations that could be created according to the benefits expected from the Safari tour by foreign tourists visiting Zimbabwe's national parks. According to the cluster analysis results, two market segments were obtained. The clusters were named (1) Socialization seekers and (2) Nature and wildlife seekers. Nduna and Zyl (2017) studied the benefit segmentation of tourists visiting Mpumalanga in South Africa. In the research, two segments were identified, and the segments were named "nature-escapists" and "culture-naturalist."

Looking at the characteristics of the market segments obtained, the "socialization seekers" segment is composed of British, South African, and American tourists. It was also determined that the majority of the participants in this segment are "male," "married," and "20-37" age group. They are predominantly "students" with an "average" income. The 'nature and wildlife seekers' market segment comprises British, South African, and Australian tourists. The majority of the tourists are "female" and "married" and are also in the "20-37" age group. Similarly, most are "students" and "middle class" income groups. Therefore, marketing managers can diversify their promotional activities by considering these features in their marketing activities for both markets.

Based on the travel characteristics of tourists, the following differences have been noted in these two market segments: "Socialization Seekers" segment: most of the foreign tourists in this segment have not visited Zimbabwe's national parks for safari tourism before, but they have previously visited Zimbabwe for vacation purposes "4-6 times". Most of the tourists in this segment participate in safari tourism for a minimum of "4-6 days" per year. Most tourists travel with their friends, opt for package tours, prefer "hunting lodges" as their accommodation, and are "very satisfied" with the national parks. These findings are consistent with the results of a study conducted by Jang et al. (2002). They observed that tourists traveled with tour packages, most with their friends or spouses.

The travel characteristics of the foreign tourists who make up the "Nature and wildlife seekers" segment are as follows: most of them visit Zimbabwe national parks for different purposes and have visited Zimbabwe "1-3" times before, take "4-6 months" period to make a vacation decision. On average, they spend "4-6 days" a year on safari tourism, typically use "package tours", and prefer to travel with their "friends". They prefer "hunting lodge" for accommodation and are "very satisfied" with national parks. Similar results were found in Jang et al.'s (2002) study.

The suggestions for the problems based on the responses given by the tourists to the open-ended questions are as follows:

Transport and infrastructure have become obsolete in the last two decades. Safari tourists complain that the roads are full of potholes and that driving is dangerous. Tourists have also expressed dissatisfaction with the long distance between Victoria Falls and Hwange National Parks, which was

long, and the old accommodation facilities. All these problems should be addressed by making renovations to equip the tourists with the best luxury accommodation they desire. It was concluded that roads must be rebuilt and widened to travel safely and faster.

Some accommodations reported aggressive employees. Hotel managers train their staff members in “guest relations management” so that they can have positive contact with guests.

Tourists also reported no fuel for their cars in national parks. Tourism authorities should supply fuel in national parks reserved for tourist use only. This would allow tourists to have adequate vehicle fuel and ease their travel and exploration within the park areas.

Poaching has become a significant problem as the number of animals, such as elephants and rhinos, rapidly decreases. National park authorities should be equipped with appropriate equipment to combat poaching and use some of their income for human resources improvement. The public should be educated about the importance of natural resources, and heavy penalties should be imposed on those engaging in poaching activities.

It has been stated that wildlife destroys things such as clothes and camping tents in the camp. This is a challenging issue to control and it is recommended to set up a security perimeter around accommodation areas to prevent animals from destroying any belongings and property.

Continuous drought conditions have resulted in water shortages for animals and accommodation providers in national parks. However, there is a simple solution. Authorities are recommended to drill and pump water from the ground to provide continuous water for animals and guests.

5.1. Theoretical implications

This study addresses Zimbabwe’s benefit segmentation. It contributes significantly to the existing literature, as there is no study on this topic in Zimbabwe. This study provides valuable information for marketing managers and decision-makers in the tourism sector to fill the gap in the literature. This study contributes significantly to understanding the benefits and expectations of foreign tourists visiting Hwange, Mana Pools, and Gonarezhou national parks in Zimbabwe.

5.2. Practical implications

This study provides important information for the safari tourism market, safari accommodation facilities and safari marketers, and valuable holiday experiences of safari tourists in national parks.

- Destination and national park managers can implement different practices to meet the expectations of current and potential local and foreign tourists. To do this, local and foreign tourists visiting Zimbabwe’s national parks can be divided into similar groups, and their

profiles can be determined based on their expected benefits.

- It is recommended that transportation and infrastructure be renewed to facilitate Safari tourism in the national parks where the study was carried out.
- It has been determined that there needed to be more water in the national parks where the study was conducted. The authorities should open boreholes to pump water from the ground and provide continuous water to the animals and guests.
- It is recommended that the carbon footprint of national parks be paid attention to.
- Green initiative incentives can be implemented for tourists to promote sustainable living.
- Loyalty programs can be developed.
- Destination managers and marketers should develop proactive strategies to minimize complaints from tourists who experience safari tourism.

5.3. Limitations and directions for future research

This study is limited to foreign tourists visiting Zimbabwe’s Hwange, Mana Pools, and Gonarezhou national parks. Future studies can be conducted on tourists visiting different countries and cities for safari tourism to generalize the findings.

- Data collection was limited to three months of distribution with the questionnaire in the study.
- The study could be conducted in other national parks in Zimbabwe.
- This study can be conducted for domestic tourists and compared with the current study.
- Using qualitative research methods, more detailed studies can be conducted on smaller sample groups, and the expectations of tourists can be examined in more detail.
- Researchers can also collect information about tourists’ satisfaction with their safari experience.
- Future studies could approach this research from the perspective of managers.

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Author contributions

Emmanuel Brighton T Muraicho: Conceptualizing and writing the original draft, methodological design, investigations, formal analysis, interpretation, and critical review.

Kemal Birdir (Advisor): Methodological design, formal analysis, and critical review and editing of the paper.

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The authors reported no potential competing interest.

Ethics committee approval

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