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TABLE OF CONTENTS

RESEARCH ARTICLES

Theme: Tourism in Asia

REGULAR ARTICLES

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Revitalizing Cultural Heritage: Museums' Dynamic Role in Raising Awareness in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to examine how museums in Pakistan are contributing to the preservation of cultural artefacts. The purpose of this research is to identify possible ties between cultural institutions, museums, and the tourism sector that can raise consciousness among tourists. A random sampling procedure was used to select 300 participants. Data were collected from the Sindh province in Pakistan. We used qualitative data to collect information from museum curators, administrators, asset managers, and visitors. This qualitative study combined in-depth interviews with semi-structured open-ended questionnaires. There were two stages of data collection: the first involved interviews and the second involved identifying historic sites. It was determined that a proper awareness system was required; however, no culturally acceptable funding could be provided. It is easier to create a compelling presentation when there is a clearly defined national policy on cultural heritage.

Keywords: Sindhiology, Cultural Heritage, Museums, Awareness, Tourism Industry

Introduction

This study centres on the Sindhiology Historical Centre, which is home to a vast and unexplored collection and is thus an important cultural tourist attraction. Cultural attractions will be able to be evaluated with its help. According to Mendoza et al. (2023), this enables the study to investigate all possible connections within the wide spectrum of links at both existing and emerging cultural awareness locations. Additionally, government agencies will use the results of awareness campaigns to help improve visitor information on cultural assets, as this is still needed (Cetin, 2020). This study seeks to identify the potential connections between historical centers and cultural heritage areas to raise awareness among guests (ASEAN, 2015).

Similarly, local destination advertising associations must demonstrate consumer interest in visiting all listed historic sites to promote them as cultural tourism industry destinations (Kanth & Soni, 2023). The building's cultural and historical resources impede the tourism industry (McKercher & du Cros, 2002), and its usage is regulated by a comprehensively characterized cultural heritage division. As a result, the services administrators' and guests' perspectives are the focus of this study (Russo & Palla, 2023). Heritage is a comprehensive concept incorporating substantial resources, such as typical and cultural situations, surrounding landscapes, notable places, destinations, and artificial conditions (ICOMOS, 1999). Agent administration and potential strategy usage are necessary to improve guests' learning economy and understanding of human cultural advancement (Le, 2020). To overcome the challenges brought on by the wrong placement of cultural assets in historical centres, astute development administration can produce positive results (Ressa, 2023). The real foundation of cultural heritage is becoming harder to ascertain due to implementation-related challenges (Goel & Pitrelli, 2021).

A typical discussion repeatedly blames a period of incompetence in various parts of the world regarding the awareness of the gallery's guests. In any case, the inappropriate structure of the introduction of cultural resources was emphasized by numerous guests, resulting in a lack of data on the national cultural heritage. The main need has always been for the exhibition hall to function as a wage-generating tool rather than as an awareness-generating organization. Furthermore, eavesdropping on common

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characteristics and familiar thought processes is associated with poor human administration (Oktadiana et al., 2022). If properly expanded, cultural exhibition halls can open new doors for neighbors and significantly contribute to local economies and countries (UNWTO, 2019). Similarly, they can strengthen the protection of unique intangible cultural heritage and raise humanity's awareness of cultural heritage. According to the UNWTO (2013), only 0.54% of the world's total population visits Pakistan. The cultural tourism industry has been denied its significance since the creation of Pakistan (Malik et al., 2023). Ineffective administrative structures, lack of investment support, and desperate security plans claim to be essential assets of the state (Aon & Rafeeq, 2014). The domestic travel industry's approach was revamped in the 1990s. Therefore, there is a great need for research in this potential area to develop appropriate strategies to advance cultural heritage and awareness in Pakistan.

Visitors from near and far who come to Pakistan to see these historic landmarks are often curious in the country's brief past (Ranck, 2023). Unfortunately, there is a lack of comprehensive data on cultural heritage at this level, and the exhibition halls consistently fail to meet their standards due to inadequate implementation (Ismaeel, 2023). This incompetence resulted in the absence of data among the day-to-day guests. Heritage in the travel industry is recognized as an outstanding example of the most senior halls, which recognizes the required standards of origination, and its importance in the development of the travel industry is undeniable (Prentice, 1993a; Prentice, 1993b). Many people visit these places for stimulation and to look for routine information. The exhibition hall displays an assortment of landscapes related to social and historical sites in the country. According to Punjab the Travel Industry Foundation (2005), the travel industry is archived as a structured, routine, and multi-dimensional business movement that has developed the industry's dimension to global prominence. It houses more than 200 million individuals globally. It supports more than US$ 600 billion in immediate and aberrant annual expenditures on global economic development—the critical development of the tourism sector throughout the year's exhibitions. The tourism sector is one of the incredible economic and cultural miracles of the past century (Menaguale, 2023). Changes in global innovation motivate the entire world to address familiar and universal needs in these unique circumstances (UNWTO, 2021). Learning economy and awareness are positively associated with one another. Because the world is experiencing a significant change in innovation and the risks of time administration, computerized learning strategies in historical centers are a source of financing data concerning cultural heritage and are important in the cultural development of humankind (Jain, 2023). Various media frequently convey awareness and data, sometimes broadcast and printed (Iqbal et al., 2023). The source of the data is mostly inquiries concerning such cultural heritage; the speed of awareness portrays the power of learning given as quickly as it comes to the searcher, and the likelihood of awareness is all the more rapid. Galleries are a platform that provides pictographic and written data on numerous cultural resources, allowing guests to access them (Brock Carlson & Overmyer, 2023). Such game plans remain flawed in terms of the awareness that these stages express constantly.

i. To ascertain the relationship between information acquisition and cultural heritage museums within the established framework.
ii. To consider the difficulties faced by both parties in promoting or sustaining cultural heritage
iii. To recommend activities that will help to present and explore the cultural heritage

Literature Review

This study seeks to explain and support the UN's recent call for "all member states, inter-governmental organizations, UN agencies, and relevant non-governmental organizations to ensure a more visible and effective integration and inclusion of culture in development policies and strategies at all levels," according to (Bandarin, 2019). This study focuses on the intellectual background that preceded the UN's belated recognition of culture's importance ten years after implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This study provides convincing evidence supporting the notion that culture, creative industries, and cultural heritage contribute considerably to development in terms of qualitative standards of equality (Kim et al., 2022). In response to these requirements, examples are provided, and strategies for coordinated action are outlined to achieve the MDGs by 2015 and proceed from there (Zainuddin, 2021).

As a result of its both direct and indirect effects on the global economy, tourism is the most vital and rapidly evolving industry, claims the European Journal of Economics (Irfan et al., 2023). Travellers will love Pakistan for its diverse landscapes, vibrant cultures, and fascinating customs. This study investigates the causal relationships and co-integration of Pakistan's current account deficit, economic growth, and tourism from 1972 to 2007. This study found a long-term relationship between the number of tourists and gross domestic product (GDP) development by reducing the current account deficit using the Johansen co-integration technique and Error Correction Model (ECM) (Abbasi et al., 2022). Currently, tourism has recognized its potential as a country's development engine. Tourism is critical in reducing a country's current deficit by generating foreign exchange revenue and national economic growth. It has become more popular in international relations as a foundation for strengthening international, political, cultural, and economic ties. However, its economic effects surpass the other effects (Kwilinski et al., 2023).

The subcontinental cultures of Pakistan (Saqfat-e-Pkistn) and India are deeply entangled. Pakistan is home to a diverse population that has been profoundly influenced by its neighbours. The south is inhabited by the Makrani, while the west is dominated by the Baloch, Hazara, and Pashtuns. The north is home to the Punjabis, Saraikis, Pothwaris, Kashmiris, Sindhis, and Burusho.

Since ancient times, the region has existed as a distinct entity within the larger geographical complex of the Indian subcontinent, West Asia, the Middle East, and Central Asia (Gee et al., 2023). The cultural practices of the various ethnic groups differ, especially when pre-Islamic customs, including dress, cuisine, and religion, diverge from Islamic practices. Their cultural heritage exhibits indigenous and distant influences from Central Asia and ancient India. Because Pakistan was the first part of the Indian subcontinent to adopt Islam, it has historically had a separate Islamic identity from the rest of the region to the east, according to the History of Bahawalpur State and its Culture in Pakistan, Journal of Social Sciences (2014). The princely State of Bahawalpur (1727–1947) was founded by the Abbasies. They ruled this state for about two centuries. The Abbasids took refuge in Egypt and subsequently Sindh after Baghdad fell (1258). Nawab of Multan Hayatullah Tareen had given them the "Chaudhary" area after hearing recommendations from the Uch priests Gilani and Bukhari. Bahawalpur was one of the wealthiest states after becoming one in this way. Bahawalpur's 12 unique "Nawab" rulers successfully ruled the realm for more than 220 years. This state has a rich history and unique culture.

The state's residents were relatively straightforward, courageous, friendly hosts, and highly cooperative. The rulers of Bahawalpur State made every effort to provide the state's residents with as many amenities as possible. The Abbasia Dynasty can be traced down to the Holy Prophet's (SAW) uncle, Hazrat Abbas (RA) (Azam, 1838). Following their fall, the Abbasi clan fled to Egypt, with some of its male members later traveling to the Indo_Pak Subcontinent. For a while, the family's famous members resided in Mekran (Baluchistan), where they were revered as religious leaders. The Abbsis' rise in Sindh began with their religious leadership and progressed into primitive land ownership. Civilization, according to Sibte Hassan (Hassan, 1977), is a system of intentional inventions and social values. The cultural legacy includes clothing, cuisine, traditions, customs, and fine arts. Although its meaning is broad, it also includes aspects of education, culture, agriculture, prosperity, and development. The term “Tehzeeb” has been used to refer to culture in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu. The architecture of the modern nation of Pakistan the pre-Islamic, Islamic, colonial, and post-colonial eras. With the arrival of the Indus civilization in the middle of the third millennium BC, a complex urban culture was established in the region, some of which still exist today. Mohenjo Daro, Harappa, and Kot Diji are three pre-Islamic cities. The Greco-Buddhist style developed in the first century CE because of the development of Buddhism, the Guptas, Mouryas, and the influence of Persian and Greek culture. The Gandhara style was at its pinnacle during this period. An example of Buddhist architecture may be seen in the remains of the Buddhist monastery Takht-i-Bahi in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Once Islam was adopted, traditional Islamic construction techniques influenced modern Pakistan's architectural environment.

However, the transitions to Islamic architecture, which generally has no image, went smoothly. Some of the earliest examples of Islamic architecture in Pakistan include the tombs of Bibi Jawindi, Baha'is-Halim, and Jalaluddin Bukhari, all of which are located in Uch Sharif and have been listed as provisional world heritage sites by United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) since 2004. One of the few most notable examples of Persian architecture is the Shah Rukn-i-Alam tomb in Multan. Mughal architecture was established during the Mughal era when architectural elements of Islamic-Persian architecture were merged with and frequently produced creative indigenous art forms. Several notable Mughal constructions can be found in Lahore, the occasional home of the emperors, including the Badshahi Mosque, the citadel with the illustrious Alamgiri Gate, and the vibrant Wazir Khan Mosque, which still bears a strong Mughal influence. The Shahjahan Mosque in Thatta, Sindh, and the Mohabbat Khan Mosque in Peshawar have Mughal origins. During the British colonial era, most buildings were constructed in the Indo–European style, which combined European and Indian-Islamic features. The Faisal Mosque, the Minar-e-Pakistan, and the Mazar-e-Quaid are modern structures that represent postcolonial national identity.

Samina Khalil (University of Karachi) examined the impact of tourism on Pakistan's short-term economic growth. The results showed a strong relationship between tourism, revenues, and economic growth, highlighting the importance of economic growth in Pakistan's tourism development. In recent decades, the role of international tourism has increased in many economies. The World Tourism Organization (2002) estimates that 693 million international tourists spent US$462 billion in 2001; i.e., approximately US$1.3 billion per day globally. Furthermore, by bringing in foreign currency, tourist spending has served as a unique form of export and benefited some countries' balances of payments.

Cultural Heritage Management

A Global Perspective by Paul A. Shackel (University Press of Florida, Gainesville) provides the foreword to this series. First, it may be helpful to briefly explain the subtitle of this chapter. Because of the extensive use of vocabulary in spoken English, it occasionally has extremely unclear meanings (for a thorough explanation, see Carman 2002:5–25). Pakistan contains several historic buildings and sites, according to the Heritage Foundation. All Pakistanis must protect and preserve these historical resources since they are our connection to the past and will last for centuries. The Pakistani people's historical heritage provides us with a unique identity in this era of extensive globalization.

Pakistan is a treasure trove of historical legacy spanning hundreds of years, lest we forget—because this appears to be our best-kept secret from the outside world. The magnificent Gandharan civilization and its role as the birthplace of Buddhism, the devotional carvings of the Hindu Shahi temples of the Salt Range and Tharparkar, the stately funerary clusters of Makli, Multan, and Ucch Sharif, a fusion of local Sikhs imitating the Great Mughals, and the shared legacy of eclectic architecture including Mehargarh, Moenjodaro, and Harrappa, are all found in Pakistan. They were all established by the young Farghana ruler. Peshawar, Multan, Thatta, Karachi, and many other modern cities with their historical backgrounds are all important in our quest to discover and understand our cultural diversity. These ancient cities may be found from the highest peaks of the Khyber in the far north to the southernmost tip of the vast river Indus.

The walled cities, a reservoir of priceless architectural heritage, must be protected and revived with their organic shape and meandering streetscapes for our rapidly growing urban centers to continue to provide character and historical flair (Webster, 2022). These historical footprints show that the conventional value system has changed over many years. Although the traditional value system has changed over the years, it still requires assistance to adapt to modern life's demands without losing its inherent brilliance. Is preserving and passing on our legacy to the next generation necessary to maintain our unique identity?

Tangible Heritage

Pakistan's history is one of its best-kept secrets. The country has several World Heritage sites and many notable local and international landmarks. For ease of preservation, the following categories of Pakistan's tangible heritage are taken into consideration:
a. Archaeological sites
b. Historic Monuments
c. Urban Historic Architecture

Archaeological sites and historical monuments are protected by the Federal Government's Antiquities Act, whereas historic urban architecture is mostly uncatalogued and unprotected in most cities. Thanks to the work of the Heritage Foundation, the Sindh Assembly approved the Sindh Cultural Heritage (Preservation) Act 1994. The foundation discovered and publicized approximately 600 cultural sites in Karachi and their heritage legislation. Of the Pakistani provinces, it has the most protected heritage sites. However, most of Sindh's ancient towns risk losing their priceless cultural heritage (Umer et al., 2023). The Punjab Premises Act protects several historic structures around the province.

Archaeological Sites

Remains from various ancient civilizations can be found in Pakistan. The best known are the Indus Valley Civilization (Moenjoaro: Sindh and Harrappa: Punjab), which existed around 3,000 BC. Mehergarh may have been around as early as 5,000 BC, according to findings in Balochistan. The zenith of this region's Buddhist civilisation is demonstrated by other famous historical landmarks. They are widespread in northern Pakistan and abundant. They are situated in Taxila (Punjab) and Takht-e-Bahi (NWFP). Most ancient sites are protected under the Federal Antiquities Act (Fatima et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2022).

Historic Monuments and Urban Historic Cores

Current structures found throughout Pakistan are considered historical monuments. They depicted the country's rich cultural environment and many eras of our history (Khan et al., 2022). Thus, historical Hindu temples may be found in Tharparkar (Sindh) and Punjab; structures from the Sultanate era can be found at the Makli Tombs, where Thatta, Lahore, Multan, Thatta, Multan, and Ucch Sharif are examples of Mughal monuments. The Federal Antiquities Act protects many monuments, but many more need to be protected. Several historic cities may exist in various provinces. Most were constructed as walled cities, including Peshawar, Multan, and Lahore (Ahmed et al., 2022). Even though the walls are long gone, the distinctive urban morphology gives the districts a unique identity. Despite recent destruction, the region still has a unique atmosphere, thanks to the historic structures (Rabbani & Zeeshan, 2022). Unfortunately, we continue to lose many irreplaceable historic buildings because of a lack of preservation.

Culture Tourism Heritage as an Economic Indicator

Various economic surveys can be used by cultural managers and authorities to determine a cultural asset's realized and unrealized economic output (Della Sapina, 2023). Public record data and activity records typically encompass many types of information, such as real estate transactions and valuations, hotel occupancy rates, building square footage, and other relevant aspects that will be elaborated upon subsequently. Although time-consuming to gather, this information frequently forms the basis for essential discoveries and may be used as a vital input for econometric models. These resources do not have to be used equally with one another; however, doing so regularly strengthens them. However, some instruments, such as econometric modeling, occupations, and household income, are better suited for specific measurements (Esam Alharasis et al., 2023).

Heritage Tourism

Heritage tourism is one of the most common ways to consider the relationship between cultural heritage and economic growth. One recent study found that legacy visitors spend $994 per leisure trip compared to $611 by non-heritage travelers, making heritage tourism one of the industry's fastest-growing subsectors globally (Lyu et al., 2023). Tourism is one of the major economic drivers in many US states as measured by the number of employees. Another study conducted in Namibia in 2006 revealed that tourism supported 71,777 jobs, including 18,840 direct and 18,840 indirect jobs. The sector contributed US $256.7 million to the country's GDP, or 3.7% of the total GDP. Surveys, which are often location-based and concentrate on the effects of a single site or a network of cultural sites, are the most common methods for determining the economic impact of heritage tourism. It is often carried out by the public or private sector, travel agencies, and site managers. Standard metrics include number of visitors, length of stay, mode of travel, lodging location, destination(s), visitor demographics, and depth of visitor emphasis (how strongly heritage-related activities influenced visitors' decisions about where to go and what to do). Another standard metric is the proportion of tourists with heritage backgrounds. This data is used to calculate the spending per-day or trip, expenditure allocation, job creation, tax generation (sales, revenue), and relative per-day and relative per-trip expenditures of heritage tourists compared to all tourists. Surveys are commonly used to understand the tourist experience and the economic effect of conservation efforts, depending on the kind and quantity of data available. Many Asian countries, like most developing countries globally, view tourism as a powerful tool for attracting foreign exchange and boosting economies. It serves as a magnet for investment, generates employment opportunities, and stimulates the demand for products like as handicrafts (Zhang et al., 2023). Pakistan, a growing nation, with abundant natural and historical splendour and exhibits a strong likelihood of achieving economic prosperity (Raza et al., 2023).

Tourism will significantly benefit the economic infrastructure because of the foreign population influx and trade balance (trade balances are a funded flow of trading in goods and services). The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2015) estimates that investment in this industry amounted to PKR 342.8 billion, or 9.3% of all investments made in Pakistan in 2015. In 2016, an increase of 11.4% is expected. However, during the next ten years, it is predicted to increase by 7.6% annually, reaching PKR 729.7 billion in 2026 (11.2% of the total). Adeola et al. (2020) stated that World Travel and Tourism Council Report in 2015, the tourist sector directly contributed PKR 780.4 billion to the national economy (2.8% of GDP), and a growth of 3.2% is predicted. This contribution is enabled by the economic operations of hotels, airlines, travel agencies, leisure pursuits, and other tourist-related businesses sponsored by foreign tourists who travel to Pakistan (Ozturk et al., 2023). Conversely, travel and tourism contributed PKR 1 918.5 billion (7.0% of GDP) to GDP in 2015; this figure is expected to rise to PKR 2,002 billion (7.0% of GDP) in 2016 and to PKR 3,418.7 billion (5.5% per annatto) in 2026.

Methodology

The final section of this study summarizes tourism and cultural heritage management theories, conflicts and relationships between tourism and other stakeholders, cultural heritage tourism and its significance, tourism as an economic accelerator, categories of cultural heritage assets and management, data collection instruments, and analysis. In this chapter, we describe the study's motivation and contribution. We conclude by outlining the organization of the remaining section of this paper.

This study examines potential relationships between museums and the cultural heritage industry. This study focuses on the Sindhiology Museum, which has a substantial but still developing collection of cultural tourist attractions. Therefore, this study examines the entire spectrum of interactions with existing and emerging cultural awareness magnets. Furthermore, government organizations will use awareness results to help increase tourists' knowledge of cultural assets, as this still needs to be done, without demonstrating consumer interest in visiting these locations. The local destination marketing organization has not presented all designated heritage sites as prospective cultural tourist destinations (Raza et al., 2023). The broadly defined cultural heritage sector controls the cultural heritage assets that serve as the foundation for cultural tourism (McKercher & du Cros, 2002) and its industry. This study focuses on asset managers and tourists. ICOMOS (1999) defines "heritage" as a broad concept encompassing tangible and intangible assets. Natural features, historical landmarks, and man-made surroundings are examples of tangible assets, whereas a collection of ideas is an example of an intangible assets, knowledge about past and current cultural practices, and firsthand experiences.

Foundation of Sindhiology (Sindhi): The Sindhiology Foundation is one of Sindh's most significant historical assets. It was the foremost investigative organization of its kind, propelling Sindhiology to the forefront of global research. Sindhiology is defined as the study of Sindh. Sindh's history and culture have been shaped by the Indu stream. Sindh's lifeline transports minerals and soil from the Himalayas and streams into the Bedouin Ocean at the Indus Waterway Delta. These elements define the scope of Sindhiology: the study of artifacts, relics, history, and the way of life in both old and present-day Sindh, with a focus on Sindhi society and writing.

The foundation's history dates back to the establishment of the Sindhi Institute in 1962 by the University of Sindh. The purpose was to build up an office to file books, original copies, and research papers over a significant period. Another purpose was to develop an interest in the Sindhi dialect, regardless of the different dialects, which included Arabic, English, Persian, and Urdu. The study was to be conducted in every single Pakistani university.

The foundation contributes to analytical research and scholarly inquiries in Sindhiology by collaborating with a scholarly institution (Sindh University). The most significant activity to bring the issue to global attention was a series of overviews to identify the locations of primary anthropological and archeological studies in the area, conducted in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution between 1967 and 1971. There were also collaborations with UNESCO to study the Sindhiology components of the major Indus Valley human advancement locations spread over Sindh. Since then, the foundation's research and scholarly scope has expanded. Other research commitments made by the organization communicated globally regarded research priorities.

The study sought to identify any relationships between awareness and the cultural heritage management industry.

This study focuses on the Sindhiology Museum, which houses a compact but well-established collection of cultural tourist attractions, especially from the asset manager's point of view. ICOMOS (1999) defines "heritage" as a broad concept that includes both tangible and intangible assets. Intangible assets include collections, knowledge about past and present cultural practices, and firsthand experiences, while tangible assets include landscapes, historical sites, places, and built environments. As part of a qualitative method, a semistructured, open-ended questionnaire is employed in conjunction with in-depth interviews. Custodians or asset managers from the CHM industry are selected for an in-depth interview at the Sindhiology Museum. Questions were asked about the asset(s) in question's history (age, gender, ownership, management structure, etc.), presentation of materials (such as authenticity, use of guides, and interpretation), identification of stakeholders, and the nature of their relationships in two rounds of interviews. Because the study was qualitative, we decided to conduct an interview-based survey. Data was gathered from all relevant personnel in the individual departments.

As a result, the population comprises curators, custodians, asset managers, and visitors to the Sindhiology Museum.

A representative sample of the Sindhiology Museum's curators, custodians, or asset managers was chosen. The study also includes data collected from 100 visitors to the Sindhiology Museum.

As part of a qualitative approach, a semistructured, open-ended questionnaire will be used in conjunction with in-depth interviews. There were two data collection cycles. The first round will be entirely experimental. The study's goal is to learn more about the challenges faced by respondents' cultural heritage sectors and assets. These interviews will encompass questions on the asset(s) in question's background (age, type, ownership, sector structure, etc.), presentation of materials (i.e., authenticity, use of guides, interpretation), identification of stakeholders, and the nature of their relationships.

The second phase of data collection relied on an open-ended graphical questionnaire distributed to museum visitors. Tourists' awareness was tested using historical images of cultural heritage.

The first round of interviews was conducted in the field using a semistructured and open-ended interview-based questionnaire. Curators, custodians, and asset managers from the Sindhiology Museum conducted the interviews. The interview crew went to museums and historical locations to conduct the interviews. Curators, custodians, and asset managers were interviewed using semi-structured and open-ended interview-based questionnaires about factors of interest.

Data was collected using a questionnaire that included images of some of Pakistan's most prominent historical and archaeological sites. The tourists were approached and asked to identify the locations using a questionnaire.

The stated hypotheses are tested over obtained data using open-ended questionnaire forms and interviews for hypothesis verification. The researcher decided whether to accept or reject the hypothesis and responded to the research questions based on relevance.

H1: The Pakistan Museum has an effective awareness mechanism.
Ho: There is no effective awareness mechanism in the Pakistan Museum.

For data analysis, we used a modified grounded theory technique. According to the literature, the optimum analytical framework would be conflicting. The preliminary data analysis will be based on this assumption. However, subscribing rigidly to a conflict paradigm cannot fully explain the variety of relationships described by respondents or the dynamics behind these interactions; further thought and investigation will reveal. Therefore, the conflict will be disregarded as a framework. The data will then be re-analyzed using a grounded theory methodology to allow it to speak for itself without the imposition of preconceived ideas.

Findings and Interpretation

The demographic information of the respondents is displayed in Table 1. Since this study is not quantitative in nature, we are able to disclose the gender, age, and occupation of the respondents. Table 1 shows that out of the 300 people that took part in the study, 63% were male and 37% were female. The largest demographic is people aged 36 to 55 (44%), the second largest is people aged 18 to 35 (38%), which includes young tourists, and the third largest is people aged 56 and above (presumably retirees who have come to Pakistan to see the country's historical museums). Because the study's goal was to raise awareness, most of its data came from museum tourists (66%), custodians (16%), museum curators (10%), and asset managers (8%).

Table 1. *Demographic Statistics*

Gender	**Frequency**	**Percentage**	**Cumulative**
Male	191	63%	191
Female	109	37%	300
Age			
18 to 35	114	38%	114
36 to 55	130	44%	244
56 and above	56	18%	300
Occupation			
Visitor	198	66%	198
Museum's Curators	28	10%	222
Custodians	50	16%	272
Asset Managers	24	8%	300

Following the study questions, the research findings are divided into two sections for publications and authors. First, 36 journals published the bibliometric features of Turkish writers' works. Then, under the subheadings for queries, information on the authors who conducted these studies is determined. The results of the analysis are listed below, with some results provided in tables and graphics and compared with those of previous studies. The Director of the Institute of Sindhiology indicated that it is a unique institution with which not only the University of Sindh and Sindh province but the entire country of Pakistan is associated to seek cultural knowledge. Sindhiology was founded in December 1962, with Mr. Raziuddin Siddique as the administrative head. The museum was founded in 1962 in a small room of 8*8 at Sindh University's former campus in Hyderabad, currently known as Elsa Kazi Campus. The institute now possesses a library that is second to none. The main objective of the institute's pioneering organ is to obtain any content, especially Hindi, in any language and shape (soft or hard). These materials are easily available to users. Sindh Art Gallery and Anthropology (Museum), Various Galleries in the Museum, Arms Gallery, Music Instrumental Gallery, Paintings, Ethnological Gallery, Prominent Personalities Gallery, Photographic Gallery, and Archeological Gallery are some of the sections that the museum offers to its tourists.

Furthermore, he contended that discussions about social heritage imply the inclusion of more initials or vignettes of heritage. A common definition of heritage is "everything derived from heritage." Heritage can be a piece of land or other property, a caste, a society, or other things. Heritage from previous eras is one type of heritage. It is the link between epochs. The connections between eras imply that each era leaves its imprints and faces on the heritage. Therefore, why does he require the faces of the forerunners to back up his claim? When necessary, problems and boundaries can be easily identified. As indicated by Shake's anthropology, the vital objects have misplaced their relationship with the intangible worldview or domains. Protests are transmitted in exhibition halls as a device for relaxing youngsters, giving music, or alleviating impact. The institute, in his opinion, also produces two research periodicals. The institute has published approximately 200 publications on Sindh's history, art, culture, literature, archeology, and anthropology since its inception. The institute is in charge of maintaining and developing the Sindhi language. The institute also collaborates with the following national and international organizations: Hamdard University Karachi, Sindh Archives Karachi, National Archives Islamabad, National Institute of Folk Heritage Islamabad, British Council, British Library, London Council of the International Archive, Japan Foundation Tokyo, Library of Congress Washington DC, UNICEF, UNESCO, and Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC.

An open-ended questionnaire with pictures of well-known people was used to gather data. places of historical and archaeological significance in Sindh. In addition, we asked people who visited the Sindhiology Museum to point out these sites. The places were as follows:

1. Shahjahan Mosque
2. Kot Diji fort
3. Moen jo Daro
4. Rani Kot Fort
5. Makli Graveyards

Sixty-six percent of visitors recognized the above-mentioned Sindh landmarks. 34% of visitors could not identify the prominent Sindh locations listed above. The tourists needed to catch up because they are rare historical/archeological sites. This disparity resulted in confrontation among stakeholders. However, 97% of visitors identified the famous historical site of Sindh, Moen Jo Daro, while 3% could not. 52% identified the Kot Diji fort, but 48% could not identify persons. 69% identified Rani Kot Fort, while 31% could not identify individuals. The Makli graveyard, a famous graveyard in Thatta Sindh, was recognized by 90% of those polled, with the remaining 10% unable to identify it personally. A famous mosque in Thatta known as the Shahjahan mosque was recognized by 87% of those polled, but 13% could not identify it.

Of the tourists surveyed, 52% were able to identify the historic Kotdiji Fort in Sindh's Khairpur District; however, 48% were unable to do so. The director and guests were asked to provide a summary of general knowledge in Pakistan regarding the importance of cultural heritage before proceeding with the part on awareness. They went to great lengths about how knowledge leads to awareness and sensitization leads to caring. The term "culture" has been used liberally. Things we use in our daily lives require great care; however, as an Anthropologist, one must incorporate cultural/archaeological sites into daily life. The public should be notified that only a photo of pigeons is excluded from the drawing rooms; however, no picture of a cultural or archeological monument will be found. This indicates that these concepts are not being assimilated. Awareness campaigns are classified into two types: formal and informal. Schools, universities, madrasas, and even our own families can help raise formal awareness.

Conclusion

The results show that cultural tourism and heritage management organizations should be aware of global recommendations for tangible and intangible cultures. Sindh is mostly the same. It was also noted that specific recommendations in official and local languages are required, and good reports on museum cultural heritage management are given to international organizations. The director appears to be fine. During Sindhiology museum interviews, the team should have examined folklore institution listings and inventories, and data banks of intangible and tangible cultural heritage institutions. The accepted folklore topology should be promoted. Tourists rarely visit archeological sites, so they have to play catch-up. Because of this chasm, tension exists between those who benefit from cultural tourism and those responsible for protecting cultural artifacts. The 18th Amendment also affected those who protect our country's historic landmarks. As per the institute's director, the Sindh government is providing support to the organisation, although there were concerns regarding the allocation of funds. This industry should have been prioritised and highlighted in the official curriculum development. Cease organising excursions to these historical sites with the intention of enlightening individuals lacking knowledge about their cultural and historical significance. All forms of media, regardless of their nature, contribute to the dissemination of information.

All forms of media (television/radio/film/documentary/online/specialized print media) are culturally inappropriate. It should broadcast cultural programs regularly to promote cultural understanding. The director believes that the media should do more to promote cultural awareness. Actions and Tools from Funfairs, HECs, and Universities to Assist States Parties in Raising Public Awareness of Cultural Heritage Recognize cultural landmarks and accept cultural attire. HEC policies are not universally applied, even at the municipal level. There are insufficient formal and informal procedures for documenting cultural artifacts.

A review of the organization's response to protecting the group's tangible and intangible cultural legacy revealed that it was underfunded. Inadequate resource allocation, inadequate identification, evaluation, and protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and lack of qualified technical staff, anthropologists, and archeologists work, propagate, and transform but are frequently overlooked by those who are unconcerned. Communities damaged by terrorist attacks have been scrambling to keep traditional attire and greetings hidden. The conservation technique is time-consuming, expensive, and requires a dedicated location. A well-defined national cultural heritage policy is necessary for presentations, guidelines, policies, roles, and responsibilities. It was discovered that the HR system was inadequate. The workers in different departments of the museum were not connected or related to each other. These occurrences have exacerbated the problem. How can staff effectively create a welcoming atmosphere for guests if they lack cultural competence?

With the right people in place, it is possible to incorporate cultural and archeological sensitivity into daily activities. These techniques are not widely utilised. There exist awareness initiatives that can be classified into two categories: informal and formal. Institutions like as schools, colleges, universities, madrassas, and even our own households can contribute to the process of cultivating and institutionalising awareness. While there may be disagreement over integrating this culture into classroom lectures, it is necessary to use traditional methods to increase awareness in this way. It is necessary to express policies and recommendations in a formal manner. These stages are crucial for developing and implementing a national and regional policy on traditional culture and folklore in partnership with international and specialised non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The academic community has the potential to advocate for the preservation of cultural artifacts and knowledge in both formal and informal ways. The government should ensure that this subject is taught in schools. It must be built from regular circles. It is now time to let the local community access to the museums, as they seek respite from the tedium of their everyday routines. Diverse media outlets can facilitate the dissemination of information and the promotion of awareness. The government's endorsement of culture deserves commendation. Light can be utilised to produce dramas, documentaries, and many forms of media that advocate for both concrete and intangible cultural practises.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study has a significant limitation: data were only collected from Sindh province's largest museum, Sindhology. The study can be extended to practically all Sindh museums. While museums are vital in increasing public understanding of Pakistan's cultural heritage, it is important to recognize the limitations they face. Museums are typically located in major cities, making them inaccessible to people living in rural areas and those whose first language is not English. The digital divide also makes using the internet to spread information and raise awareness more difficult. Due to corporate actions, there is a possibility that the country may have insufficient representation. In order to overcome these limits, museums should give priority to comprehensive and community-oriented curation, establish close collaborations with educational institutions, arrange outreach programmes targeting rural areas, and offer interpretative materials in many languages. Museums can improve people's knowledge of Pakistan's cultural heritage if they adopt cutting-edge technologies, are attentive to local customs, and receive regular government funding.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring the Dimensions of Spirituality, Wellness and Value Creation amidst Himalayan Regions Promoting Entrepreneurship and Sustainability

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ABSTRACT
Spirituality and wellness are intertwined in Himalayan regions with each other. We can find a unique blend of spiritual traditions as well as healing practices in these regions. The experiences of tourists in Himalayan regions are very profound and transformative in various aspects. In order to seek spiritual solace and blessings, various travelers undertake pilgrimages to in these regions to various sites, temples, monasteries and routes. The intersection of spirituality, wellness, value creation, entrepreneurship, and sustainability in the Himalayan regions can have several implications. The findings highlight that the Himalayan highlands are regarded as being serene, beautiful natural areas for spiritual retreats. There is an emphasis on holistic well-being that goes beyond financial considerations by highlighting wellness and spirituality in entrepreneurial and environmental activities. In the Himalayan areas, integrating spirituality, wellness, and sustainability can encourage and support entrepreneurship. An innovative and creative attitude can be encouraged by placing a strong emphasis on values, awareness, and connectivity.

Keywords: Spirituality, Wellness, Value Creation, Himalayan region, Himalayas, Entrepreneurship, Sustainability

Introduction

We are living in an era which has gradually started to be known as the era of shocks, calamities, natural environmental degradation and a whole series of pandemics such as SRS, MERS and the Covid-19 pandemic. The latest in the list did not surprise the watchful, cautious and aware denizens of this world much owing to the fact that they had been having the permeation of everything has happened thus far and even worse that can happen in the remaining decades of 21st century. The human race today has been impelled to rethink its life priorities. Hyper materialism and endless greed for material possessions, for senseless consumption of natural resources, for inhuman apathy towards nature and diverse forms of life, abrogation of spirit of ethics and the rejection of values such as empathy and compassion stand as evidence of a global downslide into a world which is without values such as togetherness, love, mutual concern and spiritual well-being.

Amidst such overwhelming sense of gloom aggravated further by the onset of unpredictable situations caused by Covid-19 force us to rethink and repurpose our life which can have some semblance of normalcy, mutual coexistence, respect for nature, respect for day-to-day interpersonal interaction and a little modicum of joy and spiritual satisfaction. Moreover, if we think in terms of providing an antidote to the situation that has arisen due to the pandemic and thereby providing a little help to the suffering humanity, notions of value creation, rural tourism, physical and spiritual well-being develop in the mind. The very thought of value creation has the potential of serving as a counter narrative to crass consumerism, humanism and hyper materialism. Likewise, the very idea of rural tourism emerges as a solid counter to commercial tourism involving huge amounts of money.

Similarly, the very thought of well-being helps us rise above the distressful state of mind. Viewed collectively, these concepts have the potential to offer an alternative to the unimaginable and excruciating turmoil caused by the present-day world that has gone absolutely hay wire because of the poor planning and policies of governments across the globe.

Life has become so unpredictable and uncertain. We don't know as to when and how we can become invading victims of this pandemic now an endemic. Because of such a helpless state of mind, people have started gradually moving out of their homes and rather than preferring a far-off destination they have started exploring the perspective local spaces and spots scarcely explored by

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the tourist. Such spots exist in the countryside across the world, but because of our conditioned mind set vis-a-vis of travelling to far off places, many people find it hard to plan out excursions/tours to such unexplored and beautiful tourist spots, offering spiritual solace and deep inner satisfaction. This is one of the key thrust areas of this paper which aims at travelling rural tourism rather than the commercial, intercontinental tourism. There is a particular reason behind this. This pandemic has caused a large-scale disruption of human life everywhere, be that business, economic, social, cultural, or political (Arora & Sharma, 2021). As a result, people in the world are psychologically shattered and many of them have developed ailments such as claustrophobia, schizophrenia and paranoia due to the onslaught of the various insecurities of life. Psychosocial well-being refers to a combination of mental and social health, both of which have been significantly impacted by the pandemic and require intervention in the post-pandemic period (Arora & Sharma, 2021)

The time spent in rural surroundings benefits us multifariously. There are studies that show how nature in the country side and its different aspects benefit distressed souls (Arora & Sharma, 2022). Nature has the capacity to cure physical as well as mental ailments. Its effect is ennobling and alleviating on the soul. When we connect the notion of value creation with rural tourism the enquiry becomes all the more interesting. Rural tourism presupposes value creation of diverse sorts in which entrepreneurship plays an important role. A traveler/tourist who explores the rural tourist spots ends up benefitting multifariously in the entire process. Right from the word go there is a serene sense of serendipity, which a person undertaking rural travel experiences. The very decision of moving out of one's comfort zone into the lap of nature is value enhancing in several ways for instance the moment of deciding to move is the moment of transformation particularly because you have bidden adieu to stasis, a lack of movement and lethargy and a depressed and dejected state of being. Moreover, the transformation is not transient which takes place inside you. It has a sense of permanence in it as it acts at the level of brain cells which get reinvigorated and renewed in that moment of transformation.

This rejuvenation causes fundamental change in the perception as well as the consciousness of a person was has decided to make a physical foray into the lap of nature (Arora, Sharma & Walia, 2021). Once the inner being of a tourist synchronises with the simple and beautiful world of nature it adds tremendous value to the quality of his life. In fact, this quality is immeasurable in material terms, but in spiritual terms one can feel the rich rewards in the form of transformation at an inner level which enables us to see the essence of being in everything in each and every aspect of creation.

Value Creation can also be viewed as a natural corollary of tourism. It has powerful communication dimensions to it. The notions of value creation, rural tourism and well-being are all inherently, intrinsically communicative. This is because of the fact that all these concepts lose their essence in the absence of language which is used in the process of thinking about them, planning them and also articulating them. Language is everywhere. We can also go to the extent of claiming that rural tourism is language incarnate and so is the value creation and even the idea of well-being will simply lose its sheen if language is not there.

In this way Value Creation is a language which can turn amorphous in a sense that it can change its form, shape and character as per the changing scenario. For instance, a rural tourist seeking spiritual solace will prefer to use the language of silence because of his inability to articulate his spiritual experience. Therefore, he/she has no choice but to silently benefit from the language of silence. However, on the other hand, upon coming into contact with an artisan in a rural arena, a tourist may feel humbled. As a result of the realisation as to which wave length of life is that rural artisan at, a tourist might suddenly become familiar with the language of simplicity and humility. He/she may wonder how uncomplicated life can get and so as to how simple human life can become promoting sustainability. This basically is the process of value creation in the form of communication by nature that seldom requires expression.

Such a silent communication from the Himalayas casts a deep and transforming impact on the psyche of a tourist who may not be prepared for the same. At yet another level nature has altogether different language to converse with the rural tourist. She can serve as a friend, philosopher and guide which William Wordsworth writes about in his poetry. "*One impulse from Vernal Wood may teach you more than all the sages of world can*". Therefore, the communicative dimension of value creation and rural tourism must occupy a place of centrality.

Methodology

This paper is qualitative in nature and aims to build a conceptually informed and considered opinion vis-a-vis the significance of rural entrepreneurship and rural sustainable practices in the process of value creation which takes place as a result of rural tourism. The major thrust of this paper is to demonstrate conceptually as well as through common place instances that one comes across while exploring hitherto unexplored and least known rural tourist rural destinations. There are plenty passing references to the rural tourist destinations in the vicinity of Dharmshala in India which happens to be a centre of international tourism attraction because of the presence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and it has got spiritual dimensions for people connected across the world. The observation method to build up a narrative will be used as two of the authors happen to be the native of the place since birth and has spent four decades observing the tourists and area. Further, in order to find out the tourist opinions about the Himalayan region, 20 tourists in the Dharamshala region, from different areas and countries were approached with a small questionnaire where they were asked five open-ended questions. The narratives have been analysed by the authors in order to understand the spiritual and wellness dimensions of the Himalayan region, if any. Manual content analysis has been performed to build an opinion in this regard. Before collecting data for this study, ethics committee approval (Faculty of Humanities, Social and Management Sciences, Elizade University; Date: 16.05.2023) and informed consent (verbal) was obtained from the participants.

The approach of triangulation is also followed in order to establish the validity of the answers. Literature support from SCOPUS database has been taken to contend the third research question. The research questions that the author would like to explore are as follows:

Research Questions/ Statements:

1. What are the spiritual and wellness dimensions of travel in the Himalayan regions?
2. How do these dimensions promote sustainability?
3. What role does rural tourism and rural entrepreneurship play in value creation?

What are the spiritual and wellness dimensions of travel in the Himalayan regions?

The Himalayan region has been associated with mental wellness and spiritual dimensions for a long time. The region has been associated with various religious and spiritual practices. Talking particularly about the Dharamshala region which is in the lap of the Himalayas, it has been a world-famous tourist destination due to many reasons. The state of Himachal has been known as land of Gods and deities. Many religions have shown their prominence mark in the Himalayan regions. The region has vast treks, plenty of river side destinations which attract tourists around the world.

The Himalayan regions are best known for countless spiritual traditions and have always been a rich source of inspiration for many practitioners throughout history (Manhas & Kour, 2014). Various religions like Hinduism and Buddhism have contributed towards the cultural and spiritual dimensions of the Himalayan regions. The Himalayas are considered to be sacred in Hinduism. They are considered to be the home of gods and goddesses. These regions are marked by the existence of many ancient temples and places of worship. They are considered to be a holy place for pilgrimage in various aspects. These regions have also been associated with Buddhism. There are several monasteries, and retreat centres with strong spiritual presence in the Himalayas. The Himalayas are also associated with serenity and peace. They are considered to be ideal places for meditation and spiritual retreats (Manhas, Charak & Sharma, 2019). Many spiritual seekers visit Himalayas for various meditational practices. Tourists always seek solitude and find a deeper connection with their inner self in the lap of the Himalayas. The Himalayas are also considered to be an important source of inspiration for practicing yoga and Ayurveda (Arora & Sharma, 2022). Presently, various healing and well-being practices can be found in these regions in the form of ashramas and meditation centres. The region has been nourishing many spiritual practitioners and famous yoga masters who have contributed to the development and dissemination of ancient Indian practices (Arora & Sharma, 2023). The Himalayan region has also been the nurturer of various cultures and local communities (Berreman,1963). There are deep rooted beliefs of nature, spirits and deities which are associated with particular regions, places, forests and mountains (Luchesi, 2006). The rituals and ceremonies of these tribes and communities are conducted in the lap of nature in order to seek blessings from various natural forces, including mountains and hills. They are the land of indigenous cultures and local castes and tribes (Rana et.al, 2021). The Himalayas are also the lands of mystic experiences to many. Certain esoteric practices like tantra and mantra can also be found being practiced by certain communities here (Tiwari & Pande, 2010). It is also the route to various famous pilgrimages and is considered highly sacred in Hinduism. In order to understand the opinions of tourists in the present scenario the narratives from 17 tourists out of the twenty random tourists in the Dharamshala region were found relevant. Some of the excerpts to the question “How do you think the Himalayan region promotes spirituality and wellness among tourists?” are stated below:

Note: No language edits or transcribing of the responses have been done, the responses have been filled by the traveler himself/herself and have been reproduced in their original form below:

Excerpt 1
“The Himalayan region is a beautiful home to many ancient temples belonging to different religions like Buddhism and Hinduism. Himachal is one part of this Himalayan region and it is land of many Gods and goddesses. I usually visit Himachal with my family to attend the temples of different deities on different occasions like *Navaratri’s*. I also visit Himachal to enjoy the beauty of greenery and the hills. In winters, I go to places like McLeod Ganj, the *Bhagsunath* temple”

Excerpt 2
“The Himalayan region is known for bringing peace to one’s mind. We come to visit these regions to get away from the hectic life of the city. There are a number of spiritual places in the Himalayan regions. One can go visit these spiritual destinations and can

feel a sense of belonging and calmness. The environment of these places possesses healing benefits. I feel energetic and full of life after visiting. My mind is refreshed and I can focus on my day-to-day tasks afterwards."

Excerpt 3
"The Himalayan region promotes spirituality and wellness among tourists by offering a unique blend of ancient traditions, stunning natural beauty, and holistic wellness practices."

Excerpt 4
"The region is home to some of the world's oldest spiritual traditions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. These traditions offer a variety of practices that can help tourists connect with their inner selves and find peace and tranquility."

Excerpt 5
"The region offers a variety of holistic wellness practices, such as yoga, meditation, and Ayurveda. These practices can help tourists improve their physical, mental, and emotional well-being."

Excerpt 6
"In my opinion the Himalayan region is doing its share of promoting spirituality and wellness amongst tourists as there are various religious sites, spiritual landscapes, pilgrimage centres in our region and tourists are often seen visiting these places."

Excerpt 7
"The Himalayan region's unique combination of natural beauty, sacred sites, spiritual traditions, and wellness offerings create an environment that facilitates self-discovery, inner growth, and holistic well-being for those seeking spiritual and wellness experiences."

By analysing the content of the responses given by the tourists, it is quite clear that the Himalayan regions are regarded to be the combination of beauty and spirituality. They also offer the wellness environment for the inner growth and holistic development of humankind. They're associated with giving inner peace and strength to the mind and soul. Further, most of the responses are inclined towards the spiritual practices being propagated by His Holiness Dalai Lama to make it a spiritual destination along with the spiritual practices of Hinduism being prevalent in these lands. The Himalayan region is associated with temples and monasteries and is considered appropriate for religious practices by the majority of respondents. When the respondents were asked about the Dharamshala region in particular, most of them associated Dharamshala with being a spiritual destination due to the facilities of the meditation and yoga retreats available in the region. The presence of various Tibetan monasteries and the dominance of Buddhism and Hinduism is also regarded to be the reason for the region to be considered spiritual.

Spirituality and wellness are intertwined in the Himalayan regions with each other. We can find a unique blend of spiritual traditions as well as healing practices in these regions (Vidyarthi, Samant & Sharma, 2013). The experiences of the tourists in the Himalayan regions are very profound and transformative in various aspects (Parashar & Chandel, 2019). In order to seek spiritual solace and blessings, as well as for finding the connection with the supreme divine, various travellers undertake pilgrimages in these regions to various sites, temples, monasteries and routes. The travel to various pilgrimages can be very transformative for the pilgrims, which contributes to one's well-being and spiritual growth (Tomer, 2011). The Himalayas are considered to be home to numerous spiritual gurus and teachers who have preserved as well as transmitted their wisdom and spiritual practices from generations to generations (Derasaria & Kumar, 2011). When tourists try to seek knowledge and guidance from these gurus, they gain insight and tools for personal growth as well as self-discovery which paves the way to the spiritual transformation of one's overall well-being. The Himalayan regions offer a perfect environment for bringing harmony to the mind and body. The serenity and solace which nature offers in these landscapes help one to find and seek a holistic sense of well-being. The spiritual practices which are prevalent in these areas provide a perfect environment for the travelers exploring the dimensions of physical and mental wellness. These regions have always offered plenty of meditational workshops and wellness training programs. The rich biodiversity of the region and abundance of flora and fauna have given opportunities to healers, resorts and spas to provide therapies, treatments and wellness programs. Ayurveda which is a traditional healing practice is very close to the holistic wellbeing of humans and nature. It promotes sustainable practices. Further the region is a hub to Yoga retreats and related wellness programs. The yogic practices focus on physical postures, breathing exercises, meditation and is all about bringing balance in the mind and body for which the Himalayan region provides a perfect environment. These retreats provide opportunities for rejuvenation, wellness and de-stress which enhances overall well-being. The pure air and rich environment with a focus on organic products add to the benefits of the region and therefore it is becoming a preferred destination for international tourists. Nature acts like a strong healer and the Himalayas provide a pristine natural environment. Nature walks, fresh air, mineral rich water, treks on mountains, organic food promotes relaxation, wellness and reduces life stress.

There are several holy places, temples, monasteries, and pilgrimage routes throughout the Himalayas. Many people travel on pilgrimages to these holy locations in search of spiritual comfort, benefits, and a sense of kinship with the divine. Even just going on a pilgrimage can be a life-changing journey that advances one's spiritual development and general well-being.

How sustainability is related

There is a close relationship between spirituality and sustainability. When we observe minutely, we can find that all the religions stress on the interconnection of all beings and the significance of living in peace with the environment in many spiritual traditions. This point of view motivates people to see the intrinsic worth of the environment or nature as a whole and to care for it. People are more inclined to adopt sustainable behaviours and contribute to the preservation of the environment when they have a strong sense of connection to nature.

Spirituality frequently demands routines that foster mindfulness and presence in the present moment, such as meditation, prayer, or respecting nature and the gifts of nature. Due to their increased awareness, people are better able to understand how their actions affect the environment and make more thoughtful decisions. With spiritual orientation, a positive mindset is inculcated. We can lessen our consumption, waste, and ecological footprint by adopting responsible behaviour towards ecology and human beings. A moral and ethical foundation offered by spirituality directs people toward sustainable activities. Compassion, gentleness, and non-harming/ nonviolence are some of the important virtues that are emphasised in many spiritual traditions. These principles can be further expanded or be associated with promoting ecological values, minimising environmental harm, and giving the wellbeing of all living things top priority.

People who are spiritually inclined always follow the path of material detachments and are compassionate towards all living beings. They follow the path of love, compassion and bliss to find happiness in simplicity. The Himalayas have been a source of inspiration to many sages, saints, gurus and teachers in this respect for centuries. This viewpoint simply opposes the consumerist culture that encourages wasteful and excessive purchasing habits. People can live more sustainably by embracing simplicity and letting go of their material desires, which will lessen their impact on the environment. Nature, especially the Himalayas and Himalayan cultures and traditions are the best influencers in this regard.

Since the past, present, and future are all intertwined, spirituality frequently emphasises the bigger picture of existence. This long-term outlook encourages people to think about the sustainability of the world and the welfare of future generations. Spiritual people are more inclined to adopt sustainable behaviours that protect resources for future generations because they understand that our actions now have ramifications for the future. To further explore the relationship between spirituality and sustainability the respondents of the study were asked: How do you think a spiritual destination promotes sustainability? The following excerpts from the respondents' interview support the notion fully:

Excerpt 1
"It develops a kind responsibility and respect towards the place in minds of the tourists to not violate the tourist destination."

Excerpt 2
"A spiritual destination always promotes sustainability greatly by emphasising mindful consumerism"

Excerpt 3
"A spiritual destination promotes sustainability as whenever I visit such spiritual destinations with beautiful nature, I become more conscious about protecting environment."

Excerpt 4
"A spiritual destination awakens one's sense of belonging to place and life. So as of my experience I want future generations to feel the same and enjoy these hidden gems by practicing sustainable activities keeping the environment clean and green."

Excerpt 5
"Sustainability is the need of the hour. Nowadays most of the things are taking the form of digitisation, like CCTV cameras. So, it's an upgradation to the existing process. Moreover, it promotes eco-tourism and environment awareness among the local guardians of the place. These are the promoters and supporters of sustainability."

Excerpt 6
"Spiritual destinations can promote sustainability in a number of ways. For example, they can: Encourage visitors to connect with nature and appreciate the beauty of the natural world. Promote respect for local cultures and traditions. Support sustainable businesses and practices. Raise awareness of environmental issues. Inspire people to live more sustainably in their own lives. In short, spiritual destinations can help people to see the interconnectedness of all things and to develop a sense of responsibility for the planet. This can lead to more sustainable behavior, both at home and when traveling."

Excerpt 7
"There are ongoing cleaning drives and the thrust on being plastic-free, and when tourists come and see the places they tend to act and follow the guidelines of the place and will protect the peace and sanctity of the place.

Excerpt 8
"In a strife torn world people are searching for peace. They require places which can bust their stress."

Excerpt 9

"The influence of humanity on the environment and the use of natural resources may be affected by spirituality, through awareness for developing a greater conscience about the implications of human actions and needs to adjust these in achieving sustainable development."

Excerpt 10

"Spiritual destinations promote sustainability by encouraging mindful practices, fostering a deep connection with nature, promoting cultural preservation, and supporting local communities."

Excerpt 11

"Promoting more spiritual tourism enhances the scope for rural entrepreneurship which in turn helps sustainability"

Excerpt 12

"Spiritual destinations can promote sustainability in several ways: Connection with Nature, Mindfulness, Ethical Values, Education and Awareness: Community Engagement. Moreover, spiritual destinations provide spaces for introspection, connection with nature, and the cultivation of values that promote sustainability."

Excerpt 13

"Spiritual destinations can operate as role models for ecologically responsible and culturally respectful tourism by incorporating sustainable concepts and practices into their design. These places have the power to motivate people to live sustainably, make thoughtful decisions, and advance the welfare of the planet and all of its inhabitants."

The excerpts above stated from the narratives given by the tourists directly indicate that a spiritual destination can promote sustainability by not emphasising the aspects of consumerism. Spiritual destinations are always a motivation to people that they should protect the ecology and the environment should be taken care of in a way that the next generations are also able to see that. They promote ecotourism as well as environmental awareness among local people to protect the natural environment of that destination. They are also supporters of the cultures and traditions prevalent in that particular destination. Which is in one way a sustainable practice. When we look for peace and tranquility in nature, it alleviates our stress and it may help us to achieve a greater conscious about human actions and lead our way towards sustainable development. Another important aspect of being in nature is indulging into more ethical practices and community engagement actions, which provide a way of introspection and connection with nature for the cultivation of sustainability among the masses.

What role do Rural Tourism and Rural Entrepreneurship play in value creation?

Rural entrepreneurship and rural tourism have a significant influence on value creation, both socially and economically. The hospitality and tourism sector serves as a favourable environment for entrepreneurship because startups and entrepreneurs are essential for tourism value creation and innovation (Solvoll et al., 2015; Kallmuenzer et al., 2019). Rural tourism generates demand for local products & services, attracting tourists, and boosting economic activity. On the other side, rural entrepreneurship includes creating and running a business venture in rural areas, which promotes local economies, creates wealth, and reduces unemployment. The growth of rural tourism destinations greatly relies on creating new tourism startups that meet customers' needs through tourism products and services (Cakmak et al., 2018). Rural communities can create job opportunities (Nagaraju & Chandrashekara, 2014) and business avenues through rural tourism and entrepreneurship.

Tourists are showing a huge interest in rural tourism experiences after the pandemic era as rural tourism has expanded entrepreneurship toward the rural dimension (Madanaguli et al., 2021) and rural tourism has emerged as a critical development strategy for rural areas (Guan & Huang, 2023). The preservation of cultural traditions and heritage is promoted through rural tourism. The distinctive cultural landscapes, traditional arts and crafts, regional festivals, and historical monuments that can be found in rural areas draw the attention of tourists. Rural tourism and small business development in rural areas can promote natural resource preservation and their sustainable use. Rural places frequently have diverse biomes, beautiful scenery, and distinctive ecosystems. Rural areas can generate value by protecting their natural resources and bringing in environmentally conscious tourists by encouraging eco-tourism (Dorobantu & Nistoreanu, 2012) and implementing sustainable practices such as responsible waste management, energy conservation, and the protection of natural habitats. In conclusion, rural entrepreneurship and tourism can help create value by preserving cultural heritage, fostering community base tourism, protecting natural resources and encouraging economic growth. By leveraging their unique assets and resources, rural communities can create sustainable and inclusive growth while preserving their distinctive identity and way of life.

In order to promote sustainable tourism practices, cultural tourism is important because cultural tourism promotes unique traditions, heritage, and practices of a particular location. The promotion and preservation of regional culture and traditions is one of the essential elements of sustainable tourism. Authentic cultural expressions of a community, such as its art, music, dance, food, festivals, and historical places, are the focus of cultural tourism. Cultural tourism promotes a sense of pride and identity within the community by enticing tourists to respect and appreciate local customs. As a result, cultural heritage is preserved, and traditional wisdom is passed on to the next generations.

A Tree map visualization of rural tourism and rural entrepreneurship-related research work

In order to understand the relationship between rural tourism and rural entrepreneurship, we explored the literature from the Scopus database by searching the key strings as "Rural Tourism and Rural Entrepreneurship". The results were analysed using R studio, and a tree map has been prepared in order to see the most frequent occurring keywords, to see the contributions of researchers in the field of rural entrepreneurship and rural tourism and to understand the future possibilities of research in this area.

Figure 1 shows the most frequently occurring keywords in the tree map which are: rural tourism, with 42 times occurrence; tourism with an 81 times occurrence; rural entrepreneurship 72 times; sustainable development 49 times and sustainable tourism 34 times of keyword occurrence in the research field. This means that most of the research in the tourism field has revolved around these major keywords and the research community has focused mainly on these dimensions, as these are the prominent hotspots of the field. Rural tourism is essential to promote rural entrepreneurship (Gannon, 1994; Wilson et al., 2001; Utami et al., 2023) which in turn helps in the development and growth of rural areas sustainably. Rural entrepreneurship means the initiatives taken by people or communities in rural areas to create and develop small ventures (Dabson, 2001; McElwee & Atherton, 2021). Rural tourism fosters entrepreneurship by utilizing rural communities' unique cultural, environmental, and historical resources (Lane, 1994; Fang & Fang, 2020). Rural tourism and rural entrepreneurship go together, because rural tourism gives rural entrepreneurs a market and potential customer for their goods and services. As a result of this demand, rural communities experience an increase in revenue and job prospects. Rural entrepreneurs contribute to the preservation and development of cultural heritage by marketing local goods, crafts, and services, improving tourists' tourism experience.

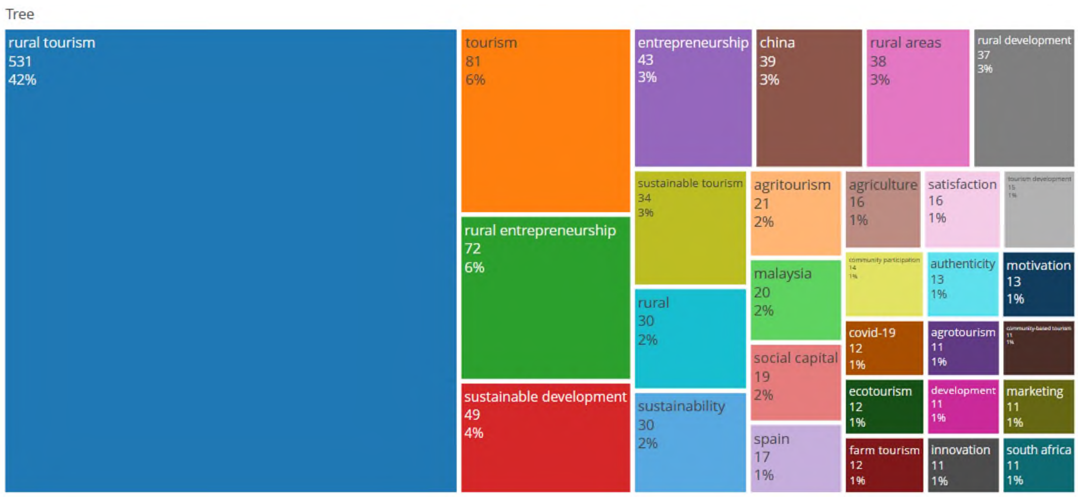

Figure 1. Tree map of author's keywords.

Source: Extracted from RStudio

Rural entrepreneurship also promotes innovation and economic diversification in rural areas (Ozoliņš, 2015; Sá, 2018). Entrepreneurs open up new opportunities for economic growth and draw investment to rural areas as they recognize and take advantage of niche markets and developing trends in the tourism sector. Rural areas become even more attractive destinations for tourists because the rural area of the Himalayas has beautiful hills, serene rivers, magnificent weather, divine holy places, and is full of peace; this all results in increased economic activity. More importantly, the growth of rural tourism and entrepreneurship encourages the rural community to be independent, empowered and can boost the local economy with the help of community-based tourism. In a nutshell, rural development and growth is the combination of rural entrepreneurship and rural tourism. Rural entrepreneurship improves the tourism experience and helps ensure rural communities' economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

In the tree map, other keywords have a very low frequency, which means the research work on those themes has not been explored much. The keywords are rural (30), eco-tourism and farm tourism, with a frequency of 12 each. Another important keyword is agrotourism and innovation, with 11 occurrences each. Promoting rural development while emphasising sustainability and protecting local resources relies heavily on eco-tourism, farm tourism, and agrotourism (Fagioli, 2014; Streifeneder & Dax, 2020). For prompting sustainable agriculture practices, farm tourism and agrotourism are highly important as they are rooted within organic farming and organic farming is a growing trend. Farm tourism enables tourists to participate in agricultural pursuits, learn about farming methods, and gain first-hand knowledge of rural living (Yu & Spencer, 2021). While agrotourism highlights rural cultural traditions and history by fusing agriculture with tourism. It encourages agricultural diversification through niche markets like organic farming and farm-to-table ideas, strengthens local ties, and fosters local entrepreneurship. In a nutshell, eco-tourism, farm tourism, agro tourism, and innovation work together to support sustainable rural development by fostering economic growth, protecting the environment, and glorifying rural culture.

Further the respondents of the study were asked: “How do you think rural tourism can promote value creation?”

The answer from most of them was quite affirmative and some of the excerpts are given below:

Excerpt 1
“It can create a bigger value to small rural entrepreneurs in monetary terms. Also, it promotes the unique rituals and customs of different places as our country is very culturally diverse.”

Excerpt 2
“Rural tourism can promote the value creation as it generates economic benefits for the local people. It can also bring social value as it brings different entrepreneurial opportunities to local people.”

Excerpt 3
“For realizing the value creation potential of rural tourism, it is important to adopt sustainable practices, involve the local community in decision making processes and ensure that tourism development aligns with the cultural, social and environmental values of the rural areas”.

Excerpt 4
“Rural tourism indeed promotes value creation in the form of the generation of GDP, employment and productivity of regional products. Plus, these are the main indicators of any successful economy”.

Excerpt 5
“Rural tourism can promote value creation by providing economic opportunities for local communities, preserving and promoting local culture and heritage, and protecting the environment. Rural tourism can create jobs in hospitality, agriculture, and other sectors. It can also help to boost local economies by increasing spending on goods and services.”

Excerpt 6
“Rural tourism can help to preserve and promote local culture and heritage by providing opportunities for visitors to learn about and experience traditional ways of life. Rural tourism can help to protect the environment by encouraging visitors to appreciate and respect the natural beauty of rural areas. It can also help to raise awareness of environmental issues and encourage visitors to adopt sustainable practices. In short, rural tourism can promote value creation by providing economic, cultural, and environmental benefits to local communities.”

Excerpt 7
“By promoting the culture, spirituality and lifestyle of the people. We can definitely boost rural tourism and it will undoubtedly lead to value creation overall.”

Excerpt 8
“Rural tourism means that people can market their products which are ethnic and linked to the traditional arts and crafts. This will help in conserving their cultural ethos as well. Moreover, it will provide many opportunities for the rural folk to grow”

Excerpt 9
Yes, rural tourism promotes value creation but it needs more time and efforts from the ground level.

Excerpt 10
“Rural Tourism increases the influx of travellers since these offbeat places offer a beautiful and relaxing ambiance. This thereby enhances the economic growth of remote rural regions. This ensures a stable income to the local community through various aspects - employment, entrepreneurship, or investment.”

Excerpt 11
“Rural tourism can play a crucial role in promoting local economic growth and bringing about social transformation. To facilitate rural tourism, the government should provide both financial and infrastructure support.”

Excerpt 12
“Rural tourism promotes value creation through the preservation of local culture, economic opportunities for communities, community development and empowerment, sustainable practices, and authentic and immersive experiences for tourists.”

Excerpt 13

"Rural tourism promotes rural entrepreneurship thereby creating new products and services, they stimulate new employment, which ultimately results in the acceleration of economic development and promote value creation".

Excerpt 14

"Rural tourism can promote value creation by generating economic opportunities, preserving cultural heritage, conserving the environment, empowering local communities, improving infrastructure and services, and facilitating knowledge exchange."

Excerpt 15

"In general, rural tourism fosters value creation through creating job opportunities, protecting regional heritage, strengthening local communities, encouraging environmental stewardship, and promoting cross-cultural dialogue and education. It can improve locals' quality of life, help rural areas develop holistically, and provide visitors with memorable experiences."

Thus, local economies can be boosted by rural tourism by attracting and serving tourists and providing economic opportunities to the local entrepreneurs and service providers. When tourists travel to rural areas, they generally spend money on lodging, meals, transportation, mementos/souvenirs and other local services. Thereby tourist expenditure is induced and has the potential to boost the local economy, help small companies locally, and create jobs. Most of the rural communities frequently have distinctive cultural traditions, heritage sites, local art, and local goods. These areas may conserve and present their unique identities through boosting rural tourism, which can increase pride in and admiration for regional customs, thereby promoting sustainability. As a result, local cultural traditions may become more resilient and intangible cultural assets may be preserved, which leads to higher value creation. Rural tourism can act as a motivator for the preservation and conservation of biodiversity and natural environments. There is a great need to safeguard these resources when tourists travel to rural areas for their spiritual and ecological interests. This requires the adoption of sustainable practices that support the long-term preservation of the ecosystem, such as responsible tourist policies, conservation initiatives, and environmental education programs. A lot of rural communities are strongly dependent on traditional businesses like agriculture or mining, which may be subject to market swings but most of them are based on sustainable practices. By focusing on economic activities, the rural communities can lessen their reliance on outside sources of income and become more robust to economic shocks by diversifying their sustainable economic activities.

Findings and Conclusion

The intersection of spirituality, wellness, value creation, entrepreneurship, and sustainability in the Himalayan regions can have several implications. The Himalayan areas are well-known for their extensive spiritual traditions and age-old knowledge. Traditional knowledge and practices can be preserved and promoted by integrating spirituality and wellness into entrepreneurial and sustainability activities. This can involve, among other things, eco-friendly farming techniques, mindfulness exercises, *yoga, Ayurveda*, traditional healing techniques, meditation and sustainable resource management. It is possible to add value and respect and preserve the Himalayan communities' cultural history by incorporating these practices into commercial endeavours.

The findings highlight that the Himalayan highlands are regarded as being serene and beautiful natural areas for spiritual retreats. There is an emphasis on holistic well-being that goes beyond financial considerations by highlighting wellness and spirituality in entrepreneurial and environmental activities. The sustainability of the environment can be considered part of this holistic approach, along with physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Entrepreneurs in these areas can launch businesses that value both the health of people and the environment by providing wellness retreats, meditation facilities, eco-friendly lodging, organic farming, and sustainable tourism experiences.

In the Himalayan areas, integrating spirituality, wellness, and sustainability can encourage and support entrepreneurship. An innovative and creative attitude can be encouraged by placing a strong emphasis on values, awareness, and connectivity. Entrepreneurs might spot chances to build enduring enterprises that adhere to wellness and spirituality-related ideals. This can include environmentally beneficial and socially conscious businesses like organic farming, environmentally friendly travel, alternative energy sources, the manufacturing of herbal medicines, and eco-crafts. Entrepreneurship in these fields can support local economic growth and employment while fostering sustainability and protecting the distinctive cultural and natural resources of the Himalayan regions. Local communities in the Himalayan areas can be strengthened through entrepreneurship that incorporates spirituality, wellness, and value creation. It is possible to develop inclusive and sustainable enterprises by incorporating community members in decision-making procedures, capacity building, and project ownership. Greater social cohesiveness, economic empowerment, and community resilience may result from this. People can be empowered to take an active part in entrepreneurship and sustainability activities through programs that support skill development, sustainable livelihoods, and community-based tourism.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Significant Trends in Asia's Wellness Tourism and Research Agenda: A Systematic Literature Review Analysis

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ABSTRACT
The research paper focused on the significant trends in the Wellness market, its demands and motivational factors, and the wellness tourism research agenda and policies that impact the Asian Wellness tourism industry in an Asian context. In a critical systematic literature review, the articles published on wellness topics in 143 Asian documents were selected from the Scopus and Web of Science databases published between 2003 and 2022. The performance analysis revealed that the theme's production reached an average annual growth rate of 17.67%. The recent trend of wellness tourism in Asian countries is based on wellness retreats that included holistic packages of services such as yoga, meditation, ayurvedic healing, spas, traditional experiences, forest parks, nature sceneries, characteristics food, ancient villages, hot springs, and mental healing. However, the research agenda was usually mixed with health and medical tourism. Health, satisfaction, experiences, and wellness tourism were used the most in the literature. This research paper presents deep insights to help policymakers develop policies which organizes and promotes their country's wellness tourism. It can be a reference document for further studies in wellness tourism in Asian countries.

Keywords: Wellness tourism, Trends, Asian countries, Wellness demand, Motivational factors, Wellness tourism structure, Science mapping, Knowledge structures

Introduction

In recent years, most Asian countries promoted tourism like never before. They recognized it as one of the most resilient and rapidly growing economic sectors. According to GWI (2022), the wellness economy for the Asia-Pacific region in 2019 was $1602.8 billion, which became $1500.2 billion in 2020 due to the COVID-19 outbreak. In 2017, the wellness economy was $1370.5 billion USD. It recorded 8.1 per cent growth during 2017-2019. A similar average annual growth rate was recorded between 2017 and 2019 for North America at 8.4 percent with 1514.0 billion USD, Europe at five percent with 1288.6 billion USD, and the Middle East-North Africa at 7.4 percent with 120.9 billion USD. This trend in the wellness economy also recorded a considerable decline in 2020. For the Asia-Pacific region -6.4 percent, North America -13.4 percent, Europe -11.4 percent, Latin America – 22.1 percent and the Middle East-North Africa-10.9 percent decline was recorded. The following table shows the wellness economy of 2020 by country.

Concept of Wellness Tourism

On the surface, tourism appears to be an action done by tourists for pleasure and entertainment, but a deep analysis discards this notion (Andreu et al., 2021). Wellness tourism is usually mixed with health and medical tourism (Voigt, 2014; Bezner, 2015), but it is conceptually different from both of those. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health to which well-being contributes as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO, 2020). Thus, wellness includes psychological, social, and physical health (Kahneman & Krueger, 2006). Similarly, Voigit (2014) said that wellness combines well-being and fitness.

Over the past decades, the wellness tourism industry experienced unprecedented growth (Bushell & Sheldon, 2009), attracting high-end tourists from Western and Asian countries. The reason for the unprecedented growth in the tourism industry is the significant growth in the wellness industry of Asian countries. The Global Wellness Economy Monitor report noted this development.

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Table 1. *Wellness Economy*

Top 10 Markets in Asia-Pacific (2020)	
US$ billions	
China	$682.7
Japan	$303.6
South Korea	$94.1
Australia	$84.4
India	$77.6
Taiwan	$38.4
Indonesia	$36.4
Philippines	$33.0
Thailand	$29.0
Malaysia	$24.4

Source. GWI, 2022

In 2015, tourists made 691 million wellness trips, an increase of 104 million visits from 2013. The total expenditures associated with wellness tourism reached $563 billion in January 2017 (Global Wellness Institute, 2017). GWI's 2021 report showed that its market reached $720 billion in 2019. Travelers worldwide made over 600 million national and international wellness trips in 2020. It was down from 936 million visits in comparison to 2019. Due to the pandemic and widespread travel disruptions, a drop was recorded to $436 billion in 2020. The GWI report estimates that wellness tourism will grow annually by +20.9%, with a $1.1 trillion market reach in 2025 as the world emerges from the global pandemic (Global Wellness Institute 2021). Several factors played a substantial role in the rapid growth of the "wellness industry," such as an increasingly hectic lifestyle, high levels of stress in the workforce, changes in religious and traditional community structures, people's desire to slow down their life and exploring themselves (Douglas, 2001; Pollock & Williams, 2000; Smith and Puczko', 2010).

This study sought to answer the research gap through the following research questions: (1) How has wellness tourism research in an Asian context grown over the last decades? (2) What are the knowledge structures (i.e., conceptual, social, and intellectual) of wellness tourism research in an Asian context? (3) What are the main features of wellness tourism research methods in an Asian context? Furthermore, (4) what does a proposed agenda for wellness tourism research in an Asian context for academics and practitioners look like? The study's main objective was to conduct a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of wellness tourism research in an Asian context.

Literature Review

Dimensions of Wellness Tourism

Wellness tourism commonly includes already healthy people proactively seeking engagement to maintain and enhance their overall wellness (GWI, 2018). Dunn (1959) described wellness as holistic as it includes four dimensions within the realm of the mind, body, spirit, and environment (Dillette et al., (2021). Thus, wellness tourism focuses on these four dimensions to facilitate wellness tourists.

Trends in Asian Wellness Tourism

The trends and opportunities for wellness tourism in Asia are mainly based on the components of yoga, meditation, and Ayurveda.[1], spas, and therapeutic[2] bath culture, nature, beauty and body treatments. Before 1994, very few spas were available in the Southern-Eastern Asia region. Today, most big hotels offer spas (Csirmaz & Pető, (2015). India's wellness tourism in South Asia is the fastest-growing among 46 countries worldwide. India scored 10 in the medical tourism index (2020-21) and seventh in wellness tourism, with a revenue of 16.3 billion USD. According to the GWI 2018c report, 3.8 million jobs were created,

[1] According to Atharva Veda (the last of the four Vedas), Ayurveda is the traditional Hindu system of medicine. Cures and treatments are done for several diseases through diet, herbal treatment, and yogic breathing.
[2] medicine.

representing 14 per cent of total employment (National et al. for Medical and Wellness Tourism 2022). The Indian government promotes wellness tourism through 'Incredible India', 'Heal in India' and 'Atithi Devo Bhava' campaigns. India's wellness tourism offers retreats that include holistic packages such as yoga, meditation, and naturopathy.[3], marma therapy[4], ayurvedic healing, spas, a traditional experience and journey (National et al. for Medical and Wellness Tourism 2022). The government facilitates digital apps and social media platforms to prospective tourists.

China's wellness tourism components are based on natural features such as clean water, fresh air, a health-spa, forest parks, healing qualities of food, ancient villages, hot springs, and rural scenery (Heung & Kucukusta, (2013). It is mainly catering to domestic visitors. A study revealed that the development of China's wellness tourism products could be more varied, and a complete countryside wellness tourism system still needs to be established (Feng et al., 2021). Wellness tourism research was also merged with medical and health tourism in China.

As global wellness tourism was undergoing dramatic changes post-pandemic, the **Korean** wellness tourism industry addressed the sag of in-country tourism. The policymakers made policy changes which promoted local wellness tourism. Han and An's (2022) research revealed that Korean wellness tourism required integrated platforms and robust IT infrastructure to promote the country's wellness tourism industry based on oriental medicine, beauty, spas, forest and nature, meditation, and healing. The country promoted 25 must-visit wellness attractions in Korea. The first-time awareness of wellness tourism is associated with the Korean Wellness Tourism Festival which was organized by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism in 2021. **Japan**'s wellness tourism is based on forest healing, hot springs, Marine healing (thalassotherapy), medical spas, and natural healing (Kim, 2021).

Thailand is considered one of Southeast Asia's leading and fastest-growing tourism destinations. One of the reasons for this growth is wellness and medical tourism. The strength of Thailand's wellness tourism is focused on spa resorts and traditional Thai massage. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) promotes forty-one spa and wellness resorts. These centres are primarily known for traditional Thai massage with traditional medicine, which helps to relieve physical and mental anxiety and stiffness to improve well-being among tourists. According to GWI, Thailand ranked 13th in 2017 in wellness tourism by earning around 12 billion dollars from 12.5 million wellness tourists. According to UNWTO (2020b), these wellness tours recorded an increase of 13 per cent from 2015 to 2017, 50 per cent more than overall international tours. In 2018, international tourist arrivals grew by 7.3%, ranking Thailand as the ninth most-visited country with earnings that reached more than 38 million (GWI 2018c).

Asian countries like India and Thailand followed similar trends as both integrated medical treatment with wellness experiences and offered comprehensive wellness packages with traditional healing. In contrast, China offers Chinese medicine with medical procedures like cosmetic surgery and dental treatments. This integration attracts tourists who seek rejuvenation along with medical care. Innovative digital platforms and mobile applications are being developed to provide personalized wellness experiences, including virtual coaching, fitness tracking, mindfulness apps and online consultation. These Asian countries' wellness tourism offerings are more inclined towards nature, such as Ayurveda, forest bathing, nature-based therapies, and spa treatments in pristine natural settings.

Knowledge Structure and Keyword Issues in Asian Wellness Tourism Research

In Asian countries, wellness tourism has a vital role to play. Scholars have researched wellness and well-being, but research on wellness tourism was less profound. Many researchers studied and evaluated medical and health tourism, which is conceptualized as wellness tourism. Cohen (2008) did exploratory research on medical tourism in Thailand. This study focused on key sociological issues related to the core development process of the Thai medical tourism industry, the commodification of Thai Medicine, the emergence and development of overseas-oriented medical facilities, creating and combining hotels with high-class remedial and hospitality amenities for foreign clients, and the consequences of such action on the Thai medical system. In his study, Connell (2006) examined medical tourism in India, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Mauritius, Cuba, and Australia. The study showed that medical tourism was likely to grow exponentially as medical services moved towards privatization, making it cost differentials. As a result, Western insurance companies might be encouraged to provide overseas treatment to reduce costs.

Research Agenda, Keyword Issue and Methods of Wellness Tourism in The Asian Context

Although a few research studies with the keywords of wellness tourism, yoga tourism, and health tourism were found, the more prominent topics for research by Asian scholars were wellness hotel centres (Chi, 2020), spiritual and physical healing through yoga (Dillette, 2019), health and wellness (Smith, 2010), and the cultural perspective of health and wellness tourism (Huang & Xu, 2014). During the last ten years, research targeted the keyword issues related to wellness tourism. In an Asian context, the

[3] A system that treats disease without drugs and surgery. It emphasizes using natural elements such as air, water, and herbs. Physical means tissue manipulation and electrotherapy.

[4] Marma therapy in Sanskrit means hidden common ailment to neuromuscular severe disease can be treated by marma therapy.

wellness tourism concept is related to the destination image of countries such as India, China, Russia, and South Korea. Due to Ayurveda's rich history and culture of yoga (Rawat, 2017), India is considered the fastest-rising wellness tourism destination, with an annual growth rate of 22% (Gregoire, 2013). The concept of yoga retreats is defined as a program where the central theme and purpose for travel is yoga practice, and the total travel experience is planned and developed around this (Lehto et al., 2006). This is considered an important element for promoting and motivating the Indian wellness industry.

Methodology

The bibliometric analysis adopted in this work proposed two techniques: performance analysis and scientific mapping. Performance analysis evaluates individual contributions, considering the number of publications, citations, and journal impact factors. It identifies the most successful researchers, research groups and institutions. While scientific mapping examines the relationships between research components through keyword co-occurrence networks, revealing trends, gaps, and the overall structure of the research landscape. These techniques made it possible to identify emerging fields, track developments and visualize collaborations within the research community. The packages include R's bibliometric program (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017) and CiteSpace software (Synnestvedt et al., 2005).

Search Queries

The search query in the Scopus database looked for documents related to "health tourism", "spiritual tourism", or "yoga tourism" in the countries/regions of Timor-Leste, Asia, Turkey, Southeast Asia, China, India, Singapore, Philippines, Hong Kong, Macau, Mongolia, Taipei, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Myanmar, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Vietnam, Pakistan, Peru, Japan, Qatar, Taiwan, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Bali, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Namibia, Bhutan, Iran, Maldives, and Nepal. The query specified for keywords in the document's title, abstract, and keywords fields. Only documents written in English were included in the selected database; documents published in 2023 were excluded.

Data Description

Table 2. *Descriptive Indicators of the dDatabase*

Description	Results
MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT THE DATA	
Timespan	1996:2022
Sources (Journals, Books, etc.)	267
Documents	408
Annual Growth Rate %	17.42
Document Average Age	5,52
Average citations per doc	11.8
References	18237
DOCUMENT CONTENTS	
Keywords Plus (ID)	1125
Author's Keywords (DE)	1167
AUTHORS	
Authors	960
Authors of single-authored docs	95
AUTHORS COLLABORATION	
Single-authored docs	107
Co-Authors per Doc	2.67
International co-authorships %	21.08

The table 2 provides information about the dataset for the timespan from 1996 to 2022 and includes 408 documents from 267 sources, such as journals and books. The annual growth rate for the dataset is 17.42%, indicating that the number of documents included has been steadily increasing. The average age of the documents is 5.52 years, meaning that most of the dataset consists of relatively recent publications.

The table provides insight into the contents of the documents, with 1,125 Keywords Plus (ID) and 1,167 Author's Keywords (DE) listed. These keywords help researchers identify and categorize the topics covered by the dataset. Additionally, the dataset includes 960 authors, with 95 writing single-authored documents. This suggests that most of the dataset consists of documents with multiple authors.

The table provides information about author collaboration within the dataset. Specifically, it indicates that 107 documents were single-authored, while the remaining documents had an average of 2.67 co-authors per document. Furthermore, the dataset had a relatively high percentage (21.08%) of international co-authorships, indicating that collaboration across different countries and regions is standard within the dataset.

Performance Analysis

Published Documents Evolution

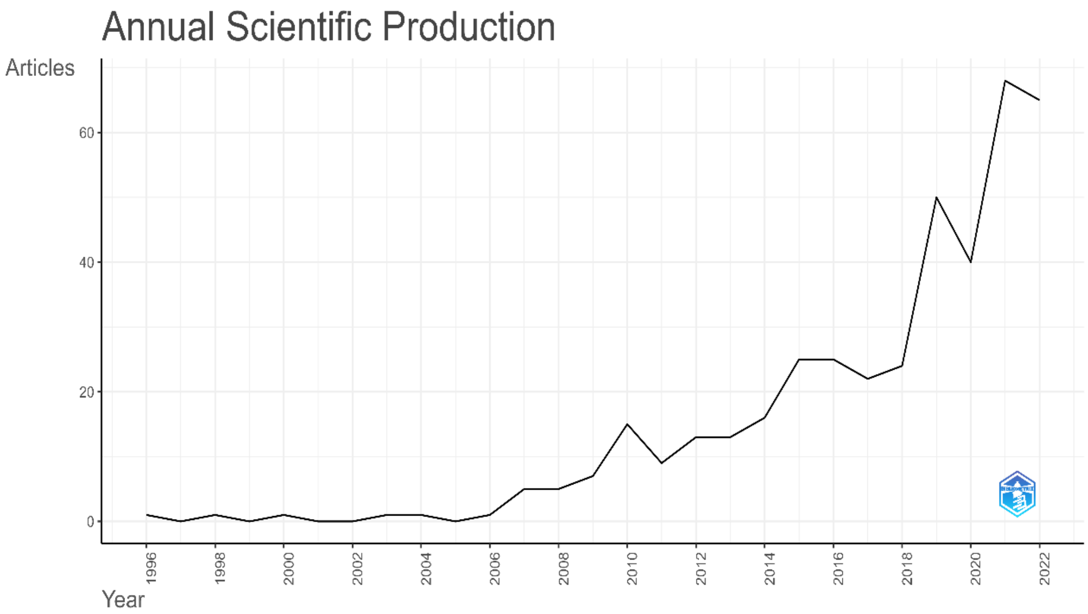

Figure 1. Title: evolution of publications in wellness tourism.

The graphic depicts the evolution of publications in the field of wellness tourism from 2001 to 2020. The vertical axis represents the number of publications, while the horizontal axis represents the year of publication.

The graph shows a steady increase in wellness tourism publications from 2001 to 2020. In 2001, there were only a few publications related to wellness tourism, but the number of publications increased substantially over the years, reaching a peak in 2020.

It is also interesting to note that there was a significant increase in publications after 2010. This could be attributed to the growing popularity of wellness tourism in recent years, which has led to increased interest and research in this area.

Source's impact

- H-index: a metric that measures the impact of a journal's publications based on the number of citations received by its articles.
- TC: the total number of citations received by the journal's articles
- NP: The number of published papers
- PY_start: the year in which the journal's publication started.

The table 3 shows that the highest h-index values are found in two journals: the Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research and Sustainability (Switzerland), with an h-index of 7. Regarding total citations received, the journal with the highest value is Tourism Management, with 673 citations, followed by Tourism Review, with 432 citations.

Table 3. *10 Most Impactful Sources*

Element	h index	TC	NP	PY start
Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research	7	189	8	2013
Sustainability (Switzerland)	7	144	13	2015
Tourism Management	6	673	6	2007
International Journal of Tourism Research	5	296	6	2009
Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing	5	132	7	1998
Anatolia	4	137	4	2003
Iranian Journal of Public Health	4	69	5	2013
Tourism Review	4	432	4	2019
Annals of Tourism Research	3	98	3	2011
International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	3	82	3	2013

Most of the journals have a relatively low h-index, which suggests that their articles are less frequently cited than those in the top two journals. However, the number of published papers varies significantly between the journals, with Tourism Management and Tourism Review having the highest number of published papers (6 and 4, respectively). Finally, the starting year of the journals ranges from 1998 (Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing) to 2019 (Tourism Review).

Authors Impact:

Table 4. *10 Most Impactful Authors*

Element	h_index	TC	NP	PY_start
Timothy J Lee	5	111	6	2015
Pramod Sharma	5	194	8	2018
Heesup Han	4	64	4	2018
Jogendra Kumar Nayak	4	180	4	2018
Honggang Xu	4	120	5	2014
Feng-Hsiang Chang	3	91	3	2013
Kaung-Hwa Chen	3	91	3	2013
Farooq Haq	3	94	7	2009
Mang He	3	54	3	2021
Liyuan Huang	3	107	3	2014

Table 4 provides an overview of authors in wellness tourism research based on their h-index, total citations, number of publications, and starting years. The h-index and total citation counts indicate the authors' research impact and influence, while the number of publications and starting years provide insights into their productivity and tenure in the field. Timothy J. Lee has an h-index of 5, which indicates that he has published at least 5 papers that have received at least 5 citations each.

His total citation count is 111, suggesting that other scholars in the field have cited his research multiple times. With six publications starting in 2015, he has been actively contributing to the field of wellness tourism in recent years. Pramod Sharma, with an h-index of 5 and a higher total citation count of 194, has received substantial recognition and influence within the wellness tourism domain. Having published eight papers starting in 2018, he has been actively engaged in scholarly work for a relatively short time.

Heesup Han, Jogendra Kumar Nayak and Honggang Xu have h-indices of 4, indicating a commendable research impact and productivity level. While Heesup Han and Jogendra Kumar Nayak have fewer publications (4) and lower total citation counts (64 and 180, respectively), XU H has published five papers with a higher total citation count of 120. The authors' research contributions to wellness tourism have likely gained attention and recognition within the academic community. Feng-Hsiang Chang and Kaung-Hwa Chen have h-indices of 3, which is still respectable and reflects moderate research impact. With three publications each, their total citation counts are the same at 91. Their research has contributed to the knowledge base in wellness tourism since 2013. With an h-index of 3, Farooq Haq's research has garnered moderate attention and impact in the field. His work has expanded since 2009 with seven publications, allowing for deeper insights and contributions. Mang He and Liyuan Huang have recently entered the field of wellness tourism research, as evident from their starting years (2021 and 2014, respectively). While their h-indices and total citation counts are at 3, their contributions and impact are still emerging.

Most Locally Cited Documents

Analyzing the most cited document permits this article to identify the most influential and impactful publications within a specific field of study. By examining the citation patterns and frequency of particular documents, researchers can gain insights into the seminal works that have shaped the development and discourse of wellness tourism literature (Martín-Martín et al., 2018).

Table 5. *10 Most Locally Cited Documents*

Document	Year	Local Citations	Global Citations
(Lehto et al., 2006) "Yoga Tourism as a Niche Within the Wellness Tourism Market".	2006	27	106
(Connell, 2013) "Contemporary medical tourism: Conceptualization, culture and commodification".	2013	20	356
(CHEN et al., 2008) "Determining the Motivation of Wellness Travelers ".	2008	18	83
(Bowers & Cheer, 2017) "Yoga tourism: Commodification and Western embracement of Eastern spiritual practice".	2017	15	55
(Yu & Ko, 2012) "A cross-cultural study of perceptions of medical tourism among Chinese, Japanese and Korean tourists in Korea".	2012	15	209
(Maddox, 2015) "Studying at the source: Ashtanga yoga tourism and the search for authenticity in Mysore, India".	2015	14	30
(Heung & Kucukusta, 2013) "Wellness Tourism in China: Resources, Development and Marketing".	2013	14	70
(Haq & Jackson, 2009) "Spiritual journey to Hajj: Australian and Pakistani experience and expectations".	2009	12	67
(Mak et al., 2009) "Health or self-indulgence? The motivations and characteristics of spa-goers".	2009	9	131
(Buzinde, 2020) "Theoretical linkages between well-being and tourism: The case of self-determination theory and spiritual tourism".	2020	8	49

By examining the characteristics and motivations of yoga retreat participants, the findings offer practical insights for tour operators and destinations looking to tap into the growing market of yoga tourism.

This article provides an overview of the history, growth, and current understanding of medical tourism, highlighting the need for clear definitions and estimates of the number of medical tourists. It challenges popular assumptions by emphasizing that medical tourism often involves nearby border crossings, diasporas, and less medically significant procedures, with numbers typically lower than industry and media claims. The paper calls for further research on the motivations, behavior, economic impact, ethical considerations, and interconnections between medical tourism and the tourism industry.

This research focused on travel motivation to wellness destinations, clearly defining wellness tourism and conducting an empirical study to identify the underlying motivational factors. The study combined qualitative and quantitative methods to identify specific attributes that attracted travelers and ranked the motivation factors, with relaxation being the most prominent.

This paper explored the interconnections between yoga tourism, spiritual tourism, and wellness tourism. It investigated the motivations of Western yoga enthusiasts in Maharashtra, India, highlighting the pursuit of union with something higher as a key driver. The study discussed the implications for yoga and spiritual tourism, emphasizing the need to decolonize yoga and preserve its transformative essence in the face of commodification.

This article critically examined the concept of authenticity in Ashtanga yoga, focusing on the experiences of American practitioners visiting the K. Pattabhi Jois Ashtanga Yoga Institute in Mysore, India. It revealed how notions of authenticity in yoga and travel to India perpetuate Orientalist ideals, reinforcing stereotypes and disregarding the syncretic nature of yoga's evolution and India's contemporary reality.

This paper utilized self-determination theory (SDT) as a framework to examine the well-being outcomes of spiritual tourism, explicitly focusing on the author's personal experience at a yoga/meditation retreat in Rishikesh, India. By combining autoethnography with theoretical linkages to broader social phenomena, the study contributes to the ongoing theoretical development and understanding of well-being in the context of spiritual tourism and sustains the legacy of interpretive inquiry.

Conceptual Structure

The conceptual structure identified the underlying organization and relationships of concepts in the wellness tourism literature. It showed how concepts are connected and related based on semantic or theoretical associations. A Co-occurrence network analysis examined the co-occurrence patterns of terms or keywords in the literature to discover their implicit relationships and connections (Zarei & Jabbarzadeh, 2019). Figure 2 illustrates the keyword co-occurrence network of the seven most significant thematic clusters. Cluster labels were determined from the document titles with the most keywords in the cluster based on the most significant likelihood ratio (LLR) (Synnestvedt et al., 2005). The silhouette metric provided information that could be used to identify significant and coherent clusters within a co-occurrence network, helping researchers understand the structure and organization of knowledge in the wellness tourism field (Chen, 2004).

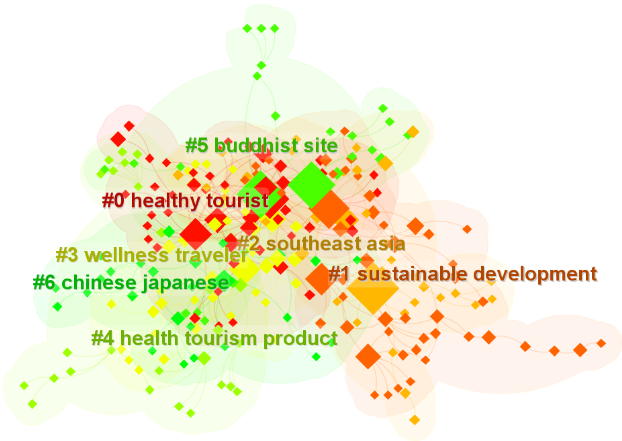

Figure 2. The most significant clusters of the keyword co-occurrence network.

Cluster (#0) Topics and Related Documents

The largest cluster (#0) has 51 members and a silhouette value of 0.892. It is labelled as a healthy tourist by LLR. The most cited article of the cluster is (Wirawan, Wirawan et al., 2020), which examined the perceptions of travel agents and tour guides in Bali regarding their role in promoting travel health measures. The authors found that both groups had good knowledge of general travel health issues and positive perceptions of their involvement in travel health and safety programs, highlighting their potential for contributing to travel health promotion efforts in Bali. The most cited keywords were "human", "article", and "adult".

This cluster included topics related to medical tourism, travel, marketing, and cultural factors. These topics are connected to various aspects of wellness tourism, including understanding consumer behavior and preferences, evaluating the impact of cultural factors on wellness experiences, analyzing marketing strategies, exploring the role of empowerment in wellness tourism, and utilizing technology and AI for enhancing wellness services. This cluster provided insights into different dimensions of wellness tourism, such as the perception of travel health promotion, the influence of therapeutic landscapes on longevity, the impact of COVID-19 on medical services, and the experiences of Muslim patients in South Korea. Overall, this co-occurrence cluster contributed to understanding and developing the field of wellness tourism by exploring various relevant topics and research studies.

Cluster (#1) Topics and Related Documents

The second largest cluster (#1) has 49 members and a silhouette value of 0.886. It is labelled as sustainable development by LLR and LSI. The major citing article of the cluster is Xu et al. (2022), which investigated the relationship between experiential value, place attachment, and environmentally responsible behavior in forest health tourism, highlighting the significant positive effects of experiential value and place attachment on tourists' environmentally responsible behavior, with place attachment playing a more crucial role than the elements of experiential value. The most cited keywords in this cluster were wellness tourism, India, and spiritual tourism. The most cited topics and the related documents are presented in Table 7.

This cluster examined the relationship between sustainable development and wellness tourism. It analyzed various aspects such as spas, yoga, ancient cities, destination branding, Chinese culture, behavioral intentions, service quality, creative economy, sustainability, religious tourism, and forest health, The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Buddhist religious tourist destinations, brand culture, Buddhist dharma, India, and authenticity. These topics highlighted the importance of wellness values in spa visitors' decision-making and the interconnectedness of yoga, spirituality, and wellness tourism. The studies emphasized the need for sustainable strategies in ancient cities, effective destination branding for wellness tourism, and the role of Chinese culture in promoting wellness experiences. Furthermore, it explored behavioral intentions, service quality, creative economy, sustainability evaluation, religious tourism's post-pandemic recovery, and the relationship between forest health and responsible behavior.

Table 6. *Cluster (#0) Most Relevant Topics*

Basic Topics	Related Topics and Documents
Medical tourism	**Adult, healthy tourist** (Sato et al., 2016) Short-term exposure to high concentrations of particulate matter (PM) in Beijing was found to have adverse effects on cough reflex and urge-to-cough thresholds, pulmonary function, and cough-related quality of life in healthy non-resident volunteers visiting the city. Packer et al. (2007) explored the complex factors influencing the participation of people with disabilities in tourism. It emphasized the importance of understanding these dynamics to promote accessible tourism and increase their active involvement in travel. **Urinary Tract Infection** Carlson & Seppänen (2000). Highlighted the first case of Melioidosis in Finland, a rare tropical disease typically found in Southeast Asia and Australia, emphasizing the increasing risk for tourists visiting infected regions. **Halal food** Alfarajat (2022) examined halal food services in South Korean healthcare institutions for patients from the UAE. It identified gaps in halal meal service and emphasized the importance of considering religious needs in medical tourism destinations for better patient satisfaction. **Attitude to health** Lee & Wu (2012) investigated consumer perception and demand for medical and wellness tourist services, offering recommendations for government organizations, medical institutions, and the tourism industry in response to the emerging trend of stress reduction, appearance changes, and wellness activities in travel. **Medical care marketing** Moghadam et al. (2021) investigated the role and importance of medical and cultural sensitivities in the marketing pattern of medical tourism, highlighting the impact on patient satisfaction, trust, and sense of security, emphasizing the need for healthcare providers and government officials to prioritize these factors in developing the health tourism industry.
Travel	**Travel Health Promotion** Wirawan, Wirawan et al. (2020) assessed the perceptions of travel agents and tour guides in Bali regarding their potential involvement in promoting travel health measures, finding that both groups had good knowledge and positive perceptions, indicating the potential for active participation in travel health promotion programs in Bali. - **Patient travel motivation** Pan & Moreira (2018) investigated Chinese perspectives on motivations, deterrents, and needs of outbound medical tourists, highlighting the varying urgency and specific factors which influenced their decision-making process. **Travel health services.** Wirawan, Putri, et al. (2020) developed an integrated travel health surveillance and information system for destination sites in Bali, mapping health hazards and risks at tourist attractions and assessing risk levels, emphasizing the importance of site-specific preventive measures for travelers. **Travel Motivation** Shalini (2017) explored the influence of factors such as Social Wellness, Emotional Wellness, Ayurveda Treatment, and Travel Motivation on Customer Satisfaction in Chennai's health and wellness tourism sector. **Iran:** Goodarzi et al. (2016) analyzed the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) of health tourism in Sareyn, Iran, identifying its potential and providing guidelines for maximizing strengths and converting weaknesses into opportunities. Mosammam et al. (2019) examined the determinants of health tourism competitiveness in Iran, which revealed that while endowed resources were relatively favorable, the overall image of Iran's health tourism fell short, providing valuable insights for policymakers and planners.
Cultural factors	**Cultural Sensitivities** Moghadam et al. (2021) underscored the significance of cultural sensitivity in medical tourism marketing, emphasizing its role in building patient trust and enhancing healthcare experiences, calling for attention to cultural sensitivity in developing the health tourism industry. **Longevity, symbolic landscape.** Huang & Xu, (2018) examined wellness tourism in China, specifically in Bama, a "longevity village," and emphasized the importance of the symbolic landscape in attracting wellness tourists and creating a unique healing environment, filling a knowledge gap in the understanding of therapeutic landscapes in China.

Cluster (#2) Summary and Most Citing Documents

The third largest cluster (#2) has 39 members and a silhouette value of 0.897. It is labelled as Southeast Asia by LLR. The major citing article of the cluster (Gönen, 2011) entitled "Health Tourism in Turkey and Some Effects for Accredited Hospitals" examined the marketing strategies and conditions of accredited hospitals in Turkey, aiming to identify challenges and provide

Table 7. *Cluster (#1) Most Relevant Topics*

Topic	Related Topics
Wellness	· **spa** Choi et al. (2015) explored how functional and wellness values influenced spa visitors' decision-making, finding that these values mediated the relationship between quality, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions, offering insights for enhancing revisitation and recommendation in the spa industry. · **yoga** Bowers & Cheer (2017) explored the interconnection between yoga tourism, spiritual tourism, and wellness tourism, examining the motivations of Western yoga enthusiasts in Maharashtra, India, and discussed the implications for yoga and spiritual tourism, · **ancient city** Varatipromma et al. (2020) analyzed the SWOT analysis and strategic model for wellness tourism development in FaDaet Song Yang Ancient City, Thailand, identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and proposing an 8Ms model for enhancing the community's tourism strategy.
Wellness Tourism	· **destination branding** Ravichandran & Suresh (2010) branded India as a wellness destination, discussing its success, challenges, and opportunities in the context of unique travel experiences and destination branding. · **Chinese culture** Huang & Xu (2014) examined Chinese wellness tourism in the Bama, Guangxi Autonomous Region, emphasizing its connection to traditional Chinese wellness culture and the belief that Bama provides optimal results for activities such as nature-based experiences, moderate exercise, and appropriate diet, offering practical implications for the industry. · **behavioral intention** Sharma & Nayak (2019) explored the impact of memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) on behavioral intentions in yoga tourism, finding that MTEs had direct and indirect effects on destination image and tourists' satisfaction, challenging the emphasis on satisfaction alone in driving destination performance. · **service quality** Pinthong et al. (2021) investigated service quality and customer satisfaction in Pattaya, Thailand's PA and wellness tourism industry, focusing on the baby boomer generation. · **creative economy** Jedeejit et al. (2018) Developed a concept for integrating local knowledge and international concepts in Thailand's wellness tourism industry. They highlighted knowledge management's role in entrepreneurship and sustainable development in the changing global society.
Sustainable Development	· **sustainability** Fan et al. (2022) established a comprehensive sustainability evaluation framework for forest health tourism, evaluated the construction potential of forest health bases in China, and provided insights for sustainable site selection and development policies. · religious tourism The COVID-19 pandemic impacted religious tourism colossally, including the Kartarpur Gurdwara Corridor. It negatively impacted the region's local economy, employment, marketing, and peace. Haq & and Medhekar (2022) suggested that a post-COVID-19 public-private partnership was needed to plan, develop, and promote religious tourism cooperatively. This could create a mutually beneficial South-Asian economic success story based on responsible cross-border tourism. · forest health Xu et al. (2022) analyzed the link between experiential value, place attachment, and environmentally responsible behavior in forest health tourism, revealing that experiential value positively impacted place attachment and environmentally responsible behavior, with place attachment playing a crucial role as a mediator.
Spiritual Tourism	· Buddhist religious tourist destination Hermawan et al. (2019). Suggested alternative solutions for managing Borobudur Temple's sustainability through a paradigm shift towards sustainable tourism, emphasizing its heritage, spirituality, and shared responsibility among Buddhists. · brand culture Kim (2017) examined how Templestay used digital media and branding practices to shape the presence of Korean Buddhism in contemporary society. It revealed that the mediated presence of Korean Buddhism through digital media and branding practices created a constant tension between these different aspects. · Buddhist dharma Sirirat (2019) developed a practical process of participative education and sustainable tourism activities in spiritual tourism, focusing on Nakhon Phanom province, which increased knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and participation regarding environmental concerns among participants.
Yoga Tourism	· **India** Kainthola et al. (2021) found that Indian urban millennials were increasingly engaging in spiritual travel to cope with mental health issues, corporate pressures, and curiosity. These motivations shaped the activities they chose during their spiritual journeys. · **yoga tourism** Liu et al. (2020) found a growing demand for yoga tourism. However, the study also found several challenges facing the yoga tourism market, including the need for more professional organizations, industry standards, and high-quality yoga tourism projects. · **authenticity** Maddox (2015) examined the notion of authenticity in Ashtanga yoga and among yoga tourists in India, highlighting how perceptions of authenticity contributed to Orientalist imaginings, a rejection of yoga's syncretic evolution, and the construction of Otherness.
Impact of COVID-19 on Wellness Tourism	COVID-19 Pandemic Sivanandamoorthy (2021) Examined the impact of COVID-19 on wellness tourism in Sri Lanka, revealing significant disruption and vulnerability in the industry due to the pandemic. (Pu et al., 2021) Analyzed the predictors of the health tourism intention after the COVID-19 pandemic. Its findings showed that the perceived usefulness of health tourism, subjective knowledge, and health consciousness influenced individuals' intentions, mediated by perceived behavior control.
Millennials	Kainthola et al. (2021). Explored the motivations and preferences of urban millennial spiritual tourists in India, revealing the push factors behind their travel choices and the desirable traits they sought in destinations, thereby expanding the understanding of contemporary spiritual tourism.

recommendations to enhance the benefits of health tourism while ensuring public health was appropriately addressed. The most cited members in this cluster are health tourism, Thailand and satisfaction. This cluster review explored various aspects of health tourism, including its impact, competitiveness, customer satisfaction, destination development, and emerging trends. This cluster contributed to understanding the health tourism topic; Gönen (2011) discussed the effects of health tourism on accredited hospitals in Turkey, emphasizing the need for quality standards and accreditation in delivering healthcare services. Alberti et al.

(2014) examined the competitiveness policies implemented by the government of Thailand to promote medical tourism clusters, highlighting the role of government initiatives in enhancing the industry's competitiveness. Choksuchat et al. (2014) focused on health tourism information extraction and ontology storage, presenting a framework for efficiently extracting and organizing health tourism-related information. Saki et al. (2017) investigated tourists' satisfaction with hospital services in Lorestan Province, Iran, providing insights into the factors influencing their satisfaction and experiences with healthcare services. Shalini (2017) explored the potential of bridging healthcare with wellness tourism in India, discussing integrating traditional healing practices and modern medical treatments to attract wellness tourists. Asadi and Daryaei (2011) proposed strategies for developing health tourism in Iran, emphasizing the importance of infrastructure, marketing, and international collaborations.

Palutturi et al. (2017) identified key challenges and recommended implementing healthy cities in North Kolaka. Indonesia aimed to enhance the region's potential as a health tourism destination. Li et al. (2022) investigated patients' satisfaction with health tourism in Malaysia, focusing on the hospital environment, nutritional advice, and perceived value, explicitly focusing on Chinese exchange students. (Moslehifar et al., 2019) examined online trust and identity on health-related tourism websites in Southeast Asia, highlighting the importance of trust-building mechanisms in attracting potential health tourists. Ashton (2018) explored the impact of tourist satisfaction and intention to revisit spiritual retreat tourism development in Chiang Mai, Thailand, providing insights into the factors influencing tourists' loyalty and repeat visitation. (Williams et al., 1996) analyzed the health spa travel markets and the preferences of Mexican long-haul pleasure travelers, shedding light on the factors that attract tourists to health spas. Lee and Kim (2015) identified success factors for health tourism in Asian tourism cities, emphasizing the significance of infrastructure, service quality, and marketing strategies to enhance the competitiveness of health tourism destinations. Han et al. (2018) investigated the role of wellness spa tourism performance in building destination loyalty, explicitly focusing on Thailand, highlighting the importance of service quality and customer satisfaction in fostering loyalty among wellness tourists.

Cluster (#3) Summary and Most Citing Documents

The fourth largest cluster (#3) has 38 members and a silhouette value of 0.913. It is labelled as a wellness traveler by LLR. The major citing article of the cluster was (Majeed et al., 2018) entitled "Health Resorts and Multi-textured Perceptions of International Health Tourists". The most cited members in this cluster were China, tourist destinations, and tourist behavior. This cluster covered various aspects of wellness tourism, such as health resorts, therapeutic landscapes, visitor motivation, perceived destination qualities, and purchase intentions. The research investigated different regions, including Bama in China, Zhangye Danxia National Geological Park, and Guangxi Bama, while examining factors like nutritional knowledge, perceived medical quality, trust, experiential value, place attachment, message framing, and the influence of COVID-19. It emphasized the significance of understanding health perceptions, gendered spirituality, and quality in wellness tourism, particularly within the Chinese market.

Majeed (2018) studied health resorts and explored the diverse perceptions of international health tourists. The research highlighted the importance of understanding the multi-faceted aspects of health tourism in sustaining wellness experiences. Huang and Xu (2018) examined the concept of therapeutic landscapes and longevity in the context of wellness tourism in Bama, China. The study underscored the role of wellness tourism in promoting overall well-being and the connection between the natural environment and health outcomes. Yan He (2020) adopted an actor-network perspective to analyze the co-evolution of therapeutic landscapes and health tourism in Bama longevity villages in China. The research shed light on the dynamic relationship between the physical environment, health practices, and tourism development. Fengmin et al. (2022) investigated the revisit intention of medical tourists in China, focusing on factors such as nutritional knowledge, perceived medical quality, and trust in physiologists. The study provided valuable insights for shaping health tourism policies and enhancing the visitor experience. Yan et al. (2014) examined environmental problems in tourism resource development using Zhangye Danxia National Geological Park in Gansu Province, China, as a case study. The research highlighted the importance of sustainable practices in preserving tourism resources and minimizing negative impacts. Chen et al. (2008) explored the motivation of wellness travelers, emphasizing the factors that drive individuals to engage in wellness tourism experiences. The study contributed to a better understanding of the underlying motivations of wellness tourists. Lim et al. (2016) compared the motivational factors and satisfaction levels between first-time and repeat visitors in wellness tourism. The research highlighted the importance of understanding visitor motivations to enhance the overall wellness tourism experience. Lehto et al. (2017) validated the perceived destination restorative qualities scale from a Chinese perspective. The study contributed to cross-cultural research by examining the restorative aspects of destinations and their influence on visitor experiences. Xu et al. (2022) explored the experiential value, place attachment, and environmentally responsible behavior of forest health tourism in China. The research highlighted the potential of nature-based health tourism and the role of visitors in preserving and conserving natural environments. Zhang et al. (2021) investigated health tourism destinations as therapeutic landscapes, focusing on the health perceptions of senior seasonal migrants. The research provided insights into the role of health tourism in promoting well-being among senior populations.

Research Gap

This bibliometric analysis was done to detect research gaps. It identified thematic areas cited frequently but with a low centrality index. A centrality index measures how central a node is in a network. The high betweenness centrality of a keyword signifies its significant role in connecting diverse research themes in the network, underscoring their importance in facilitating interactions and connections among various research areas (Jaewoo & Woonsun, 2014). A node represents a topic in bibliometrics, and the edges between nodes represent citations. A thematic area is a group of research papers focusing on a common topic. A thematic area with a high number of citations but a low centrality index suggests much interest in the topic, but there needs to be a clear consensus on the best way to approach it. This can signify a research gap in the area and that new research could significantly contribute. The research themes that identified a research gap according to this method are:

- Satisfaction: Islam (2021) focused on the satisfaction of pilgrims and addressed the service gaps of tour operators. They found that by attending to the needs of spiritual tourists and enhancing their satisfaction, tour operators could strengthen their relationship with the pilgrims, who approached the journey as more than mere tourism but as a spiritual connection with their Creator. (Kouchebagh et al., 2017) Highlighted the vital role of quality service in the survival and success of wellness tourism organizations, particularly in medical tourism. Analyzing customer satisfaction factors and utilizing decision-making techniques provided valuable insights to enhance service quality and attract foreign patients. (Han et al., 2018) explored the relationships between performance, affective experiences, satisfaction, and loyalty in Thailand's wellness spa tourism market. The findings revealed significant associations between these variables, highlighting the importance of satisfaction in building loyalty. The study offered valuable insights for destination researchers and practitioners in enhancing the loyalty of wellness spa tourists.
- Heritage Tourism: Holman (2011) provided a detailed analysis of spiritual tourism in the Amazon, specifically focusing on ayahuasca tourism through an examination of the Blue Morpho Tours website, revealing the implications of appropriation and commodification for local communities in the Peruvian Amazon and potentially other cultures as well. Parker (2011) analyzed the transformation of the significance of ancient South Asian monuments through cultural tourism, highlighting how economic cosmology and the commodification of heritage could overshadow the cultural and spiritual values represented by these sites, ultimately questioning the trade-off between economic benefits and the preservation of cultural integrity.

Discussion and Conclusion

- After careful systemic analysis of the literature on wellness tourism in an Asian context, it revealed that the wellness tourism concept and evolution are significantly connected with the country's image and tradition. India's wellness tourism is the fastest growing among 46 countries and shares 14 per cent of total employment. It showed interconnections in the research topic, such as yoga, to special tourism and wellness. The systematic analysis of the document indicates that the number of publications on Wellness tourism has increased in the last ten years. Many Scholars have discussed wellness tourism, but it is not profound as the wellness topic is more mixed with Medical and Health Tourism for clusters that have been identified, such as healthy tourists, sustainable development, South Asia, and Wellness travelers. Healthy tourism covers medical tourism, travel, marketing, and cultural elements that help to understand the factors contributing to promoting health and wellness tourism by exploring various relevant topics and Research studies. The second cluster highlighted Wellness tourism's relationship with sustainable development, which requires facilitating better service to stimulate a country's economy.
- The third cluster indicated competitive policies to enhance the Wellness industry in South Asia. It related to providing the tourist with a better experience and high-level satisfaction.
- Cluster four revealed that landscape was a significant motivator, along with traditional medication, culture, naturopathy, and yoga.

Implications, Research Limitations and Future Direction

The trend of Asian wellness tourism has far-reaching implications for both the tourism industry and the research agenda. It has the potential to benefit the local economy by creating new job opportunities, promoting local culture and tradition, and improving the health and mental well-being of tourists. A thorough review analysis was conducted to understand this trend better, identify gaps in current research, and suggest areas for future investigation. Tourism stakeholders can collaborate with local communities and healthcare providers to offer authentic and culturally sensitive wellness experiences while balancing economic growth with environmental and social considerations. Ultimately, more focused policies and practices can achieve a sustainable and socially responsible approach to wellness tourism in Asia.

One notable implication of this trend is the increasing demand for holistic and alternative health practices among tourists. They are looking for destinations that offer a range of wellness activities, from yoga and meditation to traditional healing practices such as Ayurveda, yoga, naturopathy from India and Traditional Chinese Medicine. This highlights the need for tourism stakeholders to work with local communities and healthcare providers to provide culturally sensitive and authentic wellness experiences.

Another implication is the potential economic benefits of wellness tourism for local communities, particularly in rural areas where traditional industries may decline. However, this raises concerns about the sustainability of wellness tourism and the need to balance economic growth with environmental and social considerations.

From a research perspective, a systematic review analysis can help us understand the factors driving the growth of Asian wellness tourism, such as changing consumer preferences, government policies, and technological innovations that are more focused on the wellness tourism industry. It can also identify gaps in existing research and suggest areas for future investigation, such as the impact of wellness tourism on local cultures and ecosystems, the effectiveness of different wellness practices in promoting health and well-being, and the potential for wellness tourism to promote social justice and equity.

The present study had some limitations. The study data relied on the availability and selection of relevant scholarly publications, which focused more on some areas of Asian countries. In addition, cultural and traditional nuances and context-specific factors could play a key role in creating perceptions and practices of wellness tourism. Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative data and citation approach which may overlook qualitative aspects and cultural intricacies to follow unique characteristics of Asian wellness tourism.

Future studies should include primary data on Asian wellness tourism to overcome these limitations. The findings with primary data will add value to the wellness tourism industry. This could include surveys, interviews, or country-based case studies to gather firsthand information on the motivations, experiences, and perceptions of wellness tourists in Asian countries. This would enhance the depth and richness of the wellness tourism industry.

Overall, the trend of Asian wellness tourism presents both opportunities and challenges for the tourism industry and research community. A thorough review analysis helps to inform policies and practices, leading to a more sustainable and socially responsible approach to wellness tourism in Asia.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Strategic E-Value Co-creation through Virtual Reality in the Travel and Tourism Industry of India

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ABSTRACT

The current need in the travel and tourism industry is to increase the number of walk-ins and drive continuous innovations, focusing on the cocreation of enhanced Virtual Reality (VR) experiences in developing countries. This study analyzed the use of VR in the Indian travel and tourism industry and the perspectives of travelers and travel operators regarding the use of VR as a marketing tool. This study also explores how its applications can enhance customer satisfaction and provide strategic e-value to the Indian travel and tourism industry. The methodology used consisted of a quantitative approach with a systematic literature review in the field of VR, and augmented reality, and an analysis of data collected from two sample groups: travel operators and tourists. The primary data were analyzed using cross-tabs and structural equation modeling. It was noted that the VR trend in the Indian tourism industry is still in its infancy, and the proposed stakeholder engagement will aid the growth of tourism in India.

Keywords: Virtual Reality, Destination Marketing, Travel Agencies, Travel and Tourism Industry, Cultural Shock

Introduction

The use of the internet and technology-based tools has become essential in the daily life of every individual (Erdem et al., 2023). The term Virtual Reality (VR) was first mentioned by playwright Antonin Artaud in his book “Theater and its Double,” in which he wrote about the illusory nature created by characters and objects in theater (Grimes, 2012). In short, VR is an advanced 3D visual interactive software that provides users with an immersive experience. The device is attached to a helmet or individually equipped with a digital screen, gloves with sensors, and portable joysticks that act as necessary gadgets for customers in specific scenes (Woodford, 2020). Currently, VR can be experienced in the comfort of your home with companies offering VR-enabled website services that can be viewed through desktops, laptops, and smartphones.

Strategic value is the creation of business value by selling unique travel experiences. (Penfold, 2009). The strategic value created by VR can be measured by the “self-presence” factor. Self-presence can be defined as a tourist’s emotional state and interaction with the environment in a particular location. It has a multidimensional cultural influence on the perception of a specific destination. The positive and creative influence of VR and its 360-degree technologies created by the interactive web increases the value of the intention to visit a destination.

According to a 2017 VR study by Touchstone, 74% of consumers rate travel as their preferred choice for VR content (Anastasia, 2018). With the help of external social bookmarking and reviews, travel companies made their service seem more authentic as the “*consumer voices*” and can reach a wider audience. Thus, when travel agencies wanted to promote their products, they tried to make the process transparent through blogging, vlogging, and Wikis. The virtual community mindset is that by using VR, the Indian travel industry can benefit from six major areas: *planning, marketing, management, entertainment, education, and accessibility and heritage preservation*. (Daniel, 2010).

Research Gaps and Need for the Study

There has been no significant study regarding VR application in the Indian tourism industry. Thus, the gap analyzed in this study shows a growing need to innovate the tourism industry in India with a focus on VR experiences. Currently, customers want to pay for a *service experience* rather than just booking a tour package (Site, 2020). This study analyzed the perspective of travelers and

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private tourism companies regarding the use of VR in India and determined the role of VR applications in improving customer satisfaction and adding strategic value to the Indian travel and tourism industry.

Critical Literature Review

Virtual Reality Use for Information

The availability of interpretative media is effective in improving tourists' understanding and appreciation of the destination being visited (Justus et al., 2018). This study revealed that information technology is most commonly used in the tourism and hospitality industry to meet information needs, study behavior, and performance, and manage operations and innovation processes. VR has proven to be an important information source and will greatly benefit the tourism industry (Pestek and Maida, 2021).

A current trend in tourism research involves the application of VR and travel videos in mobile phone apps for marketing. Among these, VR is the most novel and modern marketing method (Li-Pin et al., 2020). Many VR companies have collaborated with educational institutions to design creatives for ecofriendly resorts and islands. Students are required to watch VR simulations of the effects of global warming and sensitive coastal tourist locations experiencing rising sea levels (Paul P et al., 2008).

Virtual Reality Use for Cultural Information

Technology-nurtured cultures, such as community cultures in cyberspace, have a new set of symbols and interaction rituals that mutually construct their meanings (Amir et al., 2014). VR is a millennial technology that can bring new changes to the tourism Industry (Tussyadiah et al., 2017). Using social media and VR to train in language proficiency, destination information, and cultural interactions can help reduce fear and prevent travelers from having to order a bolt ride out of the blue (Made et al., 2018).

Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality in Marketing

The telepresence components create a major impact while creating valuable engagement for the travel and tourism industry. 3D environments have significantly improved customer experience, engagement, and satisfaction (Savvas, 2016). AR and VR marketing have played a major role in operational usability. Travel agencies that have unaided means of technology use had the highest number of customers dissatisfied with the technology. Thus, customization involves personal guidance as a contributing factor when promoting tourist destinations through these technologies (Ryan et al., 2017). The customer immersion level created by VR helps in the acceptance of the digital system. (Peter et al., 2017).

A digital tourism system consists of at least two parts: digitization of travel experiences and tourism management. By applying improved algorithms, improved scene entities (trees, buildings, etc.), and improved display accuracy and speed, the scene becomes more realistic and creates an avenue for real-time interaction to achieve the desired effect (Liu et al., 2017). B promoting cultural festivals for tourists, countries can use Augmented Reality (AR) to provide esthetics, education, entertainment, satisfaction, and engagement of festival visitors (Olya et al., 2018).

The use of VR can provide future tourists with more reliable, faster, and more interactive information, thereby influencing their information search and decision-making processes. This type of information makes it possible to experience a destination in advance and create realistic expectations about the location (Rainoldi et al., 2018). VR can be used as an important means in the early stages of tourist attraction to venture into new markets or as a tool to enhance the pretrip experience (Tom et al., 2018). There are three forms of using VR. One is immersive VR, which is a method in which customers use a VR headset that is preinstalled with a simulation of the destinations and other experiences based on the products the companies are selling. The next form is semi-immersive VR. This method involves projecting VR from a real-life captured destination, which is then projected on large screens, walls, and sometimes floors of a room, engaging the customer in a multienvironment virtual touristic experience. The final form is nonimmersive VR. There are VR-enabled websites and videos on platforms such as YouTube. VR can help customers plan and manage their trips. Companies benefit through their capability of marketing, information, entertainment, education, and access and culture exchange (Beck et al., 2019).

VR and AR can integrate human perception and can be used as examples of state-of-the-art technologies (Neuburger et al., 2018). Customization approach and mass acceptance might see companies automatically adopting and investing heavily in cutting-edge (Urquhart, 2019). The heritage industry is trying to build brands through the gaming, TV, and film industries (Liestol et al., 2019). VR and AR further evolved from Web 2.0 to 5.0 to provide immersive experiences to customers (Varnajot, 2019). VR and AR are twin technologies that stimulate a reality preview. VR and AR are used in the tourism context to improve the tourist experience (Moro et al., 2019). VR and AR greatly benefit tourism spots, destinations, and tourism professionals by providing information that can be organized and transmitted in large social networks (Wei Wei, 2019). VR attracts marketers because it can be used to explore and actively shape posterity, cocreate value with consumers, and develop consumer-brand engagement (Cowan et al., 2019). Customers continue to purchase hotel and flight tickets from online travel booking sites by observing their service quality (Bambang et al., 2020). The collaborative economy is essential in the tourism ecosystem (Iis et al., 2018) through its omnichannel strategies that help achieve strategic customer relationship value (Capriello and Riboldazzi, 2021).

This critical literature review provided the authors with a significant foundation for the following statement hypothesis:
H_0: VR does not add significant strategic e-value to the Indian travel and tourism industry.
Ha: VR adds significant strategic e-value to the Indian travel and tourism industry.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to analyze the use of VR in the Indian travel and tourism industry. To determine the perspectives of travelers and travel agencies regarding the use of VR as a marketing tool, and to determine the strategic e-value of using VR as a tool. The research approach adopted in this study was a descriptive study that conducted a systematic literature review in the field of VR, Web 2.0, and AR and a quantitative approach that aggregated data collected through questionnaires with the help of the following mediums: online survey and observations. The questionnaires were structured based on the identified variables for two respondent groups: travel operators and travelers. The sample size collected for travel operators was 51 and 286 for travelers, respectively. The sampling method used was probability sampling. The authors used five common variables for travel operators and travelers: marketing, personalized service, self-presence, visit intention, and cultural knowledge. These are equated using the structural equation model shown below. Statistical analysis was used to determine the exact data and hypotheses. The primary data collected through questionnaires were analyzed using cross-tabs, and SEM models. The questionnaire for the survey was self-designed and coded, and the questionnaires were sent personally via email, LinkedIn, Facebook, and WhatsApp. The sample size collected for travel operators was 51 and 286 for travelers, respectively.

Findings and Discussion

The data collected was coded and analyzed as given below:

Table 1 shows that private company employees traveled more frequently than other travelers. This can be helpful for travel operators as information communication technology, as VR technologies are more accessible to private company employees. Thus, marketing to them with VR can be beneficial, as they will better understand the features of the technology.

Table 1. *Cross Tabs of Traveler's Occupation Status and Frequency of Travel*

	How often do you travel?					
Occupation Status	**Once a Week**	**Once a month**	**Once in three months**	**Once in Six months**	**Twice a year**	**Once a year**
Government Employee	0	0	8	7	26	2
Homemaker	0	0	0	4	14	2
Interning	0	0	1	0	1	0
Private Company	0	2	26	13	49	3
Retired	0	0	5	8	17	7
Self Employed/Freelance	0	0	10	3	14	1
Student	1	3	17	7	22	4
Unemployed	0	0	0	0	4	1

Table 2 shows that 99.7% of travelers stated that they did not receive VR gadgets from hotels and 99.3% did not receive any VR gadgets from travel and tourism companies.

Table 2. *Travelers' Technological Use of Interactive Web and VR*

Factors	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Interactive Web	Government tourism portals	170 (No)	59.4%
		116 (Yes)	40.6%
	Online tourism review sites	80 (No)	28.0%
		206 (Yes)	72.0%
	Social Media advertisements	87 (No)	30.4%
		199 (Yes)	69.6%
	Word of Mouth(Family and friends)	50 (No)	17.5%
		236 (Yes)	82.5%
	Print Media (newspapers, brochures)	49 (No)	17.1%
		237 (Yes)	82.9%
	Online Print Media(e-brochures, e fliers)	107 (No)	37.4%
		179 (Yes)	62.6%
VR	VR tools provided by hotels (Oculus Rift, Samsung Gear)	285 (No)	99.7%
		1 (Yes)	.3%
	VR tools provided by travel and tourism companies (Oculus Rift, Samsung Gear)	284 (No)	99.3%
		2 (Yes)	.7%

Table 3 shows that in response to Question 1, 75.17% (215) of the respondents agreed that VR tools on company websites help them in selling their products. Question 2 shows that 76.57% (219) of the respondents agreed that VR marketing enables travel and tourism companies to place their brand image closer to their customers. For Question 3, 60.48% (173) of the respondents felt that value in the tourism industry can be created from the use of interactive web features. Finally, under Question 4, 16.08% (46) of respondents felt that travel operators in India view VR as a tool for good marketing. From the customer's perspective, the travel industry in India is not considering VR as a great tool for enhancing customer relations and business value.

Table 3. *Traveler's View of VR As A Marketing Tool*

Question No.	Response	Review Process	Percentage
1.	VR tools on company websites help in selling their products	215	75.17%
2.	VR marketing enables travel and tourism companies to place their brand image closer to their customers	219	76.57%
3.	Value in the tourism industry can be created from the use of interactive web features.	173	60.48%
4.	Travel Operators in India view VR as a tool for good marketing	46	16.08%

Table 4 shows that travel operators in India rely heavily on interactive web applications, although customers feel that travel companies can sell products better and gain profits through the use of VR. From the seven various applications in Web 2.0 provided by travel agencies, it is observed that features such as company's websites with interactive chat options such as Instagram, YouTube Blogs, Facebook, Storytelling pages, and personal Apps are all used extensively by the industry. However, regarding the use of VR gadgets and VR content, 98% and 94.1% of travel operators stated that they do not provide these tools.

Table 4. *Company's Use of an Interactive Web and VR*

Factors	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Interactive Web	Company websites with interactive chat options	100 (Yes)	100%
	Company Blog page	100 (Yes)	100%
	Company Facebook page	100 (Yes)	100%
	Company Instagram Page	100 (Yes)	100%
	Company YouTube page	100 (Yes)	100%
	Company Digital Storytelling Page	13.7(No)	13.7%
		86.3(Yes)	86.3%
	Company App	1 (No)	2.0 %
		50 (Yes)	98.0 %
VR	VR gadgets for customers	50(No)	98.0%
		1(Yes)	2.0%
	VR content on websites	48(No)	94.1%
		3(Yes)	5.9%

Table 5 that an aggregate of 96.9% of company respondents have identified VR as a good marketing tool for the travel and tourism industry in India. Under sub-question 1, 98% (50) of the respondents agreed that VR tools on company websites enhance the sale of their products. Under sub-question 2, 98% (50) of the respondents agreed that VR marketing enables travel and tourism companies to place their brand image closer to their customers. In sub-question 3, 80% (41) of respondents feel that value in the tourism industry can be created from the use of interactive web features. Finally, in sub-question 4, 80% (41) of the respondents believe that travel companies in India consider VR as a good marketing tool. In conclusion, the Indian travel industry sees VR as a great tool to improve customer relationships and business value.

Table 5. *Company Response for VR As A Marketing Tool*

Response	**Review Process**
VR tools on company websites help in selling their products	50
VR marketing enables travel and tourism companies to place their brand image closer to their customers	50
Value in the tourism industry can be created from the use of Web 2.0.	41
Travel Operators in India view VR as a tool for good marketing	41

Structural Equation Modeling for the

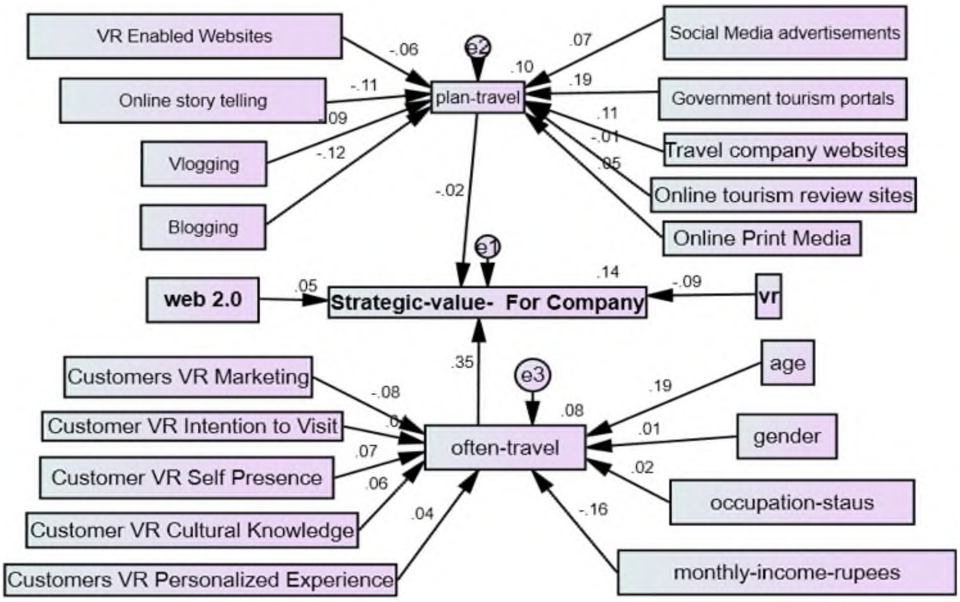

Figure 1. Strategic E-Value of a Company

Structural Equation Modeling (SME) for strategic e-value, as shown in Fig. 1, reveals that travelers' responses for planning their travel had a positive and high covariance relationship between Social Media Advertisements (.07), Government Tourism Portals (.19), Travel Company Websites (.11), and Online Print Media (.05). However, the covariance relationship between Customer VR Marketing (Travel operators in India view VR as a potential marketing tool) (-.08), Customer VR Intention to Visit (Purchasing products through Virtual Environments is higher) (.04), Customer VR Self Presence (Self-presence through VR gives the confidence to travel and avoids cultural shocks) (.07), Customer VR Cultural Knowledge (VR enables cultural interaction) (.06), and Customer Personalized Experience (Engaging customers with content provides value to the product) (.04) has a negative and low covariance relationship with Strategic Value as compared with Web 2.0 (.05) and its applications.

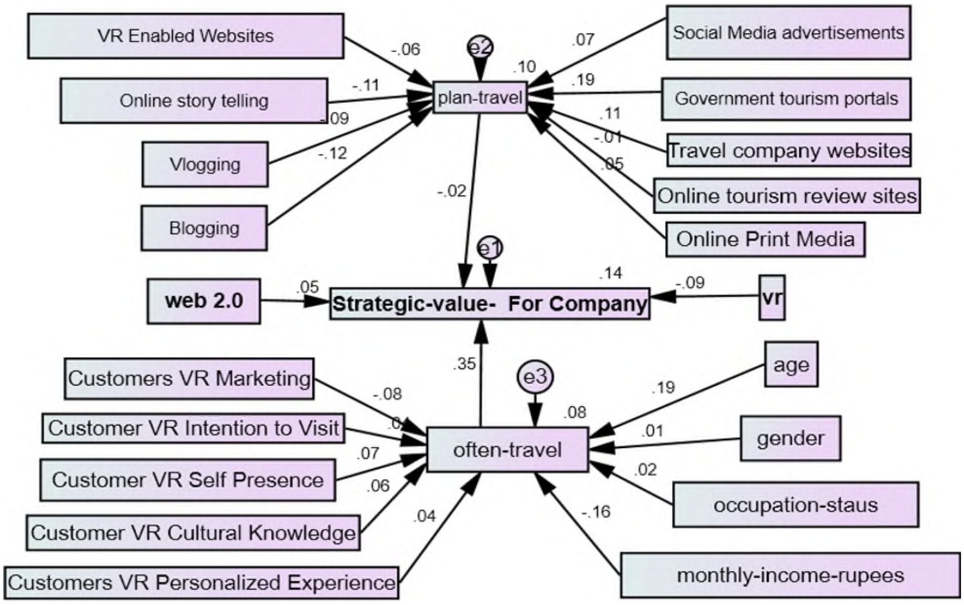

Figure 2. SEM Model for Strategic e-value of company

Hypothesis

In this study, the authors have formulated the following hypothesis:
H_0: VR does not add significant strategic e-value to the Indian travel and tourism industry.
Ha: VR adds significant strategic e-value to the Indian travel and tourism industry.

Cross-tab analysis was conducted between the identified variables from the views of the customers and travel operators.

Table 6 shows that 71.2 % (203) agree that Perceived_Value the desire to buy products through virtual environments is higher and a Virtual Experience leads to an actual purchase intention.

Table 6. *Cross-tab Analysis of Actual Purchase Intention and Perceived Value by Customers*

		PERCEIVED_VALUE			
		STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE
ACTUAL PURCHASE INTENTION	STRONGLY AGREE	123	17	4	2
	AGREE	17	46	0	0
	NEUTRAL	9	0	51	0
	DISAGREE	1	0	5	5
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	0	0	2	1
Total		150	63	62	8

Table 7 shows that the significance value between Perceived Value- Desire to buy products through virtual environments and a Virtual Experience will lead to an actual purchase intention is less than 0.005. As the value proves to be significant, it proves that customers believe that VR experiences provide them with more confidence in purchase and provide awareness concerning the place, which minimizes the cultural shocks of unknown locations.

Table 7. *Chi-Square Test for Actual Purchase Intention and Perceived Value by Customers*

Chi-Square Test			
	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	459.533[a]	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	324.054	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	162.009	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	284		

Table 8 shows that 76.4% (39) of company respondents agreed that travel operators in India view VR as a potential marketing tool and that strategic value can be created by selling unique travel experiences.

Table 8. *Cross-tab Analysis Between Strategic Value and Marketing for Travel Operators*

		MARKETING_4			Total
		STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	
STRATEGIC VALUE	UNIQUE TRAVEL EXPERIENCE	11	28	2	41
	INTER WITH ENVIRON	7	3	0	10
Total		18	31	2	51

Table 9 shows that the significant value between travel operators viewing VR as a potential marketing tool and the strategic value that can be created by selling unique travel experiences has a p-value of p = .036. This is slightly higher than the significance value of p = 0.005. As the value is not very significant, it proves that there is still a small percentage of travel operators that have not adopted VR into their operations since they could not generate enough seed capital and thus believe that there is no high significant value for VR in the travel and tourism industry in India.

Table 9. *Chi-Square Test for Travel Operators*

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.672[a]	2	.036
Likelihood Ratio	6.713	2	.035
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.048	1	.044
N of Valid Cases	51		

From the chi-square test of the travelers' response, it can be interpreted that every business needs to sell a product through a unique means to gain strategic value. No business can strive without customers; hence, the authors reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis **Ha:** VR adds significant strategic value to the Indian travel and tourism industry.

Conclusion

With the current state of technology, only large brands such as Marriott, Hilton, and Tirun Cruises can hone customers' buying behavior to capitalize on the cocreation of e-value experiences in developed nations. However, the authors expect technological adoption to be fast, and more user-friendly solutions will be made available to developing nations. From the data analysis of both the samples i.e., travel operators and travelers, it is evident that there is sufficient knowledge regarding VR in both groups.

- The results obtained indicate that the various factors contributing to strategic e-value to business are Print Media, Social Media Advertisements, Government Tourism Portals, and Travel Company Websites.
- Factor analysis of the Technological distribution VR indicates that there is an unequal ratio of the applications made available to customers.

- Existing VR technologies such as Oculus Rift, Play Station VR, Marriot Postcards, and 360° website technology have benefitted major players such as Marriot, Hilton, Thomas Cook, etc.
- The implementation of AR currently can help companies and their customers benefit as AR technology can be reached by a larger group of customers.

This study shows that only six Travel Operators (3%) from the sample size of 51 are providing VR Gadgets and VR content to customers during the business process. This can be further validated from the SEM model, as the observed variable VR enabled websites (-0.6) and VR Gadgets (-0.9) as provided by the travel and tourism industry to the travelers shows that they have no significance levels to the perceived value by the customers due to the absence of these technologies being provided.

As per the data reports from company marketing, it is evident that 65.3% of customer respondents have identified VR as a good marketing tool for the travel and tourism industry in India, but only 46 (16%) of respondents agree that travel operators in India view VR as an effective tool for destination marketing. The self-presence factor and cultural immersion created by VR help customers to know about the location before visiting, thus helping to minimize cultural shocks and developing destination positive image. Thus, proving that VR as a technology for the promotion of destinations is not being used effectively.

Limitations and Suggestions for Implications

The study is limited to the understanding and requirement of VR applications by stakeholders. An exhaustive study on the impact of the use of VR in the travel and tourism industry will be useful to tourism companies. The area of work is limited to pan India; a universal study in this field is required for a better understanding of the implications of technology in the tourism business.

Practical and Social Implications

While many of the applications of modern VR are entertainment-based, businesses are increasingly getting to grips with VR's potential as a marketing tool, delivering important information to potential customers in a way they can experience, and stimulating multiple senses in the process. The travel and tourism industry in India can use this technology efficiently through the involvement of private companies, government bodies, the tourism industry, and teaching and research institutes. The use of VR will greatly help in the revival of the tourism industry postpandemic.

VR helps in creating self-presence and cultural immersion in the minds of travelers through its pre-experience features for a place, thus helping in avoiding the cultural shock experienced during travel. Its social implications would be creating harmony among the tourists and the hosts, leading to peace-building activity through technology-enabled tourism.

Through the unique "self-presence" factor created by VR, the postpandemic market can look at repeating the importance of trying before you book/fly. In India, there are approximately 70 VR startups that enable travelers to view some of the tourism products. VR and AR are proving their worth, especially when planning, marketing, education, and tourist sport preservation come to light (Anand et al., 2018). Sensation and presence-seeking attitudes from customers have raised the intention to adopt VR for evaluating various tourist destinations (Pankaj et al., 2020). Secondly, tourism highlights a way of second "life" to destroyed or deteriorated destinations, attractions, sites, or artifacts through the use of VR and mixed reality (Alexandra et al., 2020).

Travel companies can look at "VR at home services" for postopening up to help customers come back and reduce their anxiety. The main market that VR can look into is "sustainable VR ecotourism." Currently, the focus of ecotourism is advancing the monetary benefits from tourist footfalls rather than protecting the very destination. The pre-COVID VR ecotourism measures can show customers how the environment recovered when lockdown was imposed. Contrasting scenarios of pre-COVID carbon emissions and during lockdown can be shown via VR scenarios. Future travelers will become more knowledgeable and responsible. VR tools attract tourism advertisers as they become a lucrative means of marketing to potential consumers, wherever they are located, with a realistic preview of a travel experience (Wai et al., 2020). Using VR to promote tourism can reduce the pressure created on this sector by such an epidemic and increase its sustainability (Andreea et al., 2021).

The travel and tourism industry can collaborate with the Ministry of Travel and Tourism in India and work on marketing to more domestic destinations, especially after the pandemic. It is estimated that domestic Indian travelers spend approximately eight billion dollars on international travel. If the government can provide subsidies to such forums, the travel industry can benefit immensely. Some of the VR forums engaged in VR content are:

- IVRPA- The International Virtual Reality Professionals Association
- AV Forum- Audio Visual Forum

Schools and colleges can emphasize providing incentive virtual tours for students who cannot afford to travel often, and research scholars can look at how to provide a low-cost solution for travel operators to use VR in their operations. Future research can look at using Mixed Reality Interface Systems to create awareness among people.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Transitional Changes in Asian Tourism: Evolution and Historical Development of Tourism in Asia

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ABSTRACT
Asia is recognized for its considerable variety of ethnicities, along with its swiftly expanding modern locations in addition to global marketplaces. It offers wide-ranging antiquity of human encounters over time, particularly in South-East Asia, gifted with diverse historical recollections, traditional influences, social economic domains, and democratic structures. The exploration of Southeast Asia's tourism resources started after the arrival of colonial powers. It accelerated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries due to increased movement and technological advancement. With the establishment of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Asia obtained a strategic and economic organization distinct in terms of independent factors, languages, and constant approaches from European powers. Regarding passenger traffic, the region is subsequently referred to as "South-East Asia," and it is primarily a multiethnic society guarded by the Pacific Asia Tourism Association. The present study examined numerous critical social and economic facets that have fostered the expansion of tourism in the Asian region, particularly in the southeast regions, since the time of European colonization. Studies that have highlighted the legacy of the Southeast Asian tourism industry throughout the ages have been scarce. Due to the great variety of unclear references that must be linked to identifying the past developmental phases of tourism in this region is a complex process.

Keywords: Legacy of South-East Asia, Evolution of Asian Tourism, Transitional Changes in Asian Tourism, Historical Development, Age of Exploratory Travel, Tourism Trends in South-East Asia

Introduction

Being the world's major mainland in connection to the terrestrial zone, the Asian continent is known for its implausible yet assorted resources. It offers exotic nature-based attractions and mythological experiences of cultural fine art forms as a distinguished tourism destination. The region includes an eclectic array of leisure charms ranging from the amazingly wild and sand deserts, from the present-day malls of the Middle Eastern countries to the beaming ancient shrines, extremely lofty, massive highlands in South Asian regions, the serene oceanic shorelines and wild trekking spots, and the city areas of East Asia. The entire region offers fascinating places, accommodating the interests of every type of voyager. Countries such as Japan, Singapore, Hongkong, Taiwan, and South Korea provide remarkably high-class facilities for holidaymakers. Furthermore, China, India, and Sri Lanka have vast jam-packed provinces profusely surrounded with antique, edifying, societal characters and traditions, creating a charming look to these destinations.

Realizing the benefits, the countries established strategies to support the leisure sector to improve the images of national identity and ethnicity. The tourism industry also underpins the area's economic progression and allows correlated endeavors. Various establishments have been developed synchronously, including transportation and accommodation facilities. Tourism growth has brought about substantial expansion to infrastructure and it can fast-track the course of computerization in addition to the transformation of societies (He & He, 2012). The tour business can also become the foremost foundation for serviceable alliances. The improved turnover can regularize various small-scale, business ventures adding essential ethics and responsibilities for the local population of the destination or region.

Tracing the inventiveness of the tour activities of Asian locations could be a hard-hitting concern owing to the imprecise bases that are attainable. Seemingly, very few experiences were recorded to illustrate the olden times and evolution of the leisure business industry in the continent over the several epochs. The purpose of the holiday business competence and skill aspects of

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Asia was activated through the initiation of the local frontier regulations via the sustenance of conveyance and high-tech growth throughout the nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. Asia, known for its astonishing ethnicities, has confronted unyielding social encounters for several centuries, specifically in the southeast provinces. The place is characterized by plentiful historical recollections, communal monarchies, fiscal domains, and radical systems. Numerous cities of Asian nation states are famous for traditional practices and vernaculars in addition to community groups determined through European supremacies (Kymlicka & He, 2005).

Some of the nations in Asia, especially in the southern and southeastern provinces, contributed widely to the improvement of holiday business and unlocked their financial prudence to the global investors. The governments have proposed affable accomplishment tactics, transaction measures, and strategies envisioned to deliver native tourism products. Progressively, holiday business has been extended to the appreciated practicalities in fields such as monetary progression and the probable yields for corporate associates and investors. Numerous nations introduced new diplomacies to intensify connections through supporting segments. This will help establish a better image of the tourism industry and thereby safeguard essential justification, authorizing local systems to comprise in the enhancement of locations even more efficaciously. Pro-poor tourism has played an essential role in outspreading and escalating home-grown occupational potencies to frame better dimensions for purposeful events.

Literature Review

Asia is located along the tropic climate regions and its environments have fascinating topographical inheritance and resource competence. The number of visitors to South Asian destinations has increased because of exceptional artistic and antique traditions, community standards, and a variety of ethnicities, in addition to financial magnitudes (Hitchcock et.al., 2018). The inflow of tourists has urged the countries to contribute to improved and competent networking, despite certain problems among the states regarding converting the focal idea of the locality into the synchronizing leisure industry. In addition, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) has recognized the tourism competence of the Asian continent by distinguishing a trio of profligate tourism-stimulating areas, that is, the Middle East, the southeast region, and the southern part of the continent (Winter et.al., 2008). The entire mainland has an abundance of the sacred doctrines and moral institutions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, and Confucianism (Cauquelin et.al., 2014).

The eastern part of the continent has experienced numerous disparities concerning the accumulation of local revenues owing to wide-ranging historic variations. The primeval records highlighted China as one of the world's prime commercial centers, encircled by adjacent trade units, fostering local and interregional industrial links. The first millennium witnessed the emergence of Pan-Asian trading systems (Rahman et.al., 2012). Merchandizing networks are becoming a domineering segment of the East Asian economy. Increasingly decentralized and transnational corporate structures have emerged, contributing to uniting the region in an organized manner.

Innumerable developed cities in eastern Asia have played a vibrant role in economic integration, widespread upgrading of establishments, and well-connectivity facilities to reinforce regional cooperation. The Chinese government launched its Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in 2013 to provide monetary assistance to numerous brands of capacity-enhancing organization ventures in the regions (Yu, 2017).

Thus, many factors have supported East Asian economic development and integration. One is the upsurge of Subregional Economic Zones (SREZs), initiated in the late 1980s (Dent, 2017). These zones include both bordering parts of diverse countries and subregional clusters such as the Greater Mekong Subregion (Cruz-del Rosario et.al., 2016). These zones are honored through governmental contracts and reinforced by multinational administrations (for example ADB, United Nations). These official assistances provided support for enduring financial partnerships exclusive to the subregional parts. The SREZ projects focused on overseeing distinctive ordinary possessions, and particularly the intercontinental channels. There are many SREZs, documented as subregional congregations of cross-border trade units, state-of-the-art profitable enterprises, and industrial networks. Asia's economic structures are increasingly significant within the continent and regarding other major nations globally. The state economic strategies play a substantial and industrious role in wide-reaching fiscal initiatives. The biggest challenge for many nations is to strengthen and support itself to spread the benefits of regional collaboration. The native economies have developed with time.

The early years have not seen substantial reception from dealers and profitable initiatives for regional incorporation. Progressively, however, the region obtained appreciation worldwide. These financial entities focused on sending factory-made products to foreign marketplaces, relatively less on selling to each other. The fiscal adversity of 1997–98 brought the region's liberation to new attention areas (OECD, 2005). The crisis represented a coincidental phase for many nations to discover inclusive modifications in investment and in other monetary areas. The milieus remained so satisfactory that Asian countries have appeared as an imperative area. The places became well-off in supply effectiveness, requiring a better obligation for its collective benefits and the worth of provincial collaboration.

In the intervening time, northeast Asia comprising the "Plus Three" nations (Calder & Ye, 2010) of APT – PRC, Japan, and the Republic of Korea – has endeavored to make an additional home-grown monetary interaction with ASEAN members in addition to their provincial gatherings (Friedman & Kim, 2007). There have been considerable levels of discretionary and political pressures in PRC–Japan–Korea (CJK) relations in recent years. Since the late 1990s, these three countries have been rationally forced to initiate a Northeast Asia Trilateral Cooperation (NATC) consular structure with a wide scope of stakeholders (Dent, 2016). NATC international relations have encouraged innovative undertakings to support cooperation and the socialization of decision-makers from all three countries covering a broad range of issues. Even though the NATC works as a "system" rather than an association, the regulatory body was established in 2011, namely, the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat to legalize and coordinate activities (Dent, 2017).

The new mass-producing economies entered a comparable growing stage in the early years of the 1960s (ADB, 2008). These notable advances were accomplished because of the assistance of global markets and comprehensive nationwide strategies. A major outcome of World War II was the emergence of Japan as a commercial power. Admittance to the US marketplaces empowered Japan to upsurge its labor-intensive deliveries, creating an escalation in savings and financial development. With the formation of the GATT in 1947, many discussions focused on depreciating blockades to manufactured imports. Globally, trade movements have extended enormously since the 1950s, three times quicker than productivity growth (WTO, 2007). This propelled the growth of Asian economies through international business organizations and their networks with markets.

The 1997–98 crisis has fortified the reemergence of Asia as one of the world's furthermost stimulating regions. It has paved the way for the revitalization and gradual increase in the number of visitors to the continent (Pieterse, 2017). The region's reformation integrates collective interconnectedness in domains such as fiscal activities, supportive arrangements, and intercontinental collaborative missions. Several native organizations have been incorporated within the United Nations network, such as the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) (ADB, 2008; UNESCAP, 2017). Another organization that is regional in nature, namely, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), has a pivotal role in the area's strategic outline. The working system of the association provides a comprehensive model for exploring collaborative and innovative reworking practices (Park, 2018). It stands for the growth of Asia, integrating and exploring its inference on the future of the tourism industry.

Findings

The Historical Phases of Voyages and Asian Tourism Development

The era of exploration is considered the age of discovery. It is characterized by the voyages of European merchants, discovering the land through new adventurous sea routes (Whitfield, 2015). The main impetuses for the journey were visits to holy sites, crafts, and carnivals. The journey was troublesome due to the risky environment, violence and attacks of pirates, scarcity of well-maintained roads, and so forth. The travel arrangements were very expensive because of the circumstances and conditions used such as water mode of transportation. From ancient times onwards the Asian continent maintained commercial relations with different parts of Europe and Africa (Frank, 1998). Items that happened to be of special importance during such businesses were good quality garments, metallic objects, silk and gold, an array of expensive treasured gemstones, and herbs and sweet-smelling substances used in cuisines. Intercontinental trading relations among European countries and Asia continued prominently throughout the Greek Epoch, around the 4th century BC (Whitfield & Sims-Williams, 2004). The travel became more relaxed because of the multiple land highways that connected Greece, via Anatolia (Asia Minor), with northwest India. The Roman period saw the emergence of more land-based and marine directions starting from the Mediterranean Sea to South India (Qin & Yuan, 2015).

The ancient phase of travel to Asia was from the beginning of the 15th century to the 17th century. The mainland had seen many developments along with the expeditions of European vessels (Learn & Explore Series, 2011). On their way to progression, the voyagers came across several colonies. The famous voyagers of that time were Marco Polo, Christopher Columbus, Vasco da Gama, and Ferdinand Magellan (Silverberg, 2020). The exploratory travelers were mainly from Portugal and Spain. Spain was able to conquer a larger portion of the American continents. Meanwhile, Portugal conquered Brazil and the eastern part of the Asian continent (Friedman & Figg, 2017). The victorious experience of adventurous travel encouraged countries such as Portugal to continue their voyages and subsequently led to the legendary travel of Portuguese explorer, Vasco da Gama. He discovered a sea route via the south most tip of the African continent to India. The Portuguese had likewise traveled to the far East regions of Asia and created a merchandize colony in China at Macau (Mungello, 2012). Furthermore, the age of exploration coined the term "East Indies," as the European explorers referred it to the complete range of Southeast Asia, and especially India (White, 2005).

Subsequent discoveries of direct sea routes to Asia by Spain and Portugal resulted in the expansions related to the universal discovery of the Western Hemisphere. This period is considered the epoch of the notable navigators of the 16th century (Kelsey, 2016). Portugal remained one of the prime countries to attempt and accumulate an impressive corporate prototypical framework with respect to the lucrative spice business with the eastern nations. It recognized a structure of barracks for mariners in Asia. In the interim, the 16th century witnessed Spain establishing supremacy over the Philippines (Newson, 2009).

The early seventeenth century witnessed the spread of foreign rule. The Dutch and the English established their own East India companies during this period (Northrup et al., 2015). The British began with the Indian subcontinent and gradually expanded their dominance to Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia (Johnston, 1986). The Dutch also established commercial ties with Ceylon (presently known as Sri Lanka) and progressively extended them to the southeast part of Asia, particularly Indonesia. The 19th century French invasion of the Indo–Chinese Peninsula was successful and they acquired smaller territories on the mainland of India. Eventually, the European industrial regimes became major colonial empires. Gradually, a progressive trading system evolved along with the expansion of the East India Company and successive foreign supremacy in Asia.

The overseas realms invaded the regions with an intention to export raw materials and import the finished commodities from their colonies. Great Britain has stopped exporting cotton merchandize from India. On the other hand, they started importing fresh fiber, spinning it into yarn and interlacing it in the newly established manufacturing factories in various colonies (Bulliet et.al., 2018). The 19th to 20th centuries were the zenith of foreign reign in the Asian continent; the period was correspondingly acknowledged as the age of Universal Colonialism (Patajo-Legasto, 2008). The first half of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of Japan as a vital military and naval power (Hezel, 2003), which ultimately enabled it to advance into a substantial business associate along with many other industrialized countries.

Gradually, several communist and noncommunist governments in Asia were liberated from the financial and radical intrusions of European communal influences. These nations started to generate native industries to distribute alternative products instead of their preceding importations. Meanwhile, countries such as Japan, augmented through refined and trained craftsman strength (McMillan, 2012), with limited natural resources, however, have initiated innovative industrial merchandize to encourage export business rather than depend on trade in comprehensive deliverables. The commencement of the 21st century also saw many republics countering to the globalized creations and encouraging local marketplaces on par with intercontinental competitors. The economies of these countries became susceptible to the fluctuations of foreign markets as a result of liberalization. There were considerable currency investment breakdowns and occurrences of economic problems in the second half of the 1990s (Lapavitsas, 2007).

The partition of labor in various nations and the metropolitan supremacies astonishingly affected the financial prudence of many of Asia's self-governing countries until the 1970s and remained relatively more thoughtful and stimulating than consistent with each other (Wan, 2007). The East and Southeast Asian nations have initiated significant industrialized, intraregional trade. Few places have used local canals noticeably as these inland waterways including stream and seaway routes are appropriate for carrying goods as well as holidaymakers at a nominal cost to travel wide-ranging remoteness.

The initial phase of the 13th century A. D. witnessed expeditions of the Europeans, including the adventurous travel of Marco Polo to East Asia (Duiker & Spielvogel, 2018). These voyages were greatly driven by rational inquisitiveness and developments in navigation and transport networks. The explorers had an excessive imprint on the locations that visited, and many nationalities slowly began to appreciate the impetus of Western ethos (Lockard, 2009). On account were numerous influences that influenced European explorers' search for innovative concepts related to the East. It includes the envisioned possibilities of technology-based trading practices across societies, such as the location-specific effect caused by the need for finding impractical commodities or resources and the social and financial ties involving the East and the West. However, it was the book "The Travels of Marco Polo" that fueled the quest for knowledge transpiration (Benedetto, 2014).

Exploratory travel observed some of the most momentous discoveries of the century, namely, the Carrack and the Caravel (a small, fast sailing ship of the 15th–17th centuries) in Iberia (Friedman & Figg, 2013). Primeval ships were a combination of conservative designs and structures native to Europe and Arab nations. They were preserved as important vessels that possibly would navigate alongside the relatively submissive Mediterranean direction and navigate carefully on the exposed areas of the Atlantic Ocean. One of the pioneering voyages was initiated by Portuguese navigator Prince Henry (Spielvogel, 2022). The Portuguese accomplished a leisurely but sturdy advancement and succeeded in going in a bit more southward direction. The next two decades witnessed expeditions through the Sahara Desert and explorers were able to overcome the blockades and trade in gold, beginning with Senegal. The year 1487 brought a decisive breakthrough when Bartolomeu Dias sailed through the Cape of Good Hope (Modelski et.al., 2007). His achievement resulted in the opening of the new sea route and entry to the Indian Ocean. Subsequently, in 1498, Vasco da Gama was able to reach India by sailing through the Indian Ocean (Bulliet et.al., 2018).

Following the example of the Portuguese, many European nations, namely, the Dutch, French, and British started to display their domination in the Indian Ocean routes and created respective commercial citadels and clusters. It is noteworthy to mention the expedition of Dutch explorers William John (Buchanan, 2015) and Abel Tasman through the coast of Australia (Cavendish, 2006). The 18th century also recorded the achievement of British Explorer James Cook who reached Polynesia (Goldberg, 2017). The historical phase of adventurous voyages was replaced by the Industrial Revolution (Hansen & Curtis, 2022), and intercontinental trading practices became a common practice. The corporate events were so significant that the suppliers and the dealers turned out to be more influential in the social order than primitive landlords.

Age of Exploration paved the way for more sophisticated travel throughout the 17th century, along with the progression in business relations and heightened the professional expertise of individuals regarding universal locations. It permitted many European nations to navigate across the world with comfort by sea route (Cropley & Cropley, 2020). Progressively, many countries initiated their settlements and colonies in the Asian continent, with an enduring association of interactive transactions and trading practices. Subsequently, the foreign supremacies concluded searching for advanced trade directions and marketplaces for their manufactured goods.

Traveling to unfamiliar locations around the world provided a mysterious feeling to the explorers and offered an opportunity to study diverse societal and artistic communities. On their way back to their homelands, they were able to share such incredible knowledge and experiences with their family and friends. The exploratory travelers brought numerous developments in the arena of marine navigation and map reading. During the ancient expeditions, sailors used conventional portolan illustrations, which depended on shorelines and anchorages for communicating, allowing them only to travel within striking distance from the mainland. The most primitive nautical maps were introduced by Spanish and Portuguese adventurers who ventured into undiscovered exploratory travel. They identified not only the geography of the lands, but also the coastline travel routes and underwater currents they encountered during their expeditions (Choudhury, 2019).

Exploratory voyages were a stepping stone for the proliferation of geographical acquaintance with Asian destinations. Further, such travel permitted numerous individuals to perceive and understand myriad locations around the continent. The construction of ships and navigational skill advancements enabled mariners to traverse through the vast oceans with higher success rates. These voyages, combined with discoveries in mathematical concepts, astrophysics, map-making, and printed matter, facilitated extensive distribution of knowledge. Subsequently, these travel records enabled the capacity of localities to radiate beyond their borders (Mathew, 1988). As the ancient sea trading routes were overpowered by Ottomans and Venetians, many European realms started finding alternative routes for their voyages. The terrestrial pressure from the expanding Ottoman Empire resulted in expeditions to trace progressive commercial marine routes for the resourceful Asian markets (Howard, 2014).

The Middle Ages, which spanned from the 5th century to the 15th century (Hanawalt, 1998), included many changes in society and political structures. The Middle Ages also produced countless sophisticated explorers bringing out new-fangled discoveries. A highly motivated worldly traveler of this era who changed the looming travel arena was Marco Polo, the Italian voyager. He was one of the earliest Europeans to travel from Venice to the Chinese mainland (May, 2013). Marco Polo recorded his experiences, which were later interpreted in an intriguing manner. Indeed, Marco Polo recorded all his journey experiences in the manuscript "The Travels of Marco Polo" soon after his return from China (Rugoff, 2004).

Marco Polo's book and travel accounts of various explorers exposed a virtuous impression of the complications confronted. Polo courageously encountered challenging situations during his expedition and revived them in a record with exceptional details, demonstrating discoveries, distinct practices, enticing merchandize, spatial narratives, and cultural nuances. Marco Polo's book was acknowledged as the Bible for adventurous voyagers because it depicted the societal, cultural, fiscal, and environmental conditions of the places he had visited (Campbell, 1988). Places such as Mongolia, China, Tibet, Burma, Java, and India were mostly unknown among European voyagers of those days. Polo's book has provoked many adventurers and rovers, including Christopher Columbus and Ferdinand Magellan, to name a few (Pletcher, 2013).

Polo traversed across Asia (Jackson, 1998), and particularly vigorously through the Chinese regions, namely, Yunan and Szechuan. His contented expeditions inspired him to sail along the coast of China further south to Vietnam and Sumatra. Furthermore, he reached Sri Lanka and India and returned to Ormuz (on the Persian Gulf). He continued his nautical journey northwest by land to the Black Sea, then the Mediterranean Sea, and finally reached Venice. Polo was widely recognized for his contributions to expeditions and treated as the architect of extended sea routes in Asia, such as the Silk Road (Adler & Pouwels, 2014). Although he was not the very first European to arrive in China, he happened to be the first to record an in-depth narrative of his travels across the Asian continent (Polo, 2016). His works contributed to spreading Chinese inventiveness and popular usage of charcoal, coinage, and compass for navigation and geographic cardinal directions to expand future explorations.

Polo's book encompasses descriptions of diverse cultural beliefs and traditions of places he explored during his wide-ranging voyage within China (Polo, 2016). Polo encountered the standards for unfolding the notions of heritage and culture-related tourism. Later, Polo headed to the Middle East from Venice, Italy, in the Mediterranean Sea (Burgan, 2002). Subsequently, he and his team took the route alongside the Pamir Mountains and the Gobi Desert to reach Persia (modern-day Iran).

It was highly challenging to travel through the Asian continent during the time of Marco Polo's explorations due to diverse natural and sociocultural resources. He encountered an arena of geographical disparities that very limited European adventurers might have sought to experience. Some of the old maps of Asia were created as per the evidence in Polo's book, "The Travels of Marco

Table 1. *Chronological History of Tourism Development in Asia*

Year	Event/Milestone	Description	Signiflcance/Impact	Source
1950s	PostWWII Recovery stage	After World War II, Asia saw a surge in tourism as economies recovered.	increased intemational travel, economic boost. Initial exploration of the region by Western tourists	Stubbs (1999); Hugo (2004).
1960s	Emergence of air travel (The Jet age of mass tourism) Regional Cooperation	The advent of commercial air travel made Asia more accessible to intemational tourists. Formation of the ASEAN boosts regional tourism cooperation.	Increase in foreign tourists and a growing number of intemational flights. Impactful effect on regional tourism policies	Becker (2016); Cohen & Cohen (2015) Ghimire (2001)
1970s	Growth of industrialized societies in Asian countries Bali's tourism boom	Asia's newly industrialized economies (NIEs) Bali, Indonesia, became a popular destination, attracting backpackers and tourists.	Societal growth in countries such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and South Korea boosted tourism. Emergence of Bali as a majör tourist spot	Fry(1985); Chen (1989) Picard (1990); Hampton (2003)
1980s	Economic growth in Asia	Rapid economic development in countries such as Japan, Singapore, and Hong Kong led to increased outbound and inbound tourism.	Tourism became a significant contributor to the economıy	March (1997); Mak & White (1992)
1990s	Asian Financial crisis Technology and globalization in Asia	Economic downturn affected tourism in some Asian countries temporarily. - Emergence of the internet and globalization impact tourism.	Decline in tourist arrivals and the impact on local economies. Changing global economy and technological imıovations	Wall (1998); Chhibber & Palanivel (2009); Prideaux (1999) Watson (2004); Westphal (2002)
2000s	Rise of China as a tourism hub SARS outbreak Indian Ocean tsunami	China's economic growth led to increased domestic and intemational tourism. Temporary decline in tourism due to health concerns Tsunami had *a* signifıcant impact on tourism in affected areas, leading to recovery efforts.	China became a major player in the global tourism industry. Economic impact Tourism infrastructure rebuilding and resilience.	Lin, (2011); Zhang & Ap (1999) Kuo et.al. (2008) Blazinet.al. (2014)
2010s	ASEAN tourism integration Digital Transformation	ASEAN countries collaborated to promote regional tourism, leading to increased cross-border travel. - Social media became a poweriûl tool for destination marketing. - Online booking platfomıs reshape the industry.	Strengthened regional ties and economic cooperation. Cooperative efforts to boost tourism in the region	Cuyvers (2019) Eryilmaz (2022); Kazandzhieva & Santana (2019)
2020s	COVID-19 pandemic	Global pandemic severely impacted tourism worldwide, including Asia.	Sharp decline in tourist arrivals, economic challenges - Shift toward domestic tourism and digital experiences - Unprecedented decline in tourism due to travel restrictions - Efforts to revive tourism through safety measures	Thomas (2021); Fauzi & Paiman (2021)

(*Source: author's observations and findings of the study)

Polo." Thanks to this book, Europeans were familiarized with the concept of currency (Dieterle et.al., 2020). Inspired by Polo's printed records of his understandings and explorations, many countries enthusiastically initiated mercantile relations with China and India. Polo assisted the Chinese traders in overcoming their dislike of Western societies and establishing tactful coalitions with European regimes (Spielvogel, 2022). Subsequently, many nations accepted and initiated policies safeguarding Europe's trading practices. Polo's writings also glimmered the exploratory period that gave rise to several European nations competing for improved roads toward the East, specifically after the Ottoman Turks captured Constantinople and took control over it in the 15th century (Brotton, 2003). The technological advancement and the economic growth that Chinese industries accomplished through commercial relations with Europe empowered them to spread a level of progress.

Table 2. *Country-Wise Tourism Development in Asia*

Year	Country	Majör Infrastructure Developments	Key events in tourism Development	Government Initiatives
1950s	Japan	Construction of hotels	Introduction of organized tours and accommodation facilities	Establishment of the Japan Travel Bureau (JTB) ***Source**: March (2007)
1960s	Thailand	Development of beach resorts	Launch of the "Visit Thailand Year" campaign	Creation of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) ***Source:** McDowall & Wang (2009)
1970s	India	Focus on heritage tourism	Implementation of the "Incredible India" marketing campaign	Formation of the Ministry of Tourism, Gol ***Source:** Kaur & Sharma (2012)
1980s	China	Development of key tourist sites	Opening up of China to intemational tourism	Establishment of the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) ***Source:** Airey & Chong (2010)
1980s	Thailand	Expansion of the hotel industry	Thailand relished vigorous progress in tourism	Introduction of the "Visit Thailand Year" campaign. ***Source**: Chon et.al. (1993)
1990s	Malaysia	Construction of new airports	Launch of the "Malaysia, Truly Asia" campaign	Implementation of the Vision 2020 development plan. Launching of Visit Malaysia Year operations in 1990 Hosting of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. ***Source**: Bouchon (2014); Muda (1998)
2000s	Singapore	The "volumetric" metropolitan region is shaped by State borders plans for growth, fmancial and law enforcement practices, and structural and technical competence	The key site of postindependence Singaporean urbanism, the Marina Bay area	Marina Bay Sands construction Hosting of the fırst Foımula One Grand Prix in Singapore ***Source**: McNeill (2019); Cheng & Jarvis (2010)
2000s	Japan	Upgrades to transportation	Technological improvements in transportation	Introduction of simplifıed visa requirements ***Source:** Sorensen (2005); Douglass & Roberts (2015)
2010s	South Korea	Expansion of cultural attractions	Focus on cultural and sports tourism	Hosting majör intemational events such as the Winter Olympics Hosting of the G20 Summit and Yeosu Expo ***Source:** Wood & Meng (2021); Cooper & Parlar Dal (2016); Choi & Maliangkay (2014)
2015	Vietnam	Investment in tourism infrastructure	Increase in intemational marketing efforts	Economic reforms leading to increased tourism Implementation of the "Open Door" policy ***Source**: Nguyen (2020); Van Long & Tan (2018)
2020	Indonesia	Efforts to recover from the pandemic	Implementation of health and safety protocols	The Implementation of Health Protocol in Irrigation Small-scale Project Crisis management practices during the COVID-19 pandemic: The case of a newly-opened hotel in Bali. ***Source**: Rosyadi et.al. (2022); Peımatasari & Mahyuni (2022)
2021 2022	Philippines	Niche marketing strategy to revive the postpandemic situation	Promotional campaigns to boost tourism	The farm tourism initiatives in the Philippines ***Source**: Yamagishi et.al. (2021)

(*Source: author's observations and findings of the study)

At first, the evidence of Polo was not acknowledged by the explorers of the period. Gradually, society developed a desire for knowledge about civilizations of yesteryears and several voyagers got the stimulus to discover mysterious Asian destinations (Gosman, 1994). The prominent Silk Route was an enormous inspiration for collaborations between many nations (Barisitz, 2017). The Silk Road augmented the affluence and prosperity of mercantiles and dealings between Eastern and Western societies (Silin et al., 2018). Explorers such as Columbus, Magellan, and Vasco de Gama, fascinated by the inquisitiveness of lands, passed through the mysterious locations of Asia, which were the homelands of societies unnoticed (Appleby, 2013).

Concluding Thoughts: 20th-century Changes

The historical phase of World War II and its consequences led to a comprehensive progression of the holiday business and substantial changes in Asia as well (Li & Prescott, 2009). The countries have witnessed an increase in numbers of foreign tourists and native travelers exploring their homeland. Predominantly, among the Southeast Asian nations, the Japanese were very fervent and passionate travelers. Hong Kong and Singapore have immense mercantile dealings and entice many visitors because of duty-free ports. The simplification of journey boundaries in the 1970s caused a notable upgrading in the number of holidaymakers visiting China (Mak & White, 1992).

The 20th century advanced expeditions have caused many disparities in the folkloric traditions and ethnicities of Asia and these numerous traditional communities confronted difficulties regarding their self-governance (Scalapino, 1989). So far, the topographical position together with business connections of several Asian countries incorporated them into greater sociopolitical and commercial structures. Moreover, countries such as the Soviet Union and China have extended their fiscal and corporate expertise to Siberia and central regions of Asia (Barisitz, 2017). The century also witnessed many previous colonies in Asia being transformed into sovereign nations. The ancient Ottoman Empire was restructured into industrial realms of Asia (Bose & Jalal, 2022). In the meantime, various industrial expansions completed apprise with transport arrangements, communication linkages, and economic connections of Asia. All these developments have facilitated the modernization and integration of remote regions into international business centers (Rodrigue, 2020). Although several ancient vernaculars faded, plentiful old-style routines were preserved as fragments of preciously well-looked-after cultures (Jacob et.al., 2015).

The political and commercial predominance of the nation states, to a certain extent, depends on the nation's traditional groups. In Indonesia, the Javanese have great control over political life (Jakobsen & Torp, 2001), while the supremacy was disposed to the Vietnamese in Vietnam and the Burmans in Myanmar (Lockard, 2009). In those areas, highland folkloric people such as the Hmong (in Vietnam) or the Shan (in Myanmar) frequently encounter hindrances (Clarke, 2001). The growth of major traditional gatherings has reliably restricted the area from being reachable for well-known, up-front social orders, and present-day regulatory structures have substituted previous performances.

The unswerving advancement in home-grown markets, corporate resourcefulness, and communal background have reinforced innumerable realms in the Asian continent. There is considerable potential for public–private partnerships because these undertakings may add extra worth to the leisure business. With the nurturing from the resident group, the ordinary milieu can deliver sufficient chances for guests to shape a vigorous attachment to the countryside and improve superiority in organization amenities. There is abundant progress in vacationer movement, particularly from intercontinental as well as intraregional tourism-generating countries. Nevertheless, the outlook of travelers and their predispositions are wide-ranging and increasingly varying. Although technology has become helpful in digitizing the tourism industry, appropriate expertise enrichment is still mandatory regarding manpower growth because of the prime sociopolitical encounters confronted by Asian countries.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Evaluating E-Tourism through Bibliometrics: Materials and Emerging Research Trends

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study is to examine the scope of research on materials using a bibliometric evaluation and data mapping procedure. Materials research data were acquired from the Scopus and Web of Science databases. The search is conducted utilizing a search engine that contains e-tourism data from all connected journal publications. The search method in the study material is based on a topic area using keywords. VOS viewer and MS Excel are used in the mapping procedure. There were 60 relevant articles discovered in total. According to the findings, the most studied study material was from 2016 to 2022. 126 research articles were gathered from the Web of Science database and Scopus between 2014 and 2022 for further examination with VOS viewer. Meanwhile, in the tourism industry, the word "E tourism" is the most commonly discussed item. Through VOS viewer, we examine how many articles have been written about the material and its relationship to the issue area across all contributing countries. This evaluation can undoubtedly serve as a starting point for future research on materials and future research trends in the field of e tourism and this study provides significant value to e-tourism research by analysing the bibliometric data over the last 9 years, that is, from 2014 to 2022, obtained from Scopus and analysing the trends created in e-tourism research. It also adds value by highlighting developing e-tourism regions.

Keywords: E-tourism, Bibliometrics, VOS-viewer, Digital Tourism, SLR

Introduction

The term "e-tourism," or electronic tourism, refers to the nexus between information technology and the travel and tourism sector (Buhalis, 2020). It includes using digital tools, mostly the internet, to organize, schedule, coordinate, and improve travel-related activities (Mehraj, Ul Islam, et al., 2023). This quickly developing industry is already a major player in the global tourism industry, changing how travelers communicate with travel agencies and destinations (Basheer, Walia, Farooq, et al., 2023). These are some important e-tourism factors (Buhalis & Karatay, 2022). The way people organize their travels has been completely transformed by e-tourism. Travelers may easily and conveniently research and book flights, lodgings, activities, and services using online platforms, such as travel websites and mobile apps. Travelers can get reviews, suggestions, and details on local activities and attractions on the internet, which is a massive library of knowledge about destinations. Social media and user-generated content are important in this regard (Zhang et al., 2018). Data security and privacy issues, the digital divide in technology access, and the possible harm that excessive tourism may do to local surroundings and customs are just a few of the difficulties that face e-tourism.

In recent years, e-tourism—the combination of tourism and information technology—has become a popular and active field of study that has drawn interest from both academics and industry professionals. The exponential development of digital technology has not only changed the face of the tourism sector, but it has also spurred a great deal of scholarly research. The convergence of tourism and technology has brought about a paradigm shift in the way people plan, experience, and share their travel experiences, as Buhalis et al. (2023) effectively pointed out. This significant change has sparked a great deal of scholarly attention, as evidenced by the growing body of work devoted to comprehending the subtleties and intricacies of e-tourism (Basheer, Walia, Mehraj, et al., 2023).

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The e-tourism study subject has grown into a rich tapestry woven with varied threads from information technology, marketing, hospitality, and sustainable tourism, according to Casillo et al. (2019), who noted this spike in academic attention. This type of cross-disciplinary convergence emphasizes the complex nature of e-tourism by combining knowledge from other domains to fully handle the opportunities and problems presented by the digital era for the travel and tourism sector. Alkhatib and Bayouq (2021) carried out a study of the literature in order to create the foundation for a thorough investigation of e-tourism. They did this by offering a broad overview of the key problems, research trends, and important publications in this quickly developing field. This review of the literature attests to the dynamic nature of e-tourism research, which is constantly influenced by developments in technology, market dynamics, and world events (Basheer, Farooq, Hassan, et al., 2023). The bibliometric study that follows depends on the synthesis of existing knowledge since it lays the groundwork for a more comprehensive understanding of the academic environment around e-tourism. The dynamic character of e-tourism research is one noteworthy finding from this survey (Mehraj, Qureshi, et al., 2023a). The industry is always changing, reacting to changes in consumer preferences, technological developments, and the overall socioeconomic environment. This dynamic calls for an ongoing investigation of new problems that have an effect on the field of digital tourism. The difficulty for researchers is keeping up with the changing e-tourism trends so that their research stays relevant and makes a significant contribution to the current conversation.

There is a growing demand for rigorous analysis as e-tourism research spreads into other fields, such as marketing, information technology, hospitality, and sustainable tourism. Within the e-tourism literature, bibliometric analysis—a quantitative method of examining patterns of publication, citation, and collaboration—emerges as a critical instrument for comprehending the expansion, trends, and topics that require more research (Alkhatib & Bayouq, 2021). Through the use of this analytical framework, researchers may make sense of the vast and multifaceted world of e-tourism, revealing linkages and patterns that could otherwise go unnoticed. In the sections that follow, we'll take a closer look at the scholarly environment around e-tourism and use bibliometric analysis to sort through the complexities of research questions, find notable writers, highlight important publications, and uncover gaps in the body of literature. Our objective is to provide a valuable contribution to the existing e-tourism discourse by providing a thorough analysis that not only summarizes the present state of the field but also outlines potential directions for future research. The dynamic and always changing nature of e-tourism study continues to be at the forefront as we set out on this bibliometric adventure, directing our investigation into the digital frontier of tourism scholarship.

The internet and digital technology have transformed tourism in recent years. E-tourism has changed how visitors plan, book, and enjoy their trips and presented exciting difficulties and opportunities for scholars and researchers. Understanding e-tourism research's evolution and current state is crucial as the digital domain changes tourism (Buhalis et al., 2023). A detailed bibliometric journey through e-tourism scholarship provides useful insights into its growth, trends, and future directions. Bibliometrics, a vital instrument in the scientific metric study, quantifies academic literature growth, dissemination, and influence This analysis examines the huge e-tourism literature to find trends, themes, prolific writers, significant journals, and key research areas. We use bibliometric tools to track e-tourism research to better understand its key concerns, knowledge gaps, and interdisciplinary character. This investigation of e-tourism research aims to inform decision-making, foster researcher collaboration, and inspire new research in the ever-changing field.

Literature Review

In recent years, e-tourism—the fusion of tourism and information technology—has become a popular area of research (Buhalis et al., 2023). An increasing amount of scholarly literature reflects the considerable academic interest sparked by the rise of this dynamic business (Casillo et al., 2019). The main issues, research trends, and significant publications in e-tourism are outlined in this survey of the literature, which lays the groundwork for our bibliometric analysis that follows (Alkhatib & Bayouq, 2021). This survey of the literature highlights how e-tourism research is dynamic and always changing due to shifts in global events, market dynamics, and technology. Because e-tourism draws from a variety of fields, including information technology, marketing, hospitality, and sustainable tourism, bibliometric analysis is crucial to understanding the field's trends, growth, and areas that need more research. Our bibliometric analysis will delve deeper into the academic environment of e-tourism in the upcoming sections, highlighting research issues, eminent authors, journals, and gaps in the body of current literature.

Researches face a plethora of new challenges as e-tourism develops. The rapid pace of technological change and its potential effects on the tourism industry are a major cause for concern. Concerns have been raised regarding how the use of AI, VR, and AR in the tourism industry would affect things like destination marketing, customer behavior, and vacations as a whole. Research into e-tourism, with a particular emphasis on how digital technology might help to more eco-friendly and responsible tourism practices, faces both problems and opportunities in light of the growing relevance of sustainability in the tourism industry. Several significant research trends are identified by a thorough analysis of the most current literature. Powered by data analytics and machine learning, personalization in e-tourism services is becoming more popular. It is imperative to investigate how personalization affects customer satisfaction and decision-making. Researchers have fascinating chances to examine the changing environment of digital tourism platforms due to the rise of social media, the sharing economy, and online travel platforms as significant variables in travel planning and experience-sharing. It is critical to pinpoint future areas where e-tourism research can contribute significantly. Research on the relationship between sustainability and technology is still ongoing, as is the effect of new technologies on destination marketing approaches. Further research opportunities include the ongoing globalization of tourism and the effects of digitization on cross-cultural exchange. Through a thorough bibliometric review, this work greatly increases our understanding of resources in the context of e-tourism. In contrast to earlier studies, our research offers a thorough analysis that spans nine years (2014–2022) and uses information from the Web of Science and Scopus databases.

The 60 pertinent articles that we found through our search provide insight into how materials research in e-tourism is developing. Our study is unique in that it uses VOS Viewer to conduct a detailed analysis of 126 research articles published between 2014 and 2022, allowing for a more in-depth investigation of themes connected to the material. The identification of "E-tourism" as the most widely used phrase in the tourism sector highlights our special emphasis on the convergence of materials and e-tourism, adding a fresh viewpoint to the body of literature already in existence. Our work not only synthesizes existing literature but also paves the way for the identification of new trends. We contribute to the identification of developing locations in e-tourism by offering important insights into the geographical dynamics of materials through mapping the global distribution of research articles. This study represents a significant improvement in the academic discourse on the topic because of its detailed analysis, historical span, and emphasis on the symbiotic link between materials and e-tourism.

RQ1. What are the revealed relationships that can be developed through the application of bibliometric analysis?
RQ2. Which researchers and research articles have received the most citations in relation to e-tourism?
RQ3. Which terms are most frequently addressed in e-tourism research?

Methods and Data

The majority of articles has been published in Journal of tourism marketing, Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, Tourism Recreation Research, Tourism management, journal of travel research and Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality were the journals that were chosen for this research, and based on the search results from those journals' databases, we were able to identify 60 articles that were relevant to this line of inquiry and were relevant to the subject of e-tourism. These articles were divided into three primary groups: e-tourism, which totalled 32 articles, and materials for online -tourism websites related papers, which tallied 28 papers. The following is a breakdown of how many articles were published in each year: we started with search articles published from 2014 to 2022. Please refer to Table 1 for an in-depth summary of the papers that were considered for inclusion in this research.

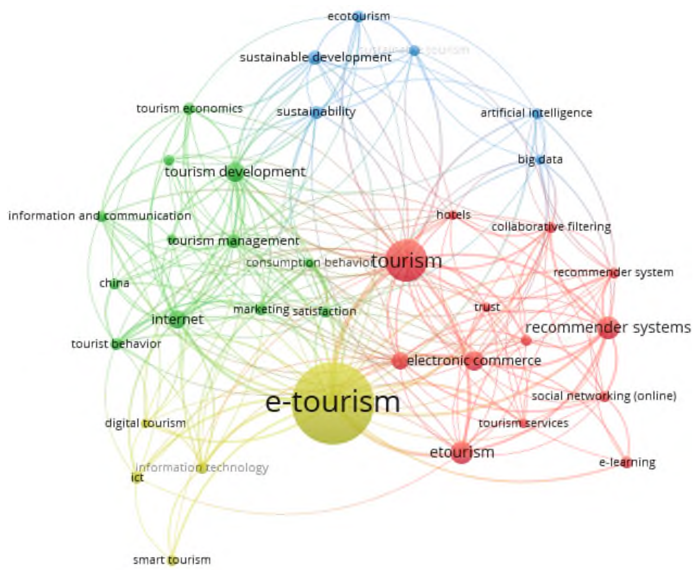


Figure 1. Distribution of Keywords in the Field of e- tourism.

Two terms constitute the minimal number of relationships between terms in VOS viewer. The results of the VOS viewer analysis of the data were subsequently categorized into six clusters: the clusters are represented as follows: i) Cluster 1 is coloured red, ii) Cluster 2 is coloured green, iii) Cluster 3 is coloured blue, iv) Cluster 4 is coloured yellow, v) Cluster 5 is coloured purple, and vi) Cluster 6 is coloured cyan. Each cluster illustrates the correlation between two or more terms. Bibliometric mappings can be presented by VOS viewer in three distinct visual representations: density visualization (Figure 3), network visualization (Figure 1), and overlay visualization (Figure 2). The labels for the keywords are coloured circles. There exists a positive correlation between the quantity of keywords mentioned in the title and abstract and the size of the circle. Thus, the frequency at which letters and circles occur determines their respective sizes. The prominence of the keyword is proportional to the enlargement of the letters and circles. The connection among terms is illustrated in Figure 1. In the context of network visualization, associations between terms are represented as a line or network (Buhails 2020). As illustrated in Figure 1, the clusters correspond to each of the investigated subject areas. The study keyword exhibits the strongest associations with other terms. This study's keywords are contained within cluster 1, which comprises sixty items. The keyword research comprises 211 links.

Density Visualization of Main keywords

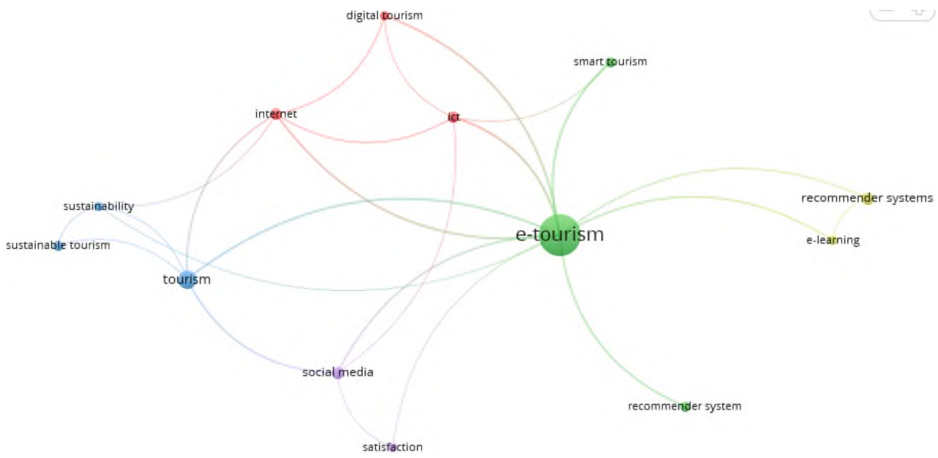


Figure 2. Density Visualization of Main keywords

Materials pertaining to tourism are also among the most researched topics, as illustrated in Figure 4. The inquiry was conducted on an e-site; e-tourism has been the subject of the most research. The correlation between e-tourism and other concepts such as virtual tourism, ICT, web services, and e-websites is illustrated in Figure 5. Figure 2 illustrates the relationships between E-tourism and seventeen other terms. The following are the terms that are linked to the keyword: e-learning, recommended system, technology adaptation, social media, ICT, and satisfaction. Overlay visualization shows the relationship between terms accompanied by the time the research is updated (Foris et al., 2020) Figure 2 shows the trend from year to year related to research on e-tourism. Research on e-tourism based on Figure 2 is in the range of 2014 – 2022

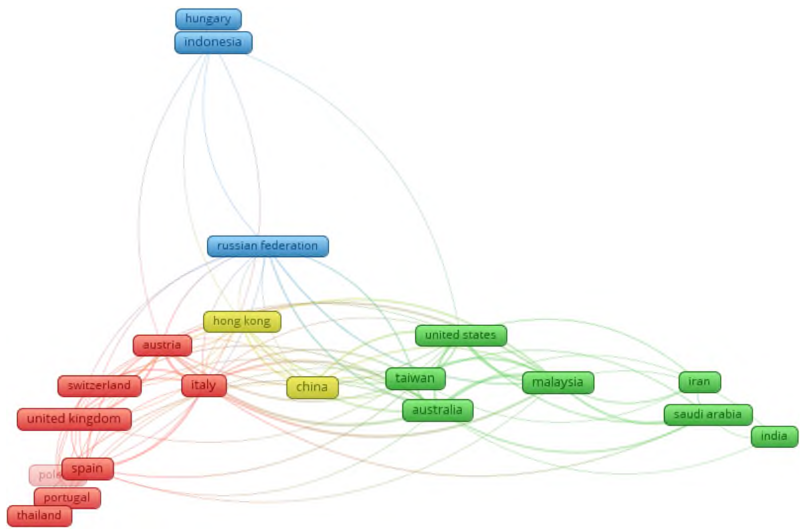


Figure 3. Participation of countries.

A total of 24 countries participated in this study. The seven periodicals comprising the largest collection of research articles, of which we are currently reviewing 43 in total. The intergovernmental relations are illustrated in Figure 4. The relationship between countries during investigation is illustrated in Figure 4. Among the 19 countries that were gathered, only five have the greatest number of research works: i) Four nations—China, Malaysia, the United States, and Indonesia —have the most e-tourism research conducted. The following are the journals included in each cluster: I) Journal of Tourism Management; ii) Malaysia and the United States of America; iii) South Korea; iv) Taiwan; and v) Indonesia. China has the most relationship connections among the five involved and interconnected nations, with approximately eight links to the United States, Malaysia, South Korea, Taiwan, and the USA. Malaysia has two links with Indonesia and South Korea, while South Korea has only one link with Indonesia. The United States of America is linked to both China and Indonesia. Taiwan is connected to China, and vice versa. Brunei is Indonesia and South Korea are linked to Malaysia. This demonstrates that the articles published in the periodicals under consideration pertain to the materials under investigation and possess a global scope, establishing connections between nations.

Network Visualization of e-tourism with Another Variables

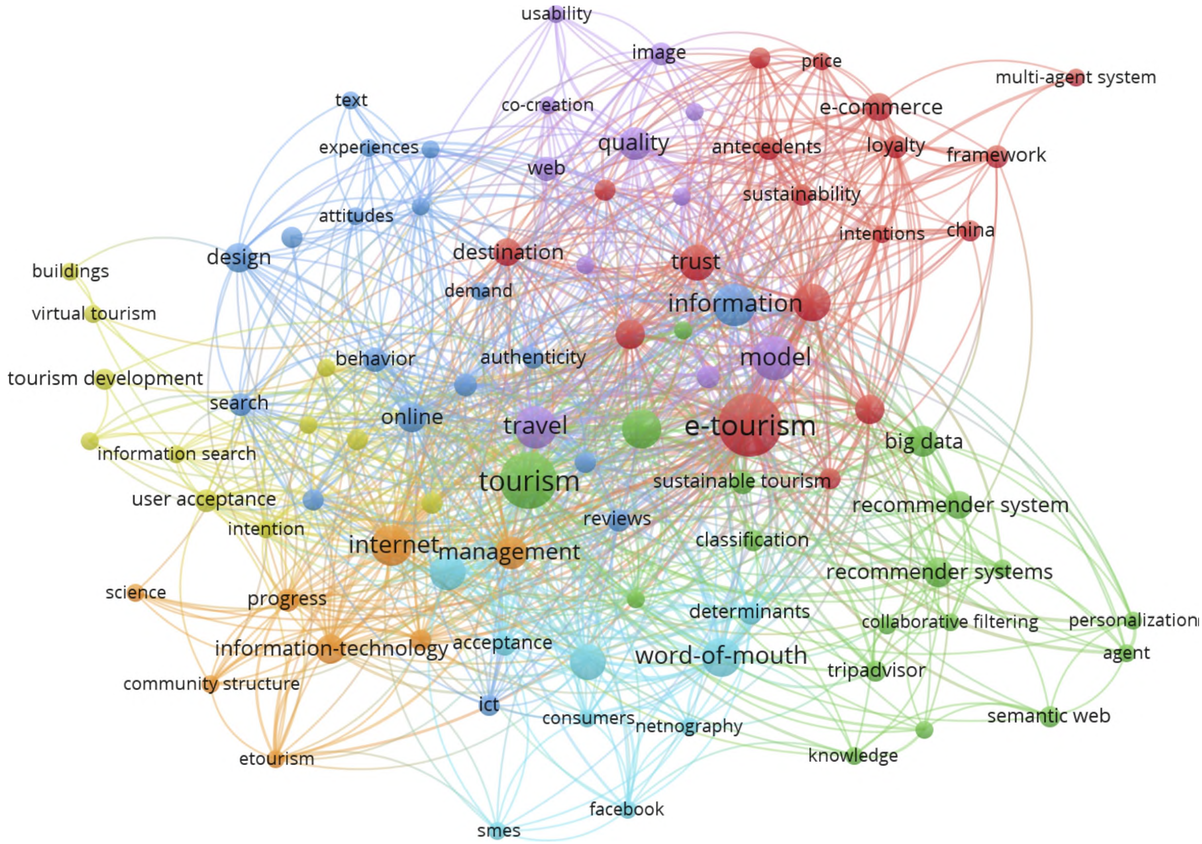


Figure 4. Network Visualization of e- tourism with another variables

According to the density visualization depicted in Figure 3, as the diameter of the circle increases and the yellow colour becomes darker, the density of keywords increases. This indicates that as the frequency of research on these subject rises, so does the density of keywords. The quantity of studies will diminish if the hue diminishes or melds with the green backdrop (Buhalis & Karatay, 2022). The number of research articles pertaining to educational materials is the most growing, as indicated by the keywords study, research, student, learning, application, and process in Figure 3. Frequently occurring keywords include research, ICT, electronic tourism, websites, word-of-mouth, the internet, and technology. For instance, tourism-related research on purified materials is rarely conducted or published in a database of seven journals used as references for data collection. Alongside the bibliometric examination of the subject matter, an analysis of the research study's country is also conducted.

Most Cited Sources of Articles

The e-tourism research scene in South Korea is characterized by an emphasis on mobile technology usage in travel experiences, user-generated content, and virtual reality applications. The diversified and culturally rich archipelago of Indonesia has investigated e-tourism from the viewpoints of sustainable tourism development, educational tourism, and community-based tourism. Due to its

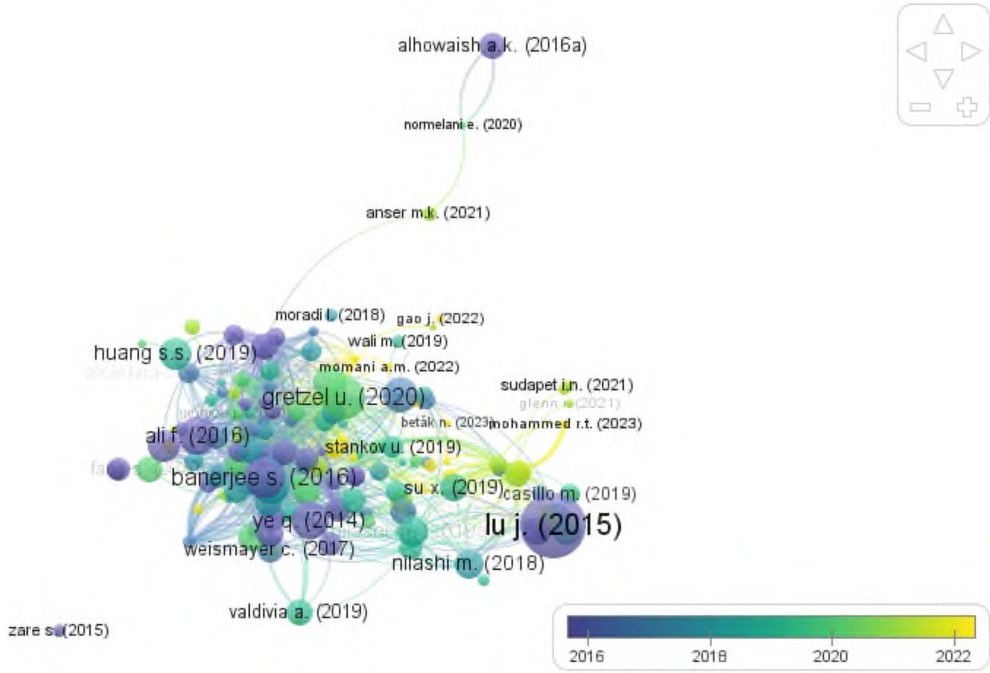


Figure 5. Most cited sources of articles.

robust technological infrastructure, Taiwan has influenced research on the functions of blockchain, augmented reality, and artificial intelligence in the e-tourism industry. This study attempts to find possible areas of cooperation and information transfer in addition to identifying important authors, journals, and research issues by looking at the bibliometric data from these six nations. The study's conclusions will deepen our awareness of the worldwide landscape of e-tourism research, which will eventually promote international collaboration and the field's continuous expansion.

Key Contributing Authors

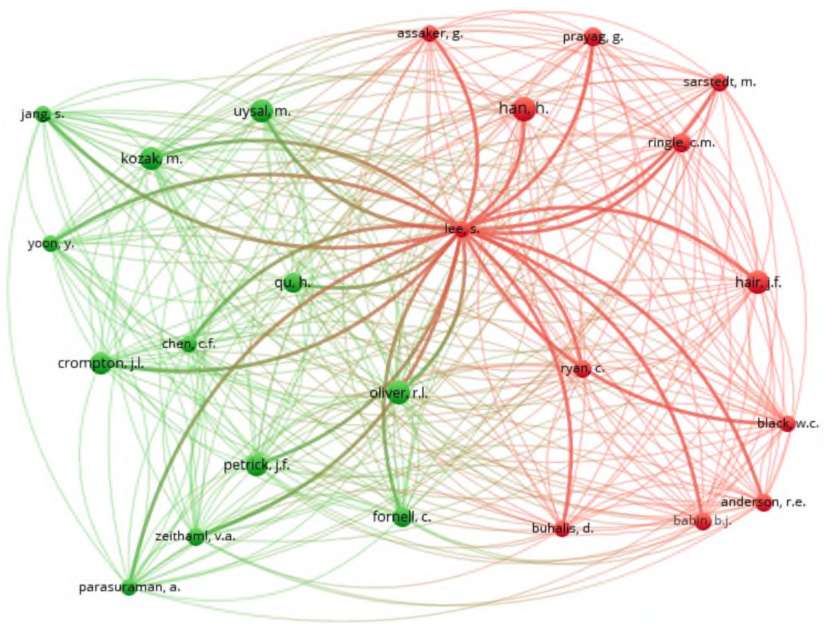


Figure 6. Key contributing authors.

A bibliometric analysis of the subject of e-tourism from 2014 to 2022 found some notable contributing authors who have considerably changed the research environment. These authors have made significant contributions to the domain, including Alamoodi, Al-Bahri, Zaidan, Zanker, Law, Neidhardt, Gretzel, Aickelin, Al-Sattar, Cantoni, Mohammed, Ibrahim, Nilashi, Samad, Yadegaridehkordi, Arya, Dhyani, and Ghayas. Their significant publishing output, frequent reference in the e-tourism literature, and active participation in interdisciplinary research collaborations demonstrate their importance. Their study covers a wide range of subjects, such as the impact of developing technologies, the function of user-generated content, sustainable tourism practices, and the consequences of global events on e-tourism, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. These writers are critical in furthering our understanding of e-tourism dynamics, directing future study, and encouraging innovation in this ever-changing industry. Their aggregate knowledge and collaboration networks illustrate their pivotal involvement in defining the trajectory of e-tourism research throughout this time period.

Affiliations of Authors of E-tourism

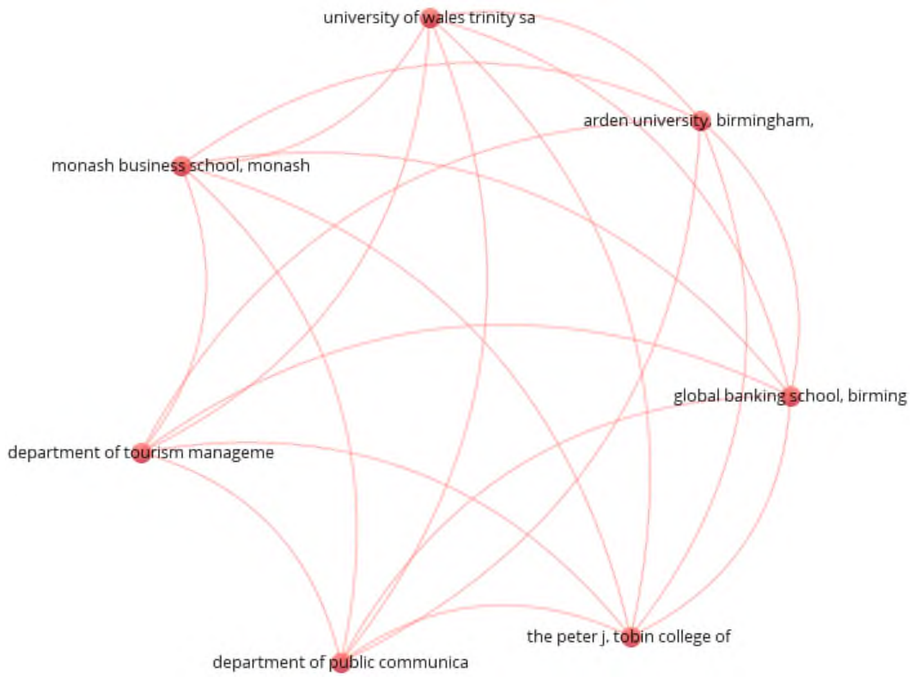


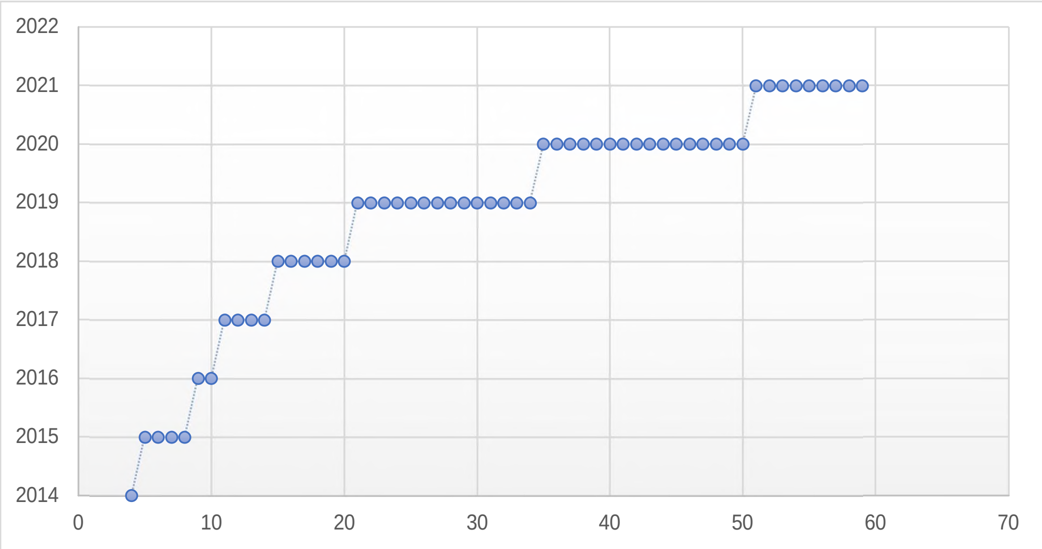
Figure 7. University Affiliations of authors

Recent years have seen an exponential growth and revolution in e-tourism, a blossoming industry at the confluence of tourism and information technology. Six nations were included in the extensive bibliometric study, which was carried out to obtain insights into the changing field of e-tourism research: China, Malaysia, the USA, South Korea, Indonesia, and Taiwan. The purpose of this study was to provide light on the scholarly contributions, new trends, and knowledge distribution in these various geographic contexts. The abundant scholarly production in e-tourism has been especially noteworthy in China. In light of the growing popularity of digital platforms and the tourist industry, Chinese scholars have looked into issues such destination marketing, online travel reservations, and the effects of new technology. Another major player in the e-tourism space, Malaysia, has contributed to research on the application of digital marketing techniques, mobile app usage, and sustainable tourism methods in multicultural settings. The USA has promoted study into the integration of big data analytics, consumer behaviour, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on e-tourism because of its well-established tourism business.

Findings

All articles analysed in this study were taken from a database of Scopus and web of science we built a specialized search engine for the field of e-tourism to make data collection and analysis easier. We fed the search engine the journal articles, narrowing the results by selecting only those that included the term "E-Tourism" in their title, keywords, and abstracts. Articles from 2014-2022 were included for the analysis. After determining which articles fit the study's inclusion requirements, we used Microsoft Excel to extract and format the data, saving the file as a comma-separated values (*.csv) file. We used VOS viewer to map the e-tourism research ecosystem and examine its trends and connections. In order to visualize the connections and co-citations amongst e-tourism studies, this program was used to construct publication, country, journal, and keyword maps. We were able to better understand the dynamic and interconnected nature of e-tourism study because to the methods we employed here. The emphasis of the amended passage is now on bibliometric approaches and the examination of e-tourism research published in the chosen journals.

Table 1. *Years of Distribution of Papers*



Conclusion

The bibliometric analysis of e-tourism research from 2014 to 2022 provides an in-depth look into the field's evolution and main issues. During this time, a wide range of studies have emerged from the efforts of notable authors, countries, citations, and top journals contributing to an ever-expanding body of knowledge. Through their prolific publications, obvious citation effect, and substantial partnerships, these researchers have jointly driven the growth of e-tourism research. Their research focuses on the transformative influence of emerging technologies, the role of user-generated content, tourist sustainability, and the effects of global events like the COVID-19 epidemic on the tourism industry. Furthermore, the emergence of data-driven research and interdisciplinary approaches illustrates e-tourism scholarship's versatility in adapting to changing market dynamics and technology advancements.

The findings of this bibliometric analysis demonstrate the interdisciplinary nature of e-tourism research, highlighting the significant contributions of experts from around the world. As e-tourism intersects with technology, sustainability, and changing consumer behaviours, these experts have opened the path for a more comprehensive knowledge of this dynamic sector. Their work not only informs and guides present research endeavours, but it also lays the framework for future investigations, underlining the value of future collaborations and knowledge sharing. Overall, this bibliometric analysis is a great resource for researchers, educators, and industry stakeholders, giving a comprehensive overview of the e-tourism research landscape and significant insights for guiding its future trajectory.

Limitation and Future Research Direction

This bibliometric analysis has limitations even if it provides insightful information on the state of e-tourism research. First off, the study depends on the quality and availability of the data sources, which might not include all pertinent papers or might have errors. Furthermore, the analysis may not cover all e-tourism research because it is limited to a particular selection of journals. The study's 2014–2022-time horizon might not include relatively recent advancements in the sector. Lastly, because the analysis skips over the study papers' actual content, it might not offer a sophisticated grasp of the particular subjects and conclusions covered in e-tourism studies. In order to get around these restrictions, future e-tourism bibliometrics research projects should use a wider range of data sources. They should also consider employing sophisticated text mining and natural language processing tools to examine the content of research papers. A knowledge of e-tourism patterns that is more current can be achieved by extending the time period to encompass more recent years. Furthermore, research on particular subtopics within e-tourism, such as the effects of new technology, eco-friendly travel strategies, or crisis management, will advance our knowledge in these fields. Additionally, studies examining the connection between scholarly e-tourism production and its real-world applications in the sector can close the knowledge gap between academia and industry, making it easier to apply research results in the actual tourism sector. Ultimately, as e-tourism develops, future studies should focus on examining the ethical and privacy implications of digital technologies in the context of e-tourism to ensure responsible and sustainable development in this fast-paced industry.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Growth Determinants from the Business Continuity Plans of Selected Travel Companies in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT
This study examines the business continuity plans of selected travel companies in the Philippines. Growth determinants, as influenced by awareness to external and internal environments, include product, price, customer, cost of goods sold, sales volume, operating expenses, profit and loss with research and repositioning. Responses were collected from the travel companies or 80% (218) of the targeted respondents. A stratified sampling technique was used with the Pearson correlation coefficient which proved the link between BCPs or business continuity plans and growth determinants. It is recommended that periodic adjustments on operations or standard procedures be made as travel related businesses are market and customer driven. Changes in tourism policies, government regulations, preferences of clients, even the current inflation prod strategies to manage sales, income and company expenses. Adapting current business continuity plans ensure growth for travel companies in the now normal. Future research can deal with tour operators, accommodation, other travel and tourism providers using BCPs and discerning if their growth indicators are similar or not.

Keywords: Business continuity plan, Growth, Travel companies, Adaptive strategy, Resilience in business

Introduction

The travel market is changing rapidly, and companies need to keep reinventing and adapting as the tourism industry landscape from 2020 and beyond is looking at how people connect and shop. The Mobile phone is becoming increasingly dominant as the primary way of accessing information. Social media plays a vital role in communication. This signifies that every travel-related company needs to update its marketing, sales platforms, company operations and other relevant transactions.

Some notable trends are: Chatbot (being refined in tourism) interaction with online guests or visitors; Sustainable Tourism (minimize environmental impact) 70% of travelers want to contribute by adjusting their itinerary or set of activities; Personalized Booking Experiences (involvement with choices) 90% of travelers, tracking internet searches and offering new vacation ideas when they log in: Biometric ID System (undergoing continuous development) for airports, airlines, hotels, others. (stratojets.com; Vannucci and Pantano 2019; Chemli S., 2020)

- An estimated 700 million people will make a booking online by 2023
- 72% of mobile bookings happen within 48 hours of last-minute Google searches that include the words ‘tonight’ and ‘today’
- There are over 148 million travel bookings made annually
- 70% of all customers do their research on a smartphone

These changes spell the difference between the success and failure of travel businesses to pivot and arrive at solutions in the short, medium and long terms. Transitioning to becoming equipped for the direction of travel. Customers, suppliers, personnel are aligned through processes, adjusted protocols for operations and the regular daily business routine for the now normal.

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Theoretical Framework

Businesses function in a dynamic or changing environment that has a direct influence on goal setting and company operations. It includes external business environments: economic, political and legal, demographic, social, competitive, global, and technological. Internal environments involve day-to-day decisions on chosen suppliers, which employees are hired, products for selling, and where to sell those products. Understanding an evolving environment helps managers with the impact on their business and have better control over them. (Gitman, et.al. 2018) Skills and resources are utilized in creating goods and services aimed at satisfying existing and future customers. Adapting to change from the external environment will enable strategies for flexible internal operations.

Business continuity planning is a combination of systematic procedures and resource information that firms can use to recover from disruptions to business operations. These may be disasters, inflation and other challenging circumstances. Business continuity planning may be focused on loss or damage to information, information systems, impact resources and resources systems needed by the firm and provided by its supply base. These can be in manufacturing, production and even service industries. (Zsidisin, et. al., 2003, Blos et.al. 2015)

Managing the risks of supply chains increases in importance, effective processes and tools are needed to help firms formulate strategies and techniques in mitigating the risk of disruption in their supply chains. The four components in the diagram are identified as integral to ensuring the flow of regular and interrupted transactions:

1. Awareness – internal and external risks as considered in management levels for the allocation of resources, create and deploy mitigation for suppliers and customers who can help in the effort.
2. Prevention – lessen the most likely scenarios on supply chain disruptions by risk identification (root causes), risk assessment (during an occurrence), risk treatment (strategy formulation), and risk monitoring (add or subtract risks as they happen)
3. Remediation – courses of action for recovery from business disruptions, shorten or minimize the duration of problem areas, and identify how to assemble solutions .
4. Knowledge Management – like an audit check or "post-mortem" analysis, post-incident reports for the key areas on learning curves and store the flow of working systems or procedures

Even with adequate plans and minimal disruptive effects, management must review what happened and conduct a debriefing on the existing BCP. Revisions if needed, address the deficiencies while simultaneously keeping the strengths of the existing plans and tactics. (Zsidisin, et. al., 2003, Blos et.al., 2015)

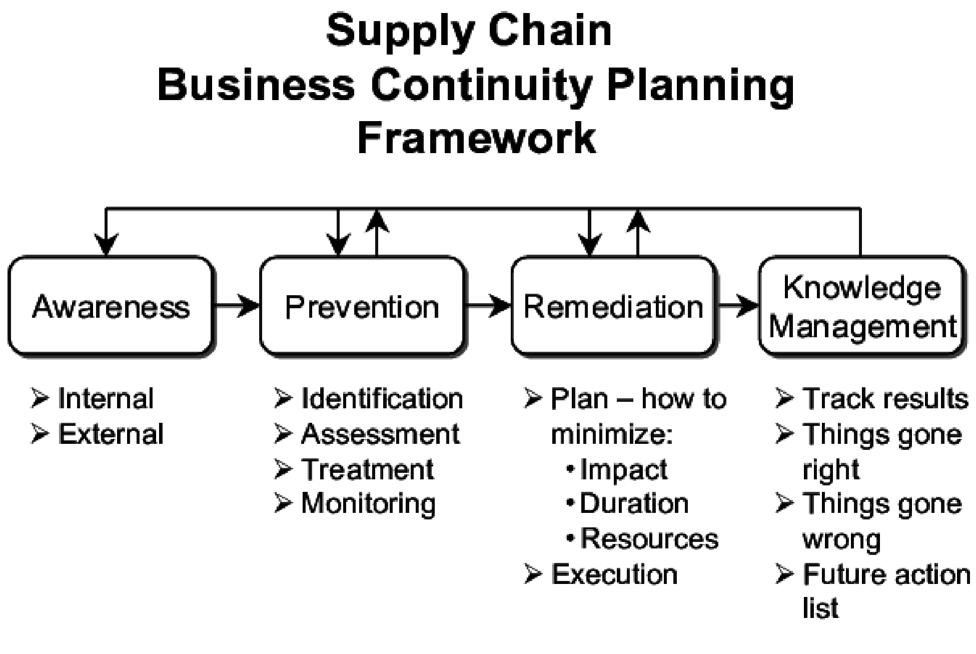

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework (Zsidisin, et.al. 2003, Blos, et.al. 2015).

Combining these theories lead to an evolving business continuity plan, an adjusted management system that includes handling crisis or any business disruption. It leads to adaptation in business operations. Change is constant even for all business types and fine-tuning products, services, delivery, prices, market positioning helps in survival. The health crisis turned the world upside down and the struggle is real, now inflation too is global. Maneuvering through a crisis or predicament poses some consideration in accuracy, risk, involvement, but it is a glue for the broken parts of a company. Threats, losses, downturns may be converted into chances, opportunities for renewal and revival which enable any business to be resilient and viable through contingencies.

The Conceptual Framework

Business awareness for travel companies begins with its external and internal environments. Circumstances like trip related delays, weather, disasters, cancellations or a sudden rebooking. It may include data sourcing, suppliers, available transport, electrical needs and others. These seen and unforeseen travel events prompt prevention measures by calculating scenarios, the most likely and least likely occurrences, and what procedures match them. Remedial action is taken to lessen costs and minimize complaints. Provisions for on-the-spot solutions and a set of prepared options must be incorporated into a company's business acumen.

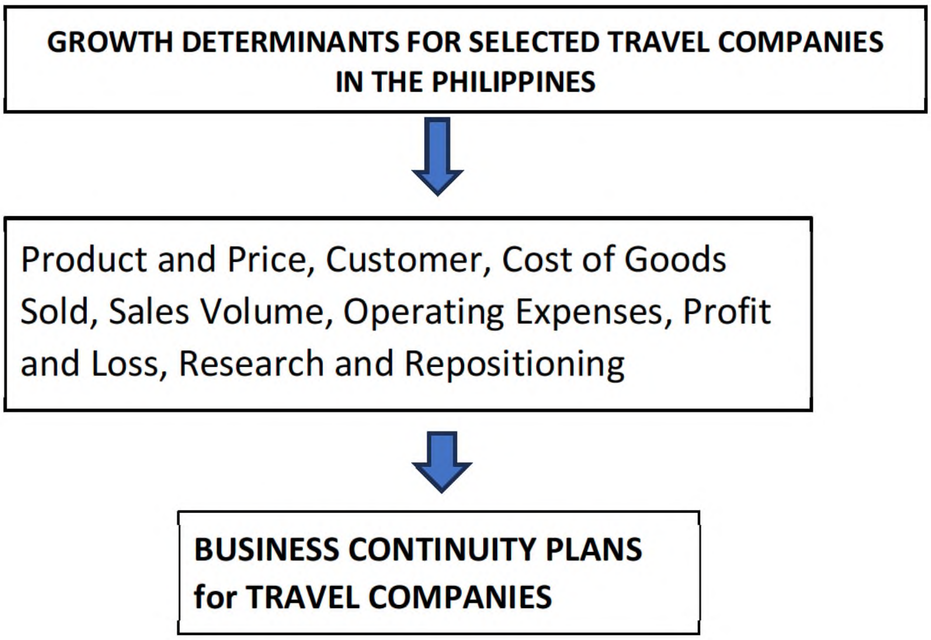

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework.

Dynamism includes how to keep an accurate record of daily routine, being in an emergency, special requests of clients, competitors and market fluctuations. Knowledge management is a button for continuous improvement, proactive approaches and fulfilling company objectives. It can create a unique selling proposition, renewed value to the products and services, rebranding and sealing the deal with what is current for the business and its customers.

The digital bandwagon brought in speed of information, processing of data, capturing live events and transmitting them in real time. This signals current business functions and operations to evolve and be updated. Continuity means streamlining, fine tuning transactions within an organization, toward its suppliers and customer base. The contingency for the long haul is adapting to change, retooling skills and competencies. Resulting in innovative products and services for travel, making an agent better equipped to withstand market forces. A roadmap to recovery during slumps as the conduct of daily operations is safeguarded by business continuity plans. The study has attempted to determine growth determinants of selected travel companies in the Philippines and what directions for business continuity can be undertaken.

Related Literature

Evolving Travel and Tour Landscape

The desktop computer remains the most popular device for making travel bookings, according to a report from EyeforTravel. Travelport Digital investigated the travel activities and why people use apps instead of mobile websites. Speed and increased functionality were the most popular reasons to favor apps, as well as the ability to receive useful updates. People value updates on trip status, price alerts and discounts, as well as reminders of bookings in progress. (www.travelport.com)

Travel companies are increasingly hosting online communities to extend their initiatives of customer relationship management and gain additional insight into their business. Virtual social interactions benefit travel choices with customer engagement. The increased influence of online content is a real advantage for travel companies who invest in them. The aim is to stimulate interest and have a convinced online customer. (Luo, et.al. 2019;Mohanty, et.al. 2020)

E-travel companies project a brand that allows online users to research or investigate. Reviews that are posted serve as clues to likability or otherwise. Social networking sites devoted to travel develop a brand for their goods, products and services accessed online. Plans to travel and decisions to go on a trip are encouraged by what is seen, viewed and heard on mobile apps. Online participation enables the start of an experience to prospective buyers. (Kamboj and Rahman, 2017; Zhang, X. et.al.,2021)

Information Communication Technology is an essential platform for Tourism Enterprises to promote business products and services using the Online Travel Agencies, Mobile App, social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. The ease of doing business is the main reason to consider but non- technological reasons such as online fraud, security and privacy concerns are real. Not everyone would trust faceless transactions. Online travel agencies are also online travel platforms that sell products assembled by traditional travel agents and tour operators. However, adapting to technology is a practical move with training key personnel, partnering with reputable platforms and developing a user-friendly website. (Maravilla and Gantalao, 2019; Zarezadeh, Z. et.al., 2019)

The changing travel landscape also leads to information overload, new hotels, new cruise ships, passport and visa issues, weather, transit strikes, travel insurance and others. Travel agents now referred to as travel consultants or travel advisors, can make it easier by providing responsible options for every budget. They serve as a life coach, concierge, fixer, and executive producer. Direct access to a global distribution system (GDS) plus personal and professional connections can land better deals and safety nets. During emergencies like cancellations, air ticket pricing, expertise like safaris, spelunking (cave exploration), free upgrades and better experiential trips, saving hours from online average individual research time. (forbes.com; Rey, 2019)

According to a survey by Rakuten Insight on online travel agencies (OTA) conducted in the Philippines in November 2020, 57% of the respondents aged 16 and 24 years stated that they had not used an online travel agency. By comparison, 52% of Filipinos surveyed between 25 and 34 years, and 35 and 44 years old stated that they used an online travel agency with 12, 112 respondents from 81 provinces. (www.statista.com) People have options for travel either with packaged tours or independent travel (DIY: do it yourself) all with budget considerations. Packaged tours are all planned out from lodging, food, guides, transport and others. Going DIY means you have extra time to navigate through travel components if you want to explore, take chances and discover on your own. (Kazandzhieva, 2020).

Business Environment

Incorporated into the internal and external analysis of a business environment is process management. It is a method to manage the activities of an organization calibrated to hit goals. A manager or leader using this technique attempts to design organizational processes highlighting quality and performance. Operationally it is how the organization puts routine steps and new procedures for customers/clients, suppliers and partners. It also includes competitors, those organizations that compete for your customers or offer alternative approaches to your services. (McNamara, 2022; Ng and Rivera,2018) Organizations operate in different external environments to succeed and thrive, organizations must adapt, exploit, fit or align with the forces in their external environments. Interrelated and affecting organizations are sociocultural, technological, economic, government and political, natural disasters, and human-induced problems. For example, economic environmental forces generally include exchange rates and wages, employment statistics, factors such as inflation, recessions, and other shocks, both negative and positive. (Bright, Cortes, et.al.2019, Bhati, et.al., 2020)

Outside forces like peace and order, new policies affecting an entire country are given attention as the state or national government decides on the best options. Aspects of assurance for health and safety, consistency on image, building partnerships for supply and demand chains can equate to better travel options. (Fana, et.al.,2020; Gössling, et.al.,2020; Cho, 2019). Boosting travel confidence through social distancing and protocols in any travel destination. Considered as transitory yet integral for the industry to survive and business to thrive. (Tourism New Zealand.com; Disimulacion, 2020; Houle, 2019)

Technological forces may refer to speed, price, service, quality of products and services. Information technologies and social media powered by the Internet can be used by sharing-economy companies. Government and political forces may include policies that question and disrupt free trade, health-care reform, and immigration—all of which increase uncertainty for businesses while creating opportunities for some industries and instability in others. (Bright, Cortes, et.al. 2019, Srihirun et.al.,2021)

The internal environment analysis dwells into an organization's internal strengths and weaknesses in relation to its competencies, resources, and competitive advantages. An organization in business should have a clear idea of its best attributes as well as current deficits and gaps which are intertwined with where the company is headed. Financial is about borrowing mechanisms, cash flow, capital, expenses, credit rating and fluctuations. Physical resources pertain to assets, building, equipment, raw materials to name a few. Proprietary technology can be copyright, patents, trade secrets and expertise in operations. (McNamara, 2022; Sigala, 2020)

Configuring new experiences, making them novel or distinct for the consumer and leading to a flexible business. Competitive advantage for tour operations will revolve around customer value, profit formula, essential resources, and processes. All these are integral with internal and external market forces, the societal conditions and maintained new service, new product delivery. Orientation to adjustments, new ways of doing will be added to new business directives. These may be customized packages, personalized guiding and bubbled shopping tour experiences. (Donthu and Gustafsson, 2020; Zheng et.al., 2021)

Customer relationships are influenced by the reputation of the company or business products and services. It transcends to reputation with suppliers, employees, competition, new entrants, product substitutes, supply chain and others. Brand recognition, pricing, repurchase and consistent performance. The aspect of human resource deals with hiring, firing, training, strategic flexibility, commitment and loyalty for competitive advantage. Compensation, labor disputes if any as well as rate of turnover. (McNamara, 2022; Park, Chen, and Cheng, 2021)

In the Asia-Pacific region a lot of countries have given incentive packages and regulations on employment and other supportive actions for tourism. These are aimed at lessening closures for enterprises to withstand the pandemic pressures. (Ng Rivera,2018) Jobs, investments can likewise be protected. Governments are arranging income support, tax credits, deferred payments, and other forms of assistance to those who permanently or temporarily lost jobs. (ILO, 2020; Disimulacion, 2020)

The new normal travels include health, safety and security. Airlines reveal filtration on airline systems, companies have contactless booking, check-ins, payments, and site tests for Covid-19. Virtual conversations and conferences through hybrid meetings, virtual tours and robots are prevalent. (Norwegian.com; Emirates Airlines, 2020) Concessions like free cancellations, extended booking dates, transfer to another person, adjusted refund policies aid in restarting the industry. Some may offer no rebooking fee, no fare adjustments if affected by sudden restrictions, even 100% refund with 24-hour notice of cancellations. These signify the desire of service providers, management companies, site operators and owners to resume operations even at a slower or gradual pace. (www.agoda.com;philippinesairlines.com;cnbc.com;dot.gov.ph)

Growth Influencers

Measuring profitability performance in the tourism sector with tour operators and travel agencies in Lithuania as an example, reveal that net profitability was influenced by sales revenue, costs of sales and operating expenses in medium-sized enterprises. Small firms had sales revenue, costs of sales and operating expenses for their net profitability ratio. It also looked into return on assets and turnover of assets. (Hedija, et. al., 2017, Alessandro and Marikka ,2021)

Sales and operating income are common outputs for measuring efficiency, but cost efficiency does not always reveal profitability. In a Spanish case study for travel agents, profitability performance used traditional indexes: return on capital employed (ROCE), return on assets (ROA) and return on investment (ROI). Sales per employee and sales per outlet were used as an indicator of productivity. The Czech tour operators had return on assets, return on sales or return on equity which do not always indicate a company's efficiency and should include other factors in the performance criterion. (Hedija et.al., 2017, Gomes and Oliveira, 2021)

In Gurgaon India, traditional travel agents, tour operators, online travel agents and hoteliers were investigated which led to an analysis that IT or information technology plays a significant role in the profitability of the tourism and travel industry. These include competitive pricing via dynamic pricing like in the hotel sector, promotions and improved efficiency in service delivery to tourists with virtual access anywhere and at any time. (Madhukar and Sharma,2019) Practical implications with direct and indirect effects to different stakeholders: travelers, owners, business executives in the travel industry point to adopting IT to take their businesses to a new level. In being competitive, practitioners must explore the potential opportunities through technologically driven approaches. This can lead to new business models as an aid in profitability for travel and tourism. (Madhukar and Sharma,2019; Valdez, P., et.al., 2017)

Most likely, business travelers use direct online booking channels due to familiarity, being tailor fit and improved frequent traveler or rewards programs. Toxzday, effective use of TikTok, microblog, WeChat and other social media platforms boost interest and customer engagement. DMOs or destination management organizations with local governments can encourage and promote online connectivity. (Yang Yang and Jin-Hoo, 2022)

The management of intermediaries should be more agile, considering the beneficial effects of the Web that facilitate the relationship with customers. It should address traditional customers less accustomed to the use of the Internet. It must be noted that evident recovery in the profitability of the hotels is followed by a lower profitability of the intermediaries due to reduced demand for their services due to the development of telematics. This allows many tourists to design independently their travels avoiding the higher costs of traditional intermediaries. (Iovino and Migliaccio, 2018; Villegas, 2017)

The tourism offer evolves all over the globe as trends in force oblige, tour operators and travel agencies to a “strategic revolution”, offer increasingly popular destinations because they are innovative and low-cost. (Iovino and Migliaccio, 2018; Mkhize and Ivanovic, 2020) Technology, matching skill sets, connectivity, real time responses, access to information and processes are helpful and practical. Any crisis or challenging situation can trigger a stimulus if accepted well, motions the way forward. All are enjoined, the public and private sectors, and every individual directly or indirectly involved in the tourism of things.

Research Design

The researcher utilized the descriptive survey method of research to attain the purposes of the study. The method is viable for the present research, since it is a status trend and deals with the prevailing characteristics of a group of people specifically, the owners, managers or representatives and their growth management together with their business continuity plan.

Respondents to the Study

The responses came from two hundred and ninety (290) listed members of a travel organization which is a local association for travel companies. The targeted respondents were in the said list as of July 2022. The qualified responses were from a stratified random population frame of two hundred and seventy three (273) travel agency managers, owners, finance heads, operations heads, and authorized representatives. The duly registered travel organization has a nationwide membership and following. It is a business association that can represent this sector of the tourism industry in the Philippines.

A profile of the respondents of the study was drawn from their demographic variables in terms of age, educational attainment, gender, length of service and position in the company. Together with it is the company profile with business location, form of organization, branches, major markets, services sold and number of employees.

Data Gathering Procedure

Both printed and soft copy questionnaire formats were used. Hand carried printed copies during onsite visits and the use of Google forms via electronic communication. All listed members were contacted via email, personal site visits, Facebook and through personal telephone calls. During the gathering of survey questionnaires only 80% of 273, or 218 were returned. These were reviewed for acceptability by ensuring all items were answered and the respondents themselves who have a real working knowledge of the travel company.

Statistical Methods Employed

Descriptive Statistics through a stratified random sampling entails dividing a population into smaller subgroups known as strata. In stratified random sampling, or stratification they are to be formed based on shared attributes or characteristics with the Likert scale to measure the degree of the answers of respondents whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree depending on the equivalent indices.

The analysis was supported by the application of various statistical formulas, including Percentage, Arithmetic Mean, Weighted Mean, and Standard Deviation. In addition to these measures, Inferential Statistics techniques were employed for comparative analysis and to assess differences. Pearson’s correlation coefficient, which quantifies the relationship between two variables, was utilized in this study. It is computed as the covariance of the two variables divided by the product of their standard deviations. The Pearson correlation coefficient was applied to ranked variables to assess their relationships.

Results and Discussions

This represents the profile of respondents according to their position in the company. From the highest to the lowest frequency, indicating that most were the owners of the business. They all have a working knowledge, have access to their company’s business plans and decided on how they reacted to the recent disruptions in operations.

The cost of goods sold may include operating expense, sales per outlet or sold per day, return on assets and technological

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents to the Assessment Survey

Position in the Company	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Owner	**90**	41.28%
General Manager	**61**	27.98%
Operations Head	**15**	6.88%
Finance Manager	**30**	13.76%
Marketing Manager	**22**	10.09%
Total	218	100.00%

Table 2. Table of Results Summary for Growth Levels in terms of the following:

Explanation	Item	Mean	Rank
Allocation for salaries, wages, contractual or project-based payments are incorporated. These enable the creation and delivery of products and services in travel.	Costs of Goods Sold	3.22	1
Product delivery and price arrangements done in person (onsite) and with IoT (internet of things), are set in the business continuity plan.	Product and Pricing	3.19	2
Sales and turnover reports help predict what next year might look like and gives an idea on how to drive more bookings, areas to cut and new revenue opportunities.	Profit and Loss	3.16	3
Improved travel products, service offerings, bookings, cancellations, payment schemes, freebies, other travel specializations are customer driven and acknowledged in continuity planning.	Customer	3.13	4
Market research provisions like customer profiling, competitor review, emerging trends and threats are identified.	Research and Repositioning	3.04	5
Managing operating expenses may include change in suppliers, agreements and contracts. Alternatives are mapped to address business and customer needs.	Operating Expenses	3.03	6
Sales forecasts using historical and current data is included in the BCP. Learning from previous and current business or market trends can strengthen it.	Sales Volume	2.93	7

adjustments as espoused by the findings of Hedjia,et,al, 2017; Gomes and Oliveira, 2021. The availability of which are translated into product and pricing for existing and target customers via FB, Instagram, YouTube and other channels. These lead to ease of doing business which helps in sustainability (Maravilla & Gantalao 2019, Zarezadeh,et.al.,2019) Profit and loss analysis are still done to predict most likely outcomes of travel companies that want to flourish in the now normal.

Configuring new experiences, making them novel or distinct for the consumer and leading to a flexible business for competitive advantage of travel companies will revolve around customer value, and how relatable they are to the wants and needs of travel customers (Donthu and Gustafsson, 2020; Zheng et.al., 2021). Research and repositioning destination management organizations (DMOs) can induce connectivity through technology, online presence and social media engagements (Yang Yang and Jin-Hoo, 2022) leading to a “strategic revolution” as innovative yet budget friendly responses to travel market conditions (Iovino & Migliaccio, 2018; Villegas V., 2017)

Recalibrating deals with suppliers, employees, competition, new entrants, product substitutes and other aspects of the supply chain can improve brand recognition, pricing, repurchase and consistent performance (McNamara,2022; Park, G.; Chen, F.; Cheng, L. 2021). These form part of the operating expenses and sale volume directions of progressive travel companies.

Recommendations

The *Cost of Goods* Sold is calculated by adding up the various direct costs required to generate a company's revenues such as the company's inventory or labor costs that can be attributed to specific sales. Better deals with suppliers or through greater efficiency in the production process, can help profits.

Product and Pricing defines the products and services offered in the marketplace with a pricing strategy for each. It needs to be consistent with brand positioning and its value. Pricing plays a crucial role as a revenue driver for businesses.

Profit and Loss indicates a company's health, summarizes a company's revenues, costs, and expenses in a period. Necessary for lenders, investors, business owners or managers to review total income, debt load and financial stability. Adjusted action plans can be formulated in the process.

Customer a strong relationship between a customer's positive experience and their willingness to make a purchase from a company again is important for business continuity. Those offering a high level of customer satisfaction will reap benefits in the areas of revenue and reputation.

Research and Positioning gives substantial information about the market and the business landscape, indicating how the company is perceived by the target customers and clients. It serves as an aid to understanding buying patterns, preferences and pain points, as well as providing insights to contenders, current market trends, and demographics.

Operating expenses help trace company spending by category and verify purchases for authorized business purposes. They designate the best expense for on time and optimal pricing while maintaining spending limits to reduce duplicate and fraudulent payments.

Sales Volume allows the tracking performance of marketing campaigns, evaluates the efforts of the sales team, chooses the best places for physical stores, online delivery of products and services and helps gain additional insight into the position of travel products and services.

Future research can deal with tour operators, accommodation, other travel and tourism providers using BCPs and discerning if their growth indicators are similar or not.

Conclusion

To advance sustainability, it is recommended to adhere to the United Nations World Tourism Organization's Sustainable Development Goal number 8 by achieving higher levels of productivity for economies through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation. It includes a focus on high value added and labor-intensive sectors like travel and tourism found in 8.2 and 8.3 and pertains to development oriented policies for job creation, entrepreneurship, and innovation for all enterprises. Selected Philippine travel companies are adjusting their business styles to keep their presence, be more responsive and equipped beyond the pandemic. Sustainability needs finance but more importantly human resources, skills training, product evolution and technology. Offshoots to environmental safeguards must be kept in mind while conducting the business of travel.

Relative to the research is the creation of an adaptive communication protocol in order to incorporate sustainable consumption and production principles within the framework of revised business continuity plans. Current conditions like rising fuel and food costs alter pricing for consumers prompting the development of new travel related product and services, new payment schemes and alternative work solutions. Adaptive management processes are timely, not a one size fits all stance. Every travel company can have their version of an evolved business continuity plan.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Determinants of Working Capital Investments: Evidence from the Lodging Companies in Developed and Emerging Countries*

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ABSTRACT
The aim of this research study is to analyze and compare the factors affecting the working capital investment levels of lodging companies in both developed and emerging countries. To this end, the Generalized Method of Moments (GMM), one of the dynamic panel data analysis methods, was employed in testing the models, contingent upon the data compatibility. In the research study, the annual financial data of 152 lodging companies located in the top 25 countries with the highest tourism revenues over the period 2011-2019 were analyzed by categorizing them into groups by the status of being developed and emerging countries. As a result of the analysis of the factors affecting the level of working capital, it was observed that the factors affecting working capital differed between developed and emerging countries. Total leverage negatively affects the working capital investment levels of the lodging companies in developed countries, whereas it positively affects the working capital investment levels of the lodging companies in emerging countries. Moreover, the impacts of firm size and operating cash flow on working capital vary by the development level of the countries.

Keywords: Working capital management, Generalized method of moments, Lodging companies, Developed and emerging countries

*This study was produced from the Ph.D. thesis titled 'Working Capital Management: An International Comparison on Lodging Companies'.

Introduction

Tourism involves a sector that contributes to the economic prosperity and economic development of various developed and emerging countries. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) International Tourism Barometer Report 2022, the number of international tourists, which was 1.5 billion as of 2019, decreased to 400 million people as of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and 415 million people as of 2021, far from the pre-pandemic period (UNWTO, 2022). While the tourism sector was preparing for the new season in 2022, when the impact of the pandemic was expected to be largely overcome, the war crisis that broke out between Russia and Ukraine created new problems for many countries, especially in Europe. In a circumstance with high demand fluctuations, tourism companies in both developed and emerging countries, especially the lodging sector which has a weighted fixed capital, have to attach more importance to capital budgeting and working capital investments. Working capital is the assets that can be converted into cash in a short time to meet the raw materials, labor, energy, and similar daily needs that companies need to fulfill their short-term liabilities (Harris, 2005; Hill, 2013). It is of great importance for lodging companies to have a sound and sustainable financial structure by making effective investment, financing, and dividend distribution decisions, and to achieve firm value maximization targets upon creating the composition of working capital and cash flows by considering risk and return balance, especially in times of crisis. In this respect, it is necessary to monitor the extent to which investment should be made in the working capital in which periods and what the working capital level is affected by to maintain the daily activities in the lodging companies without interruption.

It is quite difficult to predict the demand in the tourism sector due to the changes in the taste, fashion, and habits of the consumers, the seasonal demand fluctuations, and the socio-economic status of the tourists being seriously affected by the economic and political developments. Therefore, it may be difficult for the lodging companies, which are considered the main

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components of the tourism sector, to exhibit successful financial management obscured by such factors. The demand elasticity of the lodging subsector also complicates the working capital management of companies. In times of increased demand, the lodging company needs to enhance its activities to meet such demand, however, the subcomponents of working capital, such as cash, receivables, and inventory level, may also increase to fulfill the increased activities. Therefore, lodging companies that lack sufficient levels of working capital throughout the periods of increased demand resort to current liabilities to maintain their activities, and may have difficulty in meeting their liabilities and experience liquidity problems during the periods of reduced demand. However, sustaining the high level of working capital, even during periods of high demand, may render these assets idle funds and, in turn, lower profitability. In this respect, it is necessary to monitor the extent to which investment should be made in the working capital in which periods and what the working capital level is affected by to maintain the daily activities in the lodging companies without interruption.

The main purpose of this research study is to comparatively analyze the factors affecting the level of working capital investment of the lodging companies located in developed and emerging countries. For this purpose, the scope of the research consists of the lodging companies of developed and emerging countries, which are among the top 25 countries with the highest tourism revenues. Thus, the aim of this study is to reveal how the findings obtained from the analysis of the factors affecting the working capital level of lodging companies differ by the development level of the countries.

Upon examining the literature, it is determined that the number of studies that analyzed the factors affecting the level of working capital in the tourism sector and examined the international differences are limited. From this point of view, it is expected that this research study would contribute to both the sector and the literature in terms of revealing the importance of working capital management in lodging companies and indicating the differences in the context of countries' development levels.

In line with the determined objectives, the research study consists of six parts. Following the introduction, which is the first part, a summary of similar studies in the literature for the research study is presented in the second part. In the third part, information regarding the data and methodology of the research study is presented. In the fourth part, the analysis results of the factors affecting the level of working capital, as well as evaluations of these findings, take place. In the conclusion part, several suggestions were made along with inferences within the framework of the obtained findings.

Literature Review

Upon focusing on the studies examining the factors that affect the level of working capital, the factors most associated with working capital are determined as total leverage, sales growth, firm size, tangibility, operating cash flow, and return on assets (Chiou et al., 2006; Ramachandran & Janakiraman, 2009; Baños-Caballero et al., 2010; Wasiuzzaman & Arumugam, 2013). Upon examining the direction in which the aforementioned variables affect the working capital level, in general, it is noteworthy that there are studies in which both positive and negative relationships are detected. Research studies examining the impacts of these variables on working capital investments are presented in order below.

Total Leverage and Working Capital Investments

According to the Pecking Order Theory, companies should first prefer internal financing rather than equity financing. In case the internal resources are not sufficient, they should resort to short-term, and then, long-term borrowing, and finally stock issuance (Myers, 1984). Because stock issuance is more costly than borrowing, it increases the asymmetric information cost (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). However, according to the maturity matching principle, the current assets should be financed with short-term liabilities. Accordingly, the increase in the utilization of current liabilities can also increase the working capital level (Kwenda & Holden, 2014).

In the tourism sector, Morais and Silva (2013) stated that the total leverage ratio and short-term leverage ratio negatively affected the cash level of the companies in Southern European countries. Jerónimo (2015) concluded that the total leverage ratio in the Portuguese tourism sector negatively affected the current ratio. Nonetheless, in studies conducted on different sectors, Baños-Caballero et al. (2010); Russo (2013); Azami and Tabar (2016) revealed the existence of a negative relationship between working capital and total leverage. In some of the studies conducted in emerging countries, results are indicating that the level of total leverage positively affected working capital (Valipour et al., 2012; Naser et al., 2013; İltaş, 2016).

Sales Growth and Working Capital Investments

The increase in sales may stimulate the need for a rapid increase in the inventories, receivables, and liquid values of the company (Kwenda & Holden, 2014). The ability of companies to achieve more sales depends on the enhancement of their activities. Therefore, companies need more cash assets (Wasiuzzaman & Arumugam, 2013).

The sales growth ratio obtained by dividing the difference between the current period's sales amount and the previous period's sales amount by the previous period's sales amount has been used as the sales growth variable in many empirical studies. In some of these studies (Akinlo, 2012; Mongrut et al., 2014), it was revealed that the sales growth ratios positively affected working capital; whereas others (Palombini & Nakamura, 2012) revealed a negative relationship between the variables. Although no study revealed a relationship between the sales growth ratio and working capital in the tourism sector, similarly, Bansal and Khosla (2015) investigated whether five-star hotel chains operating in India were successful in working capital management, and detected the existence of a positive and significant relationship between the level of working capital and the level of sales.

Firm Size and Working Capital Investments

Large-scale companies may maintain higher levels of their current asset investments due to their higher activity volumes. At the same time, since large-scale firms have easier access to money and capital markets than small-scale firms, they can access the financing sources of working capital investments more easily (Wachilonga, 2013, p. 567).

Firm size is usually measured by calculating the natural logarithm of a firm's total assets. Supatanakornkij (2015), who calculated firm size in that manner and examined its relationship with working capital, found that firm size positively affected working capital in companies located in certain European countries. Fatimatuzzahra and Kusumastuti (2016) also found that a positive relationship existed between firm size and working capital. On the other hand, many studies found that firm size negatively affected working capital (Gill, 2011; Doğan & Elitaş, 2014; Qurashi & Zahoor, 2017).

In the tourism sector, Kim et al. (2011) revealed that the level of cash holding of restaurants in the United States was negatively affected by firm size. In another study, Ngugi (2014) found that firm size positively affected the receivables level of the lodging companies located in Kenya.

Tangibility and Working Capital Investments

Companies divide their limited capital between fixed assets and current assets according to the field in which they operate (Fazzari & Petersen, 1993, p. 332). Lodging companies have a large amount of tangible fixed assets, including land, buildings, and equipment, courtesy of their activities. Therefore, the working capital levels of lodging companies are usually quite limited (Moon & Sharma, 2014, p. 75). Therefore, it can be expected that working capital investments, which have limited shares in lodging companies, would be more sensitively affected by the changes in tangible fixed asset investments than of manufacturing companies (Morais & Silva, 2013).

In most of the empirical studies, it has been determined that the level of tangible fixed assets calculated by dividing tangible fixed assets by total assets negatively affects working capital (Kaur & Kaur, 2014; Supatanakornkij, 2015), whereas, in some studies, these variables positively affect the working capital investment level (Russo, 2013; Azami & Tabar, 2016). In the tourism sector, Morais and Silva (2013) stated that a negative relationship existed between the cash levels of lodging companies and the tangible fixed assets ratios.

Operating Cash Flow and Working Capital Investments

Operating cash flow represents the cash flows stemming from the daily production and sales activities of the company. Operating cash flow is a cost-effective resource as it is an internal resource for companies. In line with the Pecking Order Theory, companies can finance their daily activities with operating cash flow and make debt and dividend payments (Myers, 1984). In this context, the working capital levels of lodging companies can be affected by operating cash flows.

In sectors other than tourism, Narender et al. (2008); Hill et al. (2010) Fatimatuzzahra and Kusumastuti (2016) found that the working capital levels were positively affected by operating cash flows. On the other hand, Mansoori and Muhammad (2012) and Palombini and Nakamura (2012) detected that operating cash flows had negative impacts on working capital levels. Upon examining the studies conducted on the tourism sector, Morais and Silva (2013) stated that the cash levels in the lodging companies were positively affected by the operating cash flows.

Return on Assets and Working Capital Investments

There are many studies indicating that the increase in profitability enhances the working capital level (Nazir & Afza, 2009; Abbadi & Abbadi, 2013; Nyeadi et al., 2018). In these studies, by pointing out the agency cost problem put forward by Jensen and Meckling (1976), it is argued that the company managers avoid directing the retained profits to long-term investments with high returns and high risks, to maintain the control of the company, therefore, they consider short-term investments instead.

Upon considering the studies conducted on the tourism sector regarding the subject, Jerónimo (2015) detected a positive relationship between the current ratio and the return on assets in the lodging companies located in Portugal. In another study, Hiadlovský et al. (2016) found the existence of a positive relationship between the liquidity level and profitability in tourism companies located in Slovakia.

Data and Methodology

The scope of the research consists of lodging companies from both developed and emerging countries among the top 25 countries with the highest tourism revenues. The data collection and correction processes of the research were carried out in January 2021. In this respect, since the last announced data of the companies that constitute the sample of the research study belong to the year 2019, it was considered the base year for the tourism revenue ranking of the countries.

Table 1. *Top 25 Countries with the Highest Tourism Revenues (2019)*

Order	Countries	Tourism Revenues 2019 (Million USD)
1)	United States of America	214.134
2)	Spain	79.708
3)	France	63.801
4)	Thailand	60.521
5)	United Kingdom	52.721
6)	Italy	49.596
7)	Japan	46.054
8)	Australia	45.709
9)	Germany	41.638
10)	Macao (China)	39.526
11)	China	35.832
12)	India	29.962
13)	Turkey	29.829
14)	Hong Kong	29.043
15)	Canada	26.971
16)	Mexico	24.573
17)	Austria	22.942
18)	United Arab Emirates	21.800
19)	South Korea	21.628
20)	Portugal	20.633
21)	Greece	20.351
22)	Singapore	20.052
23)	Malaysia	19.823
24)	Netherlands	18.487
25)	Switzerland	17.949

Source: UNWTO (2020)

The annual frequency data of 152 lodging companies, obtained over the period 2011 – 2019, whose stocks are traded in the stock markets of the countries listed in Table 1, and whose data can be accessed soundly, constitute the main sample of the research study. Since the number of data was inadequate during the period before 2011, the analysis period of the study was determined as the period 2011-2019. Nonetheless, since the analyses planned to be conducted would be subject to international comparisons, the sample is classified into two groups such as developed and emerging countries. The classification of developed and emerging countries within the scope of the analysis is based on the classification of the World Economic Outlook database published by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and listed in Table 2.

While the data of the lodging companies located in foreign countries in Table 2 are obtained from the Thomson Reuters Datastream database, the data of some of the lodging companies located in Turkey are obtained from the Public Disclosure Platform web page (KAP, 2022) since they are not available in the Thomson Reuters Datastream database. Countries such as Italy, Macao (China), United Arab Emirates, South Korea, and the Netherlands are not included in the analysis among the top 25 countries with the highest tourism revenues in the world as of 2019 since the data of those lodging companies located in those countries could not be accessed. Therefore, the sample of the research consisted of lodging companies trading in the stock markets of 20 countries. In the analysis, the data of the lodging companies over the period 2011-2019 are examined. Therefore, since the data used in the analysis includes 9 equal annual values belonging to more than one company, they are created as a balanced panel dataset.

Due to the short periods (T) in the dataset and the large volumes of instrument variables, the Difference GMM developed

Table 2. *Number of Companies and Observations in the Analyzed Countries*

Developed Countries	Number of Companies	Emerging Countries	Number of Companies
USA	12	Turkey	11
Spain	2	India	32
France	6	China	7
United Kingdom	7	Thailand	9
Japan	9	Mexico	3
Australia	4	Malaysia	7
Germany	2		
Hong Kong	25		
Canada	1		
Austria	1		
Portugal	2		
Greece	2		
Singapore	9		
Switzerland	1		
Total	83	Total	69
Number of Observations	747	Number of Observations	621

Source: IMF (2019)

by Arellano and Bond (1991) and the System GMM panel estimators developed by Arellano and Bover (1995) and revised by Blundell and Bond (1998) are preferred. Both the System and Difference GMM dynamic panel estimators are found suitable for panel data in which the number of cross-section data (N) is large, and the time-series (T) is small. The System and Difference GMM dynamic panel estimators, heteroskedasticity, and autocorrelation problems are allowed within the unit, but not between the units (Terzioğlu, 2017). In the Difference GMM method, all explanatory variables are transformed by taking their first differences, while more instrumental variables are allowed by including the assumption that the first differences of the instrumental variables are unrelated to the fixed effects in the System GMM method. Thus, the System GMM estimator yields more efficient results than the Difference GMM estimator (Roodman, 2009).

The validity of the estimation results obtained from the GMM method is analyzed via different tests such as Sargan (1958) / Hansen (1982) and autocorrelation tests. The validity of the variables used in the models is tested with the Sargan/Hansen test. With the second-order autocorrelation test (AR2), it is determined whether autocorrelation exists in the GMM results (Arellano & Bond, 1991). In the GMM studies, the Wald test is performed to determine whether the model estimation is accurate (Roodman, 2009). The Difference GMM and System GMM methods are suitable for the related analyses to be conducted pertinent to the purposes of this research study.

In the analysis, the following model is generated to analyze the factors affecting the level of working capital in lodging companies.

$$WCR_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 WCR_{it-1} + \beta_2 TL_{it} + \beta_3 GROWTH_{it} + \beta_4 SIZE_{it} + \beta_5 TANG_{it} + \beta_6 OCF_{it} + \beta_7 ROA_{it} + e_i t \quad (1)$$

$$WCR_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 WCR_{it-1} + \beta_2 STL_{it} + \beta_3 GROWTH_{it} + \beta_4 SIZE_{it} + \beta_5 TANG_{it} + \beta_6 OCF_{it} + \beta_7 ROA_{it} + e_i t \quad (2)$$

$$WCR_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 WCR_{it-1} + \beta_2 LTL_{it} + \beta_3 GROWTH_{it} + \beta_4 SIZE_{it} + \beta_5 TANG_{it} + \beta_6 OCF_{it} + \beta_7 ROA_{it} + e_i t \quad (3)$$

The "i" subscript in these models includes each lodging company included in the analysis; whereas the "t" subscript denotes each year over the period 2011-2019. Moreover, the symbol "βi" denotes the estimation coefficients, and the symbol "e_{it}" represents the error term. In Model 1, WCR_{it} denotes the working capital ratio; TL_{it} stands for the total leverage, $GROWTH_{it}$ represents the growth rate of sales; $SIZE_{it}$ denotes the firm size, $TANG_{it}$ stands for the tangible fixed assets ratio, OCFit denotes the operating cash flow ratio, and ROA_{it} represents the return on assets ratio. Furthermore, Model 2 and Model 3 are generated to comprehend the mediating impact of the maturity structure of the debt in the analyses. In Model 2, unlike the first model, STL_{it} is included instead of the total leverage and it denotes the short-term leverage. In Model 3, LTL_{it} is included and it represents the long-term leverage.

Upon deciding on the variables to be included in the models, the most frequently used variables in the most cited studies in the literature are considered. As a result of the examination, information on the dependent and independent variables that were decided to be included in the analysis of the factors affecting the working capital level during the analysis process, and the calculation of these variables are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *Variables Used in the Analysis of Factors Affecting the Level of Working Capital*

Variables	Abbreviations	Calculation Formula
Working Capital Ratio	WCR	Current Assets / Total Assets
Total Leverage Ratio	TL	Total Liabilities / Total Assets
Short-term Leverage Ratio	STL	Current Liabilities / Total Assets
Long-term Leverage Ratio	LTL	Long-term Liabilities / Total Assets
Growth Rate of Sales	GROWTH	(Net Sales $_{t}$ - Net Sales $_{t-1}$) / Net Sales $_{t-1}$
Firm Size	SIZE	Natural Logarithm (Ln) of Total Assets
Tangible Fixed Assets Ratio	TANG	Tangible Fixed Assets / Total Assets
Operating Cash Flow Ratio	OCF	Cash Flow from Operations / Total Assets
Return on Assets Ratio	ROA	Net Profit / Total Assets

Empirical Results

Descriptive Analysis

In Table 4, the descriptive statistics of the lodging companies in the developed and emerging countries of the research study are indicated, respectively. In the descriptive statistics of the aforementioned samples; the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values of the variables used in the analysis, and the number of observations are introduced.

Table 4. *Descriptive Statistics*

	Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Developed Countries	WCR	0.224	0.175	0.008	0.923
	TL	0.487	0.224	0.010	0.993
	STL	0.185	0.152	0.009	0.905
	LTL	0.302	0.193	0.000	0.918
	GROWTH	0.075	0.394	-1.000	4.662
	SIZE	5.704	0.901	3.619	7.654
	TANG	0.506	0.264	0.000	0.966
	OCF	0.040	0.076	-0.632	0.796
	ROA	0.010	0.096	-1.211	0.371
Emerging Countries	WCR	0.231	0.176	0.007	0.935
	TL	0.450	0.241	0.022	0.999
	STL	0.183	0.132	0.011	0.771
	LTL	0.267	0.202	0.001	0.880
	GROWTH	0.084	0.468	-0.969	5.214
	SIZE	5.078	0.867	3.103	7.397
	TANG	0.584	0.231	0.000	0.985
	OCF	0.049	0.554	-13.583	0.559
	ROA	0.019	0.184	-4.108	0.465

Upon comparing the variables within the context of developed and emerging countries in Table 4, it is seen that the mean value of the working capital ratio is 22.4% in the developed country sample; whereas 23.1% in the emerging country sample. Accordingly, it is possible to claim that the working capital ratios in both samples converge on average. Upon comparing the leverage ratios in developed and emerging country samples, it can be said that lodging companies in developed countries have a higher level of borrowing than lodging companies in emerging countries, and a significant part of such difference stems from the utilization of long-term foreign debt. Upon evaluating the average working capital ratio and short-term foreign debt levels simultaneously in developed and emerging country samples, it is revealed that a net working capital surplus exists at almost the same rate in both groups. Therefore, it can be claimed that lodging companies in both developed and emerging countries usually pursue a moderate working capital financing policy.

Upon comparing the firm size and tangible fixed asset ratios, which are among the other variables calculated within the scope of the research study, in both developed and emerging country samples; it is seen that the total assets of the lodging companies in developed countries are similar in size to the lodging companies in the emerging countries; however, it can be asserted that the shares of tangible fixed assets in the total assets of the lodging companies in the emerging countries are higher. Upon considering the other calculated variables it can be claimed that lodging companies in emerging countries are relatively more successful than lodging companies in developed countries in terms of improving sales volumes, providing cash flows from their main activities, and utilizing their assets efficiently.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis is performed to reveal the relationships among the examined variables within the scope of the research study. The findings of the correlation analysis are presented in Tables 5 and 6 for developed and emerging countries, respectively.

Table 5. *Correlation Analysis Results of the Developed Country Sample*

Variables	WCR	TL	STL	LTL	GROWTH	SIZE	TANG	OCF	ROA
WCR	1.000								
TL	-0.173	1.000							
STL	0.048	0.531	1.000						
LTL	-0.239	0.745	-0.170	1.000					
GROWTH	0.075	-0.041	-0.063	0.002	1.000				
SIZE	-0.082	0.174	-0.200	0.359	0.023	1.000			
TANG	-0.512	0.189	0.084	0.154	-0.051	-0.170	1.000		
OCF	-0.121	0.016	-0.062	0.067	0.080	0.084	0.218	1.000	
ROA	-0.016	-0.134	-0.193	-0.004	0.113	0.221	0.007	0.438	1.000

Upon examining Table 5, it is seen that a moderate negative relationship exists between the working capital ratio and the tangible fixed asset ratio of the lodging companies in the developed country sample; besides, a negative but weak relationship exists between the working capital ratio and total leverage ratio, long-term leverage ratio, firm size, operating cash flow ratio, and return on assets ratio. Moreover, it is seen that a weak positive relationship exists between the working capital ratio, the short-term leverage ratio, and the sales growth rate.

Table 6. *Correlation Analysis Results of the Emerging Country Sample*

Variables	WCR	TL	STL	LTL	GROWTH	SIZE	TANG	OCF	ROA
WCR	1.000								
TL	-0.190	1.000							
STL	0.118	0.549	1.000						
LTL	-0.305	0.837	0.002	1.000					
GROWTH	0.045	-0.033	0.004	-0.042	1.000				
SIZE	-0.086	0.383	0.108	0.388	0.047	1.000			
TANG	-0.672	0.161	-0.027	0.210	-0.085	-0.167	1.000		
OCF	-0.012	-0.112	0.021	-0.148	0.066	0.035	0.088	1.000	
ROA	0.118	-0.268	-0.079	-0.268	0.112	-0.016	-0.047	0.913	1.000

Upon examining Table 6, it is seen that a moderate negative relationship exists between the working capital ratio and the tangible fixed assets ratio of the lodging companies in the emerging country sample. Nevertheless, it is seen that a negative but weak relationship exists between the working capital ratio and total leverage ratio, long-term leverage ratio, firm size, and operating cash flow ratio. Furthermore, it is observed that a weak positive relationship exists between the working capital ratio and the short-term leverage ratio, the growth rate of sales, and the return on assets ratio.

GMM Estimation

The factors affecting the level of working capital in lodging companies, which is the main objective of the research study, are analyzed with the GMM, and the findings are interpreted separately for the lodging companies located both in developed and emerging countries, and the results are compared. Estimation results of both developed and emerging country samples are given in Tables 7 and 8, respectively.

In Table 7, it is seen that all models are significant as a whole according to the Wald test, no second-order autocorrelation problem exists in the models according to the AR(2) test, and the used instrumental variables are also valid according to the Hansen test.

Table 7. *Estimation Results of Developed Country Sample*

Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Diff. GMM	System GMM	Diff. GMM	System GMM	Diff. GMM	System GMM
$WCR_{i,t-1}$	0.349*	0.419*	0.333*	0.412*	0.324*	0.411*
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
TL	-0.060**	-0.041***				
	(0.012)	(0.052)				
STL			0.045*	0.049*		
			(0.002)	(0.000)		
LTL					-0.061**	-0.072*
					(0.015)	(0.000)
GROWTH	0.001	0.001	-0.001	0.001	-0.003	-0.001
	(0.945)	(0.748)	(0.724)	(0.868)	(0.381)	(0.969)
SIZE	0.016	0.009	0.006	0.004	0.026	0.016
	(0.458)	(0.483)	(0.791)	(0.724)	(0.226)	(0.191)
TANG	-0.387*	-0.399*	-0.443*	-0.422*	-0.463*	-0.417*
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
OCF	0.081**	0.121*	0.103*	0.140*	0.103*	0.134*
	(0.018)	(0.000)	(0.002)	(0.000)	(0.002)	(0.000)
ROA	0.140*	0.122*	0.131*	0.122*	0.141*	0.119*
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.00)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Constant	0.271**	0.297*	0.322*	0.302*	0.247**	0.269*
	(0.023)	(0.000)	(0.009)	(0.000)	(0.043)	(0.000)
Sargan/Hansen	31.08	35.60	30.57	35.76	28.97	37.11
	(0.268)	(0.393)	(0.289)	(0.386)	(0.363)	(0.328)
AR (2)	-0.68	-0.66	-0.80	-0.74	-0.78	-0.71
	(0.497)	(0.509)	(0.427)	(0.458)	(0.438)	(0.477)
Wald Test	327.41	894.88	259.37	923.05	343.07	961.28
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)

Note: *, **, and *** indicate significance at 1%, 5%, and 10% significance levels, respectively.

Upon examining Table 7, it is observed that total leverage (TL) has a statistically significant and negative impact on the working capital level (WCR) in Model 1, but the working capital level is positively affected by short-term leverage (STL) in Model 2. It is seen that the long-term leverage (LTL) has a negative impact on it. Accordingly, it can be claimed that the increase in short-term liabilities of lodging companies in developed countries increases the level of working capital, whereas the increase in long-term liabilities decreases the level of working capital, and the impact of long-term liabilities on the level of working capital is greater.

Upon examining Table 7, it is observed that operating cash flow (OCF) and return on assets (ROA) have statistically significant and positive impacts on the working capital level (WCR) in all models, however, the working capital level is negatively affected by tangible fixed assets ratio (TANG) at a high degree. Accordingly, it can be asserted that the increase in operating cash flow and asset profitability of the lodging companies in developed countries increases the working capital level, whereas the increase in tangible fixed assets decreases the working capital level. It is determined that the sales growth rate (GROWTH) and firm size (SIZE) do not have statistically significant impacts on the working capital level.

Upon examining Table 8, it can be asserted that the Wald test, indicating whether the models are significant as a whole, yields valid results and the models are appropriate for analysis, besides, no second-order autocorrelation problem exists in the models according to the AR(2) test, and the instrumental variables are appropriate for the models according to the Hansen test. In Model 1 presented in Table 8, total leverage (TL) has a positive impact on working capital (WCR) according to System-GMM results, and in Model 2, short-term leverage (STL) has a statistically significant and positive impact on working capital, however, it is seen that long-term leverage (LTL) negatively affects working capital in Model 3. Accordingly, it can be stated that as the level of short-term liabilities increases, the working capital levels of lodging companies in emerging countries increase, whereas the working capital level decreases as the level of long-term liabilities increases, however, the impact of short-term leverage on the working capital level is greater.

In Table 8, it is seen that size (SIZE) and tangible fixed assets ratio (TANG) negatively affect the working capital in all models, whereas the return on assets (ROA) positively affects the working capital. Accordingly, the increase in tangible fixed assets of lodging companies in emerging countries decreases the working capital level, and the working capital level becomes lower as the firm size increases. On the other hand, the increase in the return on assets increases the working capital level. It is determined that the GROWTH and OCF variables do not have statistically significant impacts on the working capital level in any model.

Table 8. *Estimation Results of Emerging Country Sample*

Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Diff. GMM	System GMM	Diff. GMM	Sistem GMM	Diff. GMM	System GMM
$WCR_{i,t-1}$	0.289* (0.000)	0.368* (0.000)	0.261 (0.000)	0.347* (0.000)	0.279* (0.000)	0.345* (0.000)
TL	0.033 (0.333)	0.076** (0.015)				
STL			0.125** (0.021)	0.144* (0.003)		
LTL					-0.080* (0.003)	-0.047*** (0.072)
GROWTH	-0.002 (0.275)	-0.003 (0.101)	-0.001 (0.610)	0.001 (0.450)	-0.002 (0.388)	-0.002 (0.303)
SIZE	-0.157* (0.000)	-0.125* (0.000)	-0.149* (0.000)	-0.113* (0.000)	-0.129* (0.000)	-0.104* (0.000)
TANG	-0.452* (0.000)	-0.462* (0.000)	-0.464* (0.000)	-0.462* (0.000)	-0.460* (0.000)	-0.466* (0.000)
OCF	-0.003 (0.755)	-0.002 (0.827)	-0.009 (0.346)	-0.004 (0.611)	0.001 (0.972)	0.008 (0.284)
ROA	0.071** (0.048)	0.061** (0.025)	0.072* (0.009)	0.042** (0.048)	0.036 (0.248)	0.012 (0.642)
Constant	1.208* (0.000)	1.008* (0.000)	1.171* (0.000)	0.966* (0.000)	1.107* (0.000)	0.955* (0.000)
Sargan/Hansen	28.21 (0.400)	36.68 (0.346)	29.01 (0.360)	35.43 (0.401)	26.54 (0.489)	33.02 (0.515)
AR (2)	-0.54 (0.592)	-0.046 (0.647)	-0.75 (0.453)	-0.63 (0.529)	-0.57 (0.568)	-0.45 (0.650)
Wald Test	915.86 (0.000)	1702.60 (0.000)	1045.52 (0.000)	2295.27 (0.000)	880.26 (0.000)	1737.32 (0.000)

Note: *, **, and *** indicate significance at 1%, 5%, and 10% significance levels, respectively.

Discussion

The summary of the findings obtained regarding the direction of the relationships between the dependent and independent variables in the models as a result of the analyses performed on both country samples within the scope of the research is presented in Table 9.

Table 9. *Summary of the Obtained Findings*

Independent Variables	Developed Countries (WCR)	Emerging Countries (WCR)
TL	-	+
STL	+	+
LTL	-	-
GROWTH	No impact	No impact
SIZE	No impact	-
TANG	-	-
OCF	+	No impact
ROA	+	+

(+) indicates a positive relationship, (-) indicates a negative relationship

Upon examining Table 9, it is revealed that the total leverage ratio negatively affects the working capital ratios of developed countries. This finding is consistent with Baños-Caballero et al. (2010) and Russo (2013). Whereas the total leverage ratio positively affects the working capital of the emerging countries. İltaş (2016); Naser et al. (2013); Valipour et al. (2012) had also drawn the same findings. Also, it is seen that the short-term leverage ratio positively affects the working capital ratio; whereas the long-term leverage ratio negatively affects the working capital ratio in both developed and emerging country samples. Kwenda and Holden (2014), reveal that short-term leverage and the working capital levels are positively related, and Supatanakornkij (2015), revealing that long-term leverage negatively affects the working capital level, support these findings. Upon evaluating the relationship between leverage ratios and working capital investments, it can be asserted that the lodging companies in emerging countries benefit more from current liabilities in working capital financing compared to developed countries. It is thought that the impact of long-term liabilities on working capital investments may be lower than that of developed countries, since the lodging companies in emerging countries less benefit from capital markets and experience higher economic uncertainties.

Sales growth, in general, is positively associated with working capital investments (Akinlo, 2012; Mongrut et al., 2014). A company that wishes to improve its sales volume has to invest in working capital at a higher level. However, upon examining Table 9, it is seen that the sales growth ratio does not have a statistically significant impact on the working capital ratio of the developed and emerging country samples.

In Table 9, it is revealed that the firm size negatively affects the working capital ratio in the emerging country sample, but no statistically significant relationship exists among these variables in the developed country sample. Accordingly, the finding suggesting that firm size negatively affects the working capital level is consistent with the findings of Gill (2011) and Doğan and Elitaş (2014). Accordingly, it can be stated that as the scale of lodging companies in emerging countries increases, working capital investments tend to decline. It can be asserted that while small-scale lodging companies in emerging countries act prudently and maintain their cash and inventory levels higher than that of large-scale companies, large-scale companies can maintain their working capital investments at a lower level since they have the advantage of meeting their supply and financing needs much faster.

In Table 9, it is seen that the tangible fixed assets ratio negatively affects the working capital ratio in both developed and emerging country samples. This finding obtained from both samples is consistent with the findings of Kaur and Kaur (2014) and Supatanakornkij (2015). Land, buildings, facilities, vehicles, and fixtures, in general, take place in quite high amounts in the tangible fixed assets of lodging companies. Increases in these assets reduce the share of current assets, and on the contrary, the share of current assets increases upon disposition of these assets. Therefore, the increase in the level of tangible fixed assets of lodging companies in both developed and emerging countries leads to a decline in the working capital level.

Upon examining Table 9, it is seen that the operating cash flow has a positive impact on the working capital level in the developed country sample. The finding suggesting that operating cash flow positively affects working capital is consistent with the findings of Baños-Caballero et al. (2010) and Hill et al. (2010). Therefore, it can be stated that lodging companies in developed countries act in accordance with the Pecking Order theory and benefit from internal resources while maintaining their activities.

It is found that the return on assets ratio positively affects the working capital ratio in both the developed and emerging country samples. The finding suggesting that the return on assets ratio positively affects the level of working capital is consistent with the findings of Nazir and Afza (2009) and Nyeadi et al. (2018). In light of these findings, it can be said that the revenue obtained from the assets of the lodging companies in emerging countries contributes to the working capital, or, in the opposite case, the working capital is adversely affected when the loss is incurred.

Conclusion

Upon considering the results of the research study, it is determined that the working capital level is positively affected by the short-term leverage ratio, and negatively affected by the long-term leverage ratio. However, it is revealed that the total leverage ratio negatively affects the working capital ratio in the developed country sample, whereas positively in the emerging country sample. In this case, it can be claimed that lodging companies in emerging countries pursue more aggressive policies within their working capital financing strategy. Therefore, since liquidity risk may be high in these companies, it may be recommended to pursue a more moderate policy. Another variable in the research study, whose impact differs by the level of development of the countries on the working capital level, is the firm size. In the performed analyses, it is revealed that the working capital level decreases as the firm size of lodging companies in emerging countries increases, however, no such relationship exists in developed countries. The relationship between working capital and operating cash flow is another result that differs between developed and emerging countries. Although operating cash flow has a positive impact on the working capital levels of lodging companies in developed countries, no such relationship is detected in emerging countries.

Upon examining the studies conducted on working capital in the finance and tourism literature, no research study has been found that examines the analysis of the factors affecting the level of working capital in lodging companies with an international comparison. It is thought that the results obtained in the study within the context of working capital management would provide important information to both the literature and the managers in the sector in terms of revealing the differences between developed and emerging countries. Besides, it is thought that presenting the analyses performed to examine the factors affecting the level of working capital in the research study by making a comparison in the context of developed and emerging countries provides this research study with a unique quality.

The research study covers only a limited number of lodging companies located in a limited number of countries. Nonetheless, to render the data suitable for analysis, limitations are made in the measurement of working capital and the variables to be included in the model, and at the same time, it is deemed appropriate to investigate the data obtained from the companies over the period 2011-2019 to expand the scope in the context of the country. Due to the utilization of the annual data in the research study, the seasonality of the lodging companies could not be examined. Therefore, in future studies to be conducted on the factors affecting the level of working capital, both annual and quarterly analyses can be performed with a longer-term and more comprehensive scope, in which different variables would also be included in the analyses. Moreover, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the working capital investments and liquidity risks of lodging companies can also be examined. Furthermore, it is thought that researching the differences between the lodging sector and other subsectors of the tourism sector would contribute to the tourism literature.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring the Influence of Demographic Factors on Perceptions of Festival Tourism in Ilara-Mokin, Nigeria: A Social Exchange Analysis

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ABSTRACT
This research article explores the influence of demographic factors, including age, gender, income, and education, on residents' attitudes and perceptions towards festival tourism. A cross-sectional survey design was employed, utilizing purposive sampling, and 400 questionnaires were distributed to festival participants aged 18 and above. Data collection involved a combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions in the questionnaires, with subsequent analysis employing descriptive and inferential statistics. An analysis by gender highlighted disparities between male and female respondents in how they perceived economic impacts, indicating gender-based variations in expectations and perceptions. The female respondents exhibited positive views regarding the economic advantages of festival tourism. In addition, employment type emerged as a significant predictor of perceived social effects, indicating diverse viewpoints among different occupational groups. For festival organizers and tourism operators, the findings underscored the importance of considering the diverse needs and preferences of various demographic groups when designing festival tourism products and services. This approach ensures the maximization of economic benefits while simultaneously balancing social and cultural values. The application of social exchange theory offered valuable insights into the exchange of rewards and costs within festival tourism interactions, influencing perceptions, and behavior.

Keywords: Festival tourism, Demographic factors, Perceptions, Social exchange analysis, Diversity in festival tourism

Introduction

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2015), tourism has become one of the fastest-growing sectors in the global economy, contributing to the international recognition of many countries. Nigeria, as a developing nation, is no exception to this trend, with tourism accounting for up to 34% of the country's yearly Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 20% of all employment, making it one of the key sectors in the Nigerian government's development agenda (National Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Nigeria's festivals play a vital role in the success of its tourism industry, with festivals proving to be effective in attracting tourists to seasonal areas (Celik and Cetinkaya, 2013).

Community festivals are increasingly important in branding, marketing, promoting destinations, revitalizing locations, and encouraging the growth of adjacent regions (Rogerson and Collins, 2015). Festivals have an impact on people and provide benefits such as encouraging urban redevelopment, providing attendees with a range of activities, enhancing the reputation of the local community, and generating income and employment for the host location (Bagiran and Kurgun, 2016). Nigeria's festivals have gained popularity, and festival tourism constitutes over 65% of all foreign visitors to Nigeria, with approximately 80% of these individuals serving as observers (Nigeria Tourism Development Co-operation (NTDC), 2018).

Festival tourism depends on the involvement and support of community residents, and the benefits and impact of tourism on them are crucial determinants for its long-term sustainability (Balogun and Nkebem, 2022; Seraphin *et al.*, 2019). The success of festival tourism largely depends on residents' support for tourism development, which depends on the perceived impact of the type of tourism being developed (Quinn, 2010; Seraphin *et al.*, 2019; Kodas *et al.*, 2022).

In this study, we investigated residents' perceptions and attitudes towards festival tourism and its impact on community cooperation. We explored how demographic factors such as age, gender, income, and education influence residents' perceptions and attitudes towards festival tourism. The study gives insights into the function of festival tourism in fostering sustainable tourism

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by using a social exchange analysis. The research question that guided this study: do residents' support for festival tourism and their perception of its benefits vary based on a cost-benefit analysis and the evaluation of alternatives.

The findings of this study can help guide tourism officials and community leaders in developing effective policies and programs to increase residents' support through perceived benefits. The theoretical models can shed a light on how residents' perceptions of festival tourism influence their support for tourism development and inform the development of strategies to enhance community involvement and support (Kim *et al*., 2006; Viviers, 2010; Quinn, 2010; Cudny *et al*., 2011; Celik and Cetinkaya, 2013; Winkle and Woosnam, 2014; Rogerson and Collins, 2015; Chang and Tsai, 2016; Bagiran and Kurgun, 2016; Agbabiaka, 2016).

To examine how residents' perceptions of festival tourism influence their support for tourism development, the following theoretical models were developed:

H1: There is no significant relationship between the respondents' gender and the perceived economic effect of festival tourism.

H2: The age, education, and employment type of respondents have no significant relationship with the perceived social effects of festival tourism.

Literature Review

Festival Tourism

According to Duffy and Mair (2017) and Saatci (2020), the word "festival" comes from the Latin term "festum," which means "common carnival, feast, and joy." Historically, festivals were driven by religious reasons, such as saints' feast days, carnivals, and pilgrimages. Festival tourism refers to the marketing of local festivals that entice travelers to attend and participate based in a region's culture, heritage, and resources (Choi *et al*., 2021). Festivals play a role in preserving a culture, including cuisine, music, dances, crafts, religious rites, and customs (Celik and Cetinkaya, 2013). Festival tourism is still a new phenomenon, but it is gaining popularity rapidly as more countries organize festivals to encourage tourism to their region (Zheleva, 2019; Doe *et al*., 2020).

Mahadevan (2020) stated that festivals were known for their celebratory nature and ability to bring people together by highlighting various cultural elements. Saatci (2020) added that festivals served the purpose of showcasing a society's unique identity or skill while promoting tourism attractions, cultural traditions, and celebrations. According to O'Sullivan and Jackson (2002), festival tourism occurred when people from outside the festival region attended the festival. Choi *et al*. (2021) also noted that a festival could be classified as a tourism attraction if tourists came to the festival and utilized the area's tourist amenities.

Festival organizers, government officials, and residents of the hosting cities and regions recognize these festivals as major tourist attractions in which the benefits can be maximized by drawing in officials, media personnel, spectators, and participants (Ayob *et al*., 2013). Elik and Etinkaya (2013) pointed out that festivals are widely marketed as an international and domestic activity for events and tourism worldwide. Festival tourism is one of the fastest growing and most popular type of travel, making it a unique kind of leisure activity (Stankova and Vassenska, 2015). Promotion of festivals through tourism can influence sustainable development in rural areas through community sponsorship (Balogun & Ajagunna, 2022).

Festival and Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism is rapidly expanding worldwide, particularly in developing countries (Richards, 2021). Traditionally, festivals were organized by communities to celebrate their ethnic identity and unique cultural characteristics based on their socio-economic status and way of life. Cultural tourism is significant both as a tourist product and as an area of academic study (Sohn *et al*., 2016). According to Koutoulas (2001), tourism is a human activity that involved traveling to destinations outside of one's usual place of residence and engaging in specific activities while on the trip. The Wales Tourist Board (WTB, 2003) defined culture as the spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional characteristics that identify a society or group, including performance, historical landscapes, crafts, religion, broadcasting, food, and languages, as well as traditional, current, and emerging forms of cultural experience. The definition of cultural tourism varies (Cetin & Bigihan, 2016). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 1985) defined cultural tourism as the movement of people primarily motivated by cultural factors, including study tours, cultural tours focused on performing arts, travel to festivals and other cultural events, visits to historical sites and monuments, travel for nature research purposes, folklore, art, and pilgrimages. Koutoulas (2004) defined cultural tourism as a type of human activity involving travel to locations outside of one's permanent residence and participation in cultural activities while away from home to satisfy certain needs. Festivals and cultural tourism comes in many forms. The first is heritage tourism, which focuses on travel related to heritage. Heritage can include landscapes, natural history, structures, artifacts, cultural celebrations, and customs that are passed down from one generation to the next (Prentice, 1994). The second category is travel related to the arts and includes activities such as music, theater, dance, folk art, sculpture, craft arts, and costume design (Horner & Swarbrooke, 1996).

Festival and Sustainable Livelihoods

In the past few years, festivals have become a promising avenue for enhancing community livelihoods and reducing poverty (Wu & Pearce, 2013). It is increasingly common to integrate festivals into the economic planning and tourism development strategies of regions, towns, and nations, as they offer numerous benefits and a comprehensive framework for the challenge of sustaining communal livelihoods (Davies *et al*., 2010; Getz & Page, 2016; Tichaawa, 2016). When planning festivals, it is of important that demographic characteristics such as age, gender, marital status, occupation, and income status of the local people are considered (Agbabiaka, 2022).

The impact of festivals goes beyond their direct economic benefits, as many ancillary businesses, such as agriculture, fishing, forestry, handicrafts, and food processing, also benefit indirectly from festivals (Muresan *et al*., 2016; Su *et al*., 2016). The literature recognized festivals as catalysts for social change due to their dynamic and fluid nature (Wu & Pearce, 2013; Sirima & Backman, 2013; Su *et al*., 2016). Festivals can enhance societal living conditions, although some changes brought about by festivals may not be positive (Gao & Wu, 2017; Niehof, 2004; Su *et al*., 2016). Festival tourism is considered a valuable tool for promoting local economies. A community livelihood approach emphasizes the significance of human well-being in sustainable development from a people-centered perspective.

Festivals can have a social impact on the communities in which they are held, both positive and negative (Dwyer *et al*., 2005; Ohmann *et al*., 2006). Festivals increase a community's visibility by showcasing its attractions and drawing participants, tourists, investors, and sponsors, which can lead to greater community involvement and a revitalization of the community. However, hosting festival events can also result in adverse socio-cultural impacts, such as increased crime rates (Agbabiaka *et al*., 2017). While festivals can have both positive and negative effects on a town's residents, they offer visitors a multitude of benefits and opportunities, as well as the satisfaction of contributing to a worthwhile endeavor (Duarte *et al*., 2018).

The relationship between demographic factors and tourism perception

The way people perceived and chose their travel destinations was influenced by their demographic characteristics, which were significant determinants of tourism perception (Ahmad *et al*., 2020). Many researchers examined how demographic factors such as gender, age, education, and employment type affected tourism perception. These variables were associated with an individual's socioeconomic status, cultural heritage, and personal values, which could impact their expectations, motivations, and level of satisfaction with their tourism experiences (Aziz *et al*., 2018, Agbabiaka, 2022).

Effect of gender on tourism perception

Tourist perception is heavily influenced by various demographic factors, with gender being a particularly important one. According to Evans and Anderson (2018), females tended to prioritize social and cultural events, while males prioritized adventure and outdoor activities. Pomfret and Bramwell's study (2016) discovered that female visitors tended to be more drawn to cultural and heritage tourism experiences, while male tourists favored nature-based and adventure tourism. Gender differences also existed in terms of risk-taking and safety concerns, with females being more risk-averse and safety-conscious, while males were more willing to take risks and seek excitement in their travel activities (Berdychevsky & Gibson, 2015). Thus, it is crucial to take gender differences into account when developing tourism products and services to cater to the diverse needs and preferences of male and female tourists.

Effect of age on tourism perception

The demographic factor of age is another significant aspect affecting tourism. According to Vyshak *et al*. (2018), the travel expectations and objectives of younger tourists differed from older tourists. Younger tourists looked for distinctive and unconventional experiences, whereas older tourists preferred more conventional and comfortable travel experiences. Additionally, older tourists had greater financial resources and were more likely to travel with family or in groups (Boroch, n.d.). The implications of this are important for tourist marketing and product development, as tourism operators need to provide a wide range of tourism products and services to meet the diverse demands of different age groups.

Effect of education on tourism perception

Tourism perception is also influenced by education, which is a key demographic factor. Highly educated tourists have higher expectations in the quality of tourism products and services and were more likely to engage in sustainable and responsible tourism practices (Aknc *et al*., 2018). According to Kasim (2017), educated visitors were more interested in cultural and educational experiences and participating in environmental conservation and community development initiatives. Additionally, higher education was associated with a willingness to pay more for higher-quality tourism products and services (Samah *et al*., 2013). Therefore, tourism operators must provide high-quality tourism products and services that meet the needs and preferences of educated tourists.

Effect of employment type on tourism perception

According to Popescu and Olteanu (2014), employment type was an essential demographic factor that influences tourism perception. Tourists employed in professional or managerial positions had higher levels of disposable income and were more likely to participate in luxury tourism experiences. Conversely, tourists employed in manual or non-managerial positions had lower disposable income and were more price-sensitive when it came to tourism products and services. Self-employed tourists or those who owned businesses had more flexible travel schedules and were more likely to engage in long-term travel activities (Yang *et al*., 2021). Therefore, tourism operators must consider the employment type of their target market when designing tourism products and services that cater to needs and preferences.

Demographic characteristics such as gender, age, education, and employment type play an important role in shaping tourism activities. By recognizing the influence of these factors on festival tourism, tourism operators can develop more effective marketing strategies and provide high-quality products and services that meet the diverse needs and expectations of tourists.

Theoretical Framework

Several models have been used to study the relationship between the growth of tourism and the responses of residents in host destinations, with Social Exchange Theory (SET) being the most frequently used (Byrd *et al*., 2009; Chaliskan & Saltik, 2018; Mihalic *et al*., 2016; Nunkoo & So, 2016). SET has made significant theoretical contributions to the study of residents' perceptions of tourism. According to Homans (1958), SET was one of the first theories of social behavior that gained popularity in the literature of sociology and social psychology. Thibaut and Kelley (1959) modified economic theory to develop the social exchange theory for the study of group social psychology, focusing on the relative costs and benefits of relationships and their implications for relationship satisfaction.

SET suggests that human behavior or social contact involves an exchange of activities, both tangible and intangible, particularly of rewards and costs (Homans, 1961). The theory examines how interaction behaviors are influenced by the structure of incentives and costs in a relationship (Molm, 1991). People behave in ways that enhance the positive outcomes they value and reduce the negative ones, and if the advantages of the exchange outweigh the costs, they will continue to engage in exchanges over time (Cook, Molm, and Yamagishi, 1993).

According to SET, individuals' attitudes toward tourism and their subsequent level of support for its development are influenced by their evaluations of the outcomes of tourism for themselves and their communities (Andereck *et al*., 2005). After evaluating the benefits and the costs, people engaged in an exchange process and entered relationships to maximize the advantages and minimize the disadvantages. Social trades are fundamentally different from economic ones in a number of ways. Benefit exchange is a voluntary act that includes undefined obligations in the future (Blau, 1964). The social exchange, according to SET, results in economic and/or social outcomes (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

Tourism is considered a reliable strategy for job creation, infrastructure development, and development of community pride, among others, which aid in getting community cooperation in touristic development. However, it is not without controversy, as it is often associated with negative social, cultural, and environmental effects (Choi and Sirakaya, 2005; Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2007). The Social Exchange Theory is one of the key ideas used to explain tourism research (Chang, 2021; Gannon *et al*., 2021), which hypothesizes a connection between elements that are favorable and unfavorable to certain activities.

Residents often weigh the advantages and disadvantages of engaging in social interactions or participating in activities before doing so (Thaichon *et al*., 2018). If residents believe that the advantages of an event or activity exceed its drawbacks, they will see it favorably and could even act in ways that are supportive of it (Fredline, 2005). However, if they believe that the costs outweigh the benefits, they will start to have unfavorable views about an activity, which could cause them to stop supporting the celebration of the event since the conditions of trade will no longer be followed. SET suggests that residents are prepared to participate in the exchange provided they believe they will gain advantages from it that do not require them to shoulder unbearable expenses (Gursoy and Kendall, 2006).

Methodology

Study Area

The Ijesu Annual Festival in Ilara-Mokin, a fast-growing university town located in Ondo State, Nigeria, was used as the study area. The town is situated about 12 km from Akure, at latitude 7.204150°N and longitude 5.06700°E, with a population of around 45,000 people. The region has two distinct seasons: the wet season, which occurs from March to October with an average rainfall of 1900mm, and the dry season, which occurs from November to February (Ashaolu & Adebayo, 2014; Adu *et al*., 2019). The average monthly temperature in the town is between 27°C and 30°C, and the average monthly relative humidity is below 70%. Ilara-Mokin has undergone significant development in the last decade, primarily due to the establishment of Elizade University and its Golf Course, which transformed the once peaceful rural area into a dynamic and rapidly expanding city. A majority of the population are Yorubas, who work as farmers, traders, and artisans. The Ijesu Festival is indigenously known as "*Odun Ijesu*", a "New Yam Festival" celebrated to commemorate the beginning of another agricultural year cycle. The event often features traditional prayer sessions by the Alara (King) of Ilara-Mokin, the presentation of gifts, and the preparation of indigenous meals, which are all usually made of yam as a vital ingredient.

A cross-sectional survey design was used to collect the data. The sampling frame included all residents who participated in the festival and were aged 18 years and older. Four-hundred questionnaires were conveniently distributed to participants, who were selected using the purposive sampling method based on their willingness to participate and direct experience with the festival.

The sample size was determined using a sample size calculator to ensure adequacy. Data was collected using hard copy questionnaires that consisted of open-ended and closed-ended questions to gather information on participants' festival tourism perceptions, social exchange relationships, and overall festival experience.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics like frequencies and percentages were used to summarize the data, while inferential statistics such as correlation analysis were used to test research hypotheses.

Ethical considerations were considered by ensuring that participants were informed about the study's purpose and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty, and their anonymity was ensured by not collecting any personal confidential information.

The researchers modified a scale that was developed by Gursoy *et al*. (2004) to collect data from the respondents. The economic effect was considered in terms of "increased employment opportunities", "increased standard of living", "locals encouraged to develop new facilities", and "increased sales and revenue". Social benefits were considered in terms of "provide more recreational opportunities", "promote organizations and businesses", "offer family-based recreation activities", "enhance community image to outsiders", "help foster relationships between residents and visitors", and "make people aware of culture", while Social costs were considered in terms of "increased traffic congestion", "pressure on local services", "increased crime rate", "overcrowding", "sexual abuse or prostitution", and "noise pollution".

Results

Socio-demographics

A descriptive analysis showed that most of the study participants were female (53.5%), between the ages of 34 and 41 (26.75%), married (65.75%), with 51.5 percent having tertiary educational qualifications, and Christians (66.5%). The majority of participants were indigenous to the community (74.5%) and employed (69%). The results of the demographic characteristics of participants are presented in the table below (Table 1).

A descriptive analysis of the perceived economic effects, social benefits, and social costs of festival tourism revealed interesting findings. The respondents demonstrated a moderately positive perception of the economic effects, indicating that festival tourism is believed to contribute to employment opportunities, the standard of living, and sales or revenue. This suggests that festival tourism has the potential to generate economic benefits for the local community, fostering growth and prosperity.

The respondents expressed a favorable perception of the social benefits associated with festival tourism. Festival tourism was perceived as providing recreational opportunities, promoting organizations and businesses, fostering relationships between residents and visitors, and raising awareness of the local culture. These findings highlight festival tourism's potential to enhance the social fabric of the community by offering enjoyable activities, strengthening community bonds, and promoting cultural exchange.

However, the respondents also expressed moderate concerns regarding the social costs associated with festival tourism. These concerns included increased traffic congestion, pressure on local services, crime rates, overcrowding, sexual abuse and prostitution, and noise pollution. These findings underscore the need for effective management strategies to mitigate the potential negative

Table 1. *Sample Demographic Characteristics*

Gender	f	%
Male	186	46.5
Female	214	53.5
Age		
18-25	68	17
26-33	77	19.3
34-41	107	26.7
42-49	102	25.5
50-above	46	11.5
Educational Qualification		
No schooling	0	0
Primary	46	11.5
Secondary	148	37
Tertiary	206	51.5
Marital Status		
Single	84	21
Married	263	65.75
Divorced	12	3
Widowed	41	10.25
Religion		
Christianity	266	66.5
Muslim/Islam	79	19.75
Traditional	55	13.75
Indigen of the Community		
Yes	298	74.5
No	102	25.5
Employment Status		
Self-employed	69	17.25
Employed	276	69
Unemployed	55	13.75

Table 2. *Descriptive Analysis: Items for Measuring Perceived Economic, Social Benefits, and Social Costs*

ITEMS	**Mean**	**SD**
Perceived Economic Effects		
Increase employment opportunities	3.78	0.92
Increase standard of living	4.12	0.75
Encourage locals to develop new facilities	3.56	1.02
Increase sales and revenue	3.94	0.86
Perceived Social Benefits		
Provide more recreational opportunities	4.08	0.79
Promote organizations and businesses	3.72	0.98
Offer family-based recreation activities	3.86	0.91
Enhance community image to outsiders	3.94	0.85
Help foster relationship between residents and visitors	4.16	0.77
Make people aware of culture	3.62	1.03
Perceived Social Costs		
Increase traffic congestion	2.78	1.15
Put pressure on local services (police, utilities, etc.)	2.96	1.02
Increase crime rate	2.44	1.10
Overcrowding	2.68	1.05
Sexual abuse or Prostitution	1.98	1.05
Noise pollution	2.32	1.12

impacts of festival tourism. This includes implementing traffic management measures, ensuring adequate provision of local resources, and addressing safety concerns.

Table 3. *T-Test: Relationship between Gender and Perceived Economic Effect of Festival Tourism*

	Male (n=186)	Female (n=214)	t-value	p-value
Perceived Economic Effect	3.75	4.10	2.30	0.000

The t-test results indicate that there is a significant difference in the perceived economic effect of festival tourism between male and female respondents (t (400) = 2.30, p = 0.000, α = 0.05). Female respondents (F = 4.10) perceived a higher economic effect compared to Male respondents (M = 3.75).

Table 4. *ANOVA: Relationship between Demographic Factors and Perceived Social Effects of Festival Tourism*

	Male (n=186)	Female (n=214)	t-value	p-value
Perceived Economic Effect	3.75	4.10	2.30	0.000

The ANOVA results show that there is no significant relationship between age groups and the perceived social effects of festival tourism (F (2, 397) = 1.78, p = 0.169, α = 0.05). Similarly, there is no significant relationship between education levels and perceived social effects (F (3, 396) = 2.56, p = 0.057, α = 0.05). However, there is a significant relationship between employment types and perceived social effects (F (2, 397) = 4.12, p = 0.003, α = 0.05).

Discussion

Tourism is a significant economic contributor in many countries, generating revenue and creating employment opportunities in sectors beyond the immediate tourist expenditure. Festival tourism is increasingly popular due to the unique cultural experiences that attract tourists and contribute to local community development. This study investigated the relationship between the demographic factors, attitudes, and perceptions of festival tourism using the Ijesu Festival in Ilara-Mokin, Ondo State, Nigeria, as a case study.

An analysis of the perceived economic effects, social benefits, and social costs of festival tourism provided valuable insight into residents' perceptions of festival tourism. The findings revealed that female respondents generally hold positive views regarding the economic benefits of festival tourism. They believe that festivals contributed to increased employment opportunities, a higher standard of living, and increased sales and revenue. These perceptions align with previous studies that highlighted the potential economic advantages of festival tourism (Agbabiaka, 2022; Doe et al., 2020; Imbeah et al., 2016). Positive economic effects can stimulate local development, improve the livelihoods of residents, and generate revenue for the community. Due to this effect, and the resilience of local people enable tourism events to grow and sustain the industry (Seraphin et al., 2019).

In terms of social benefits, the respondents expressed a favorable perception of festival tourism, which aligned with Zamani-Farahani, as residents found tourism favorable due to their influence on the outcomes related to tourism events and development. They believed that festivals provided more recreational opportunities, promoted local organizations and businesses, fostered relationships between residents and visitors, and raised awareness of the local culture. These findings were consistent with research emphasizing the social benefits of festivals, including the enhancement of community image, the promotion of cultural exchange, and the creation of social bonds (Agbabiaka, 2022; Yilmaz, 2020; Pope et al., 2017). Festival tourism can contribute to social cohesion and the well-being of a community by offering diverse and engaging activities for both residents and visitors.

However, respondents also acknowledged certain social costs associated with festival tourism. Concerns were raised regarding increased traffic congestion, pressure on local services, crime rates, overcrowding, sexual abuse and prostitution, and noise pollution. These findings highlighted the importance of effective planning and management strategies to address these potential negative impacts. It is crucial to develop sustainable tourism practices that minimize social costs and maximize the benefits for the local community (Krems & Gurbanli, 2022). This can involve implementing traffic control measures, ensuring the provision of adequate resources, fostering community engagement, and promoting responsible behavior among festival attendees.

The gender analysis revealed a significant difference in the perceived economic effect of festival tourism between male and female respondents. Female respondents perceived a higher economic effect compared to their male counterparts. This finding may be attributed to gender-based variations in perception, roles, and expectations within the community. Future studies could delve deeper into understanding the underlying factors contributing to this difference.

Regarding the demographic factors of age, education, and employment type, the analysis showed no significant relationship with the perceived social effects of festival tourism. While age and education did not exhibit significant associations, employment type emerged as a significant predictor of perceived social effects. This suggests that individuals employed in different sectors may have varying perceptions of the social impacts of festival tourism. Further research could explore the specific mechanisms through which employment type influences these perceptions and inform targeted strategies for engaging different occupational groups.

The findings of the study indicated that social exchange theory, which posits that individuals engage in interactions with others based on the exchange of rewards and costs, is applicable in the context of festival tourism. Tourists engage in the exchange of economic and social benefits, such as the consumption of products and services, social interaction with the local community, and cultural experiences, respectively. Different demographic groups prioritize different types of rewards and costs in the exchange of benefits, shaping their tourism perception and behavior.

Conclusion, Implications and Limitations

In this study, we investigated residents' perceptions and attitudes towards festival tourism and its impact on host community cooperation. The study explored how demographic factors such as age, gender, income, and education influenced residents' perceptions and attitudes towards festival tourism. The study gave insights into the function of festival tourism in fostering sustainable tourism development by employing a Social Exchange analysis. The research determined the perceptions of residents based on perceived economic benefits, social benefits, and social costs. Hypotheses were tested between gender and perceived economic benefits as well as demographic factors and perceived social effects of Festival Tourism.

Based on the study's findings, it can be concluded that demographic factors are significant in shaping tourism perception and the economic impact of festival tourism in the community. Specifically, the study highlights the importance of considering gender, age, education, and employment type when developing festival tourism products and services. To maximize the economic benefits and minimize the social and environmental costs of festival tourism, it is crucial to develop innovative and sustainable festival tourism products and services that cater to the diverse needs and preferences of different demographic groups.

Therefore, festival organizers, community leaders, and tourism operators must create strategies that balance the economic advantages of festival tourism with the social and cultural values of the community to ensure the long-term success of festival tourism. Tourism officials and community leaders should develop effective policies and programs to increase residents' support through these perceived benefits. The theoretical models shed light on how residents' perceptions of festival tourism influence their support for tourism development and inform the development of strategies to enhance community involvement and support.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Cruise Tourism in Japanese Coastal Cities: The Role of Revisit and Word-of-Mouth Intentions as Proxies for Behavior

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ABSTRACT
This two-wave study was conducted within Japan's cruise tourism landscape to augment existing research and delve into an understudied area by evaluating the role of destination revisit and word-of-mouth (WOM) intentions as surrogates for self-reported behaviors in inbound tourism. The study employs partial least squares structural equation modeling to analyze data collected in 2018 and 2022, exploring the relationships among overall satisfaction, repeat visitation rate, distance, and revisit and WOM intentions. The analysis of the estimation partition, consisting of 580 valid first-wave responses, helps isolate the critical factors associated with overall satisfaction, such as destination attractiveness, transportation, prices, and tourist attractions and facilities. Based on 77 valid responses gathered in the second wave, which as a sample size has been deemed sufficient for a post-hoc power analysis, the findings significantly reveal that cruise goers' intentions correlate with self-reported behaviors for revisits and WOM, with intentions explaining 14.4% and 9.3% of the variance observed in the respective behaviors. These results emphasize intentions' multifaceted role in predicting tourist behavior, underscoring the importance of context-specific constructs in tourism management and unveiling potential pathways for further exploration. The conclusion offers insights that may guide future research and industry practices in crafting strategies to enhance visitor satisfaction and loyalty.

Keywords: Cruise tourism, Intention, Repeat visitation, Satisfaction, Word-of-mouth

Introduction

Cruise visitors' behaviors have increasingly attracted researchers' attention as passenger volumes grow (Casado-Díaz et al., 2021). Many cruise goers view their destination visits as formative experiences, shaping their decisions to revisit the same destinations by cruise or land (Teye & Paris, 2010). Researchers and destination management organizations (DMOs) often predict this revisit behavior through intentions to revisit and recommend (Chi & Qu, 2008; Hallak et al., 2018). However, empirical tourism studies examining this relationship between intention and behavior are nonexistent for inbound visitors. Furthermore, existing two-wave studies targeting domestic tourists report explanatory powers of less than 8% for revisit intention (RI; Pike, 2006; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Hsu & Huang, 2012). Consequently, some researchers question the validity of RI as a proxy for behavior in tourism (McKercher & Tse, 2012). Similarly, a dearth of two-wave studies investigating tourists' word-of-mouth (WOM) intentions is found with regard to predicting WOM behavior.

Cruise tourism is an ideal context for studying the intention-behavior dichotomy for three main reasons: (1) surveying cruise goers immediately after their visit minimizes recall bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003), (2) targeting cruise goers enables sampling from multiple coastal destinations within a country, overcoming the generalizability limitation, and (3) cruise goers' experiences in different coastal cities share similarities in terms of length of stay, motivation, and mode of exploration, thus reducing potential confounding effects. In the study of cruise tourism, Japan stands out as a unique destination with multiple coastal attractions. Despite the popularity of these Japanese destinations, few studies have investigated cruise tourist behavior in Asia, a gap that is important to bridge as cruise goers form a distinct group of inbound tourists. Cruise goers spend less time at the destination, rely more on planned sightseeing tours and transportation, and depend less on culinary and accommodation establishments (Ozturk & Gogtas, 2016; Penco & Di Vaio, 2014). This may lead to disparate levels of overall satisfaction and likelihoods of revisitation between cruise goers and land-based visitors. For instance, while cruise goers may react more strongly to individual experiences, land-based visitors, who often spend more time at the destination, may not be deterred by an isolated negative encounter during

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the initial day of an extended stay. Therefore, understanding cruise goers' experiences and behaviors in Japan is vital for DMOs and cruise companies operating in Asia.

The present study aims to address the gaps noted above by focusing on three objectives: 1) investigate the relationship between the intentions and self-reported behaviors of cruise goers to Japan; 2) examine how factors such as distance, repeat visitation rate, and overall destination satisfaction impact cruise goers' intentions; and 3) explore the destination attributes that contribute to cruise goers' overall destination satisfaction in Japanese coastal cities. By utilizing omnibus surveys conducted in two waves in 2018 and 2022 and by applying partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) for analysis, this research emphasizes its uniqueness through a twofold contribution to tourism research: Firstly, it moves beyond single-city cross-sectional studies to analyze multi-city and year-long primary data for inbound cruise goers. Secondly, it pioneers a two-wave exploration of the suitability of revisit and WOM intentions as proxies for reported destination revisits and recommendations among inbound cruise goers.

Literature Review

Satisfaction and Intention

That overall satisfaction with a product is closely linked to attribute satisfaction has been well established (Oliver, 1993). Chi & Qu (2008) confirmed this link for destinations regarding land-based tourists. Likewise, researchers have observed similar correlations for cruise goers (Brida et al., 2012; Satta et al., 2015). However, the specific attributes contributing to destination attribute satisfaction may vary by market. For instance, Whyte (2018) reported that North American cruise goers prioritize cleanliness, beautiful scenery, weather, ease of access, and diverse scenery. In Asia, Sun et al. (2019) studied Chinese cruise goers' satisfaction with onshore experiences, reporting the importance of diverse attractions and shops, as well as the attractiveness of sightseeing attractions. Furthermore, Tao & Kim (2019) reinforced that onshore attributes significantly affect cruise goers' destination satisfaction in Asia. Therefore, satisfaction with specific destination attributes influences attribute satisfaction, which in turn affects overall satisfaction. To this end, Hypothesis 1 has been adapted (Alegre & Cladera, 2006; Ozturk & Gogtas, 2016), with attribute satisfaction being measured through items related to destination attractiveness, tourist attractions and facilities, and transportation (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Kozak, 2001), as well as other items that have been proven in the context of cruise tourism (Alegre & Cladera, 2006; Ozturk & Gogtas, 2016).

H_1: Attribute satisfaction exerts a positive influence on overall satisfaction with the destination.

Loyalty, satisfaction, and WOM have been subjects of extensive research (De Matos & Rossi, 2008; Chi & Qu, 2008). Oliver (2015) broke down loyalty into four components: cognitive, affective, conative, and action, with the first three corresponding to attitudinal loyalty and the last to behavioral loyalty (Han & Hyun, 2012). Destination RI reflects the conative loyalty phase; it serves as one way to operationalize loyalty and is a precursor to behavioral loyalty (Oliver, 2015). Ajzen's (1985, 1991) theory of planned behavior (TPB) further explains this relationship between intention and action. Another crucial factor in loyalty formation is satisfaction, an antecedent of behavioral intention (Gotlieb et al., 1994). Many tourism studies have supported this, affirming that overall satisfaction is associated with revisit and WOM intentions (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Hosany & Witham, 2010). Some researchers have found a significant short-term relationship between overall satisfaction and RI (Jang & Feng, 2007), while others confirm the long-term connection (Bigné et al., 2009). Cruise tourism literature also supports this association (Brida et al., 2012; Satta et al., 2015). For instance, Sanz-Blas et al. (2017) reported destination satisfaction and perceived quality to be antecedents of revisit and WOM intentions. In Asia, Chang et al. (2016) underscored the significance of destination satisfaction for revisit and WOM intentions among cruise goers to South Korea. Hence, Hypotheses 2 (Alegre & Cladera, 2006) and 3 (Ozturk & Gogtas, 2016) have been formulated in accordance with the reviewed literature.

$H2$: Overall satisfaction with the destination positively impacts the intention to revisit.

$H3$: Overall satisfaction with the destination positively impacts the intention to engage in WOM communication.

Distance, Past Repeat Visitation, and Intention

TPB suggests intention translates into behavior, barring hindrances like cost and cooperation (Ajzen, 1991). In tourism, distance can act as a constraint on revisiting a destination (McKercher, 2018). Models investigating the impact of distance on RI have confirmed its inhibitory role (Moutinho & Trimble, 1991; Ozturk & Gogtas, 2016; Um et al., 2006). Therefore, the distance between the tourist's point of origin and destination can act as a barrier variable, diminishing the likelihood of RIs (Gabe et al., 2006). This variable can be measured using either travel time or Euclidean distance (Nicolau & Mas, 2006). The current study adopts the latter approach, thereby indirectly accounting for travel costs, time, and budgets (Ahn & McKercher, 2015). Accordingly, Hypothesis 4 has been adapted (Ozturk & Gogtas, 2016) in alignment with Ajzen (1991) and Moutinho and Trimble (1991); this hypothesis asserts that the distance between the visitor's city of residence and destination city negatively affects the likelihood of RI for both repeat cruises and land-based trips.

*H*4 : The distance between the destination city and the visitor's city of residence has a negative effect on RI.

A combination of background factors such as age, familiarity, and repeat visitation rate can play a role in shaping RIs (Alegre & Cladera, 2009; Gitelson & Crompton, 1984; Moutinho & Trimble, 1991; Prentice & Andersen, 2000). For cruise goers, factors such as age, time spent in port, gender, perceived value, quality, repeat visitation rate, and value for money emerge as potential influential variables (Gabe et al., 2006; Petrick, 2004; Silvestre et al., 2008). In this context, repeat visitation rate is equivalent to repeat purchasing behavior, which is a characteristic of the last three phases of Oliver's (1999) four-phase loyalty framework. In tourism, Oppermann (2000) found that past repeat visitation rates can predict revisits within a retrospective framework. Consequently, previous visit frequency is expected to correlate positively with the intention to return, as encapsulated in Hypothesis 5 (Alegre & Cladera, 2006).

*H*5 : Past repeat visitation rate positively impacts the intention to revisit.

Intention and Behavior

Research in marketing literature reveals that repurchase and recommendation intentions predict behavior (Keiningham et al., 2007). Although tourism studies have yet to examine the relationship between intention and behavior for inbound or cruise tourism, three existing studies have suggested a positive correlation between intention and self-reported behavior regarding domestic tourism (Pike, 2006; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Hsu & Huang, 2012). Pike (2006) explored short-distance domestic travel by car in Australia with surveys conducted three months apart. Kaplanidou and Vogt (2007) focused on sport tourists visiting a small town in the USA using structural equation modeling (SEM) for data collected within a year after the first wave. Hsu and Huang (2012) examined visitors from major Chinese cities traveling to Hong Kong and applied ordinary least squares regression within a six-month timeframe. The same relationship is expected to hold for inbound cruise goers, many of whom view their destination visit as a sample experience. In an attempt to fill the existing research gap and better capture revisit behavior, this study extends the timeframe for assessing revisit behavior to three years for inbound tourism, in contrast to the shorter time spans commonly found in the current literature on domestic tourism. Consequently, the following hypothesis has been adapted from Hsu and Huang (2012), extending the inquiry period to a three-year timeframe instead of the three-month, six-month, and two-year periods utilized in prior studies.

*H*6 : The intention to revisit positively impacts self-reported revisit behavior.

Many tourism studies (Chi & Qu, 2008; Hallak et al., 2018) have used revisit and WOM intentions to operationalize loyalty, building upon the seminal work by Zeithaml et al. (1996). However, the role of WOM intentions as a proxy for behavior remains underexplored in inbound tourism. One notable exception is Naylor and Kleiser's (2000) study in the hospitality industry; they identified a marginal link between WOM intention and the behavior of resort visitors in the USA. Consistent with the connection between RI and behavior as described by TPB, WOM intention is anticipated to lead to corresponding behavior (activity) and valence (praise; De Matos & Rossi, 2008). This proposition is nuanced, as negative WOM is often more prevalent than its positive counterpart (East et al., 2007). The hypothesis that WOM intention positively impacts WOM valence acknowledges the multifaceted nature of WOM dynamics. While negative WOM is common in some contexts, positive WOM can prevail when specific conditions are met, such as experiences that lead to high satisfaction levels or unique characteristics at a tourist destination that may foster positive WOM. East et al.'s (2007) research has provided further insights into these conditions. In the context of the current study, the hypotheses have been formulated based on cruise goers' experiences of the destination. Recognizing the constructs that define the quantity (frequency) and favorableness (valence) of WOM communication (Harrison-Walker, 2001) and drawing on Oliver's (2015) approach, Hypotheses 7 and 8 explore WOM intention's influence on both WOM behavior and valence in a nuanced manner. Figure 1 illustrates all the stated hypotheses.

*H*7 : The intention to engage in WOM communication positively impacts self-reported WOM behavior.

*H*8 : The intention to engage in WOM communication positively impacts WOM valence.

Research Methodology

Based on the identified gaps and challenges, several actions were taken to build a sound methodology to address the developed hypotheses. To reduce any common method bias that may arise from common rater and measurement context effects, different scales and anchor points were employed for the predictor and criterion measures by gathering data in two waves (Podsakoff et al., 2003). A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure both attribute satisfaction (AS) and overall destination satisfaction (OS), with the inclusion of a "not applicable" option (Chi, 2012; Chung & Petrick, 2013). Following Cronin and Taylor (1992) and Füller

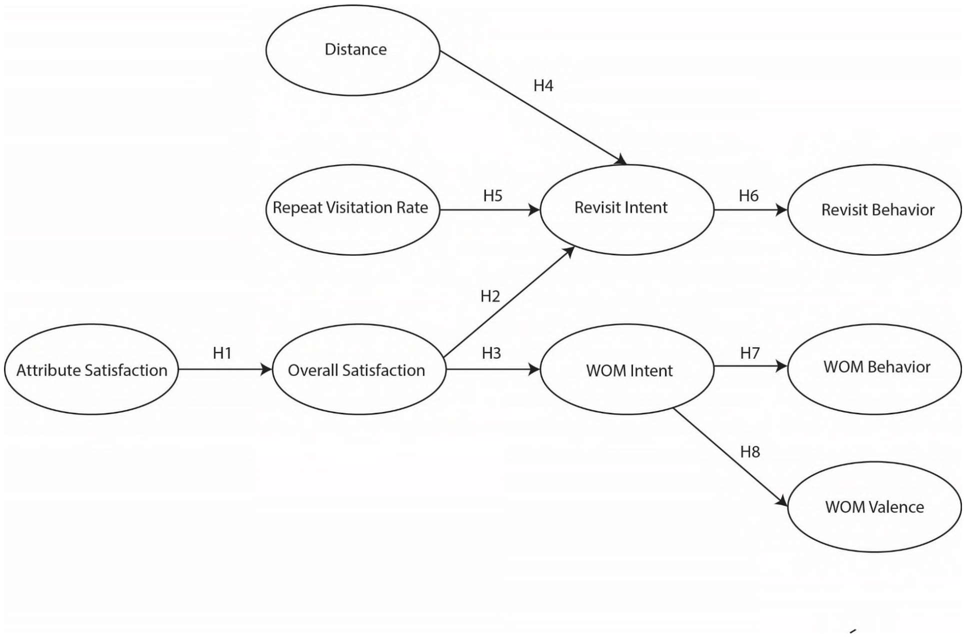

Figure 1. The hypotheses tested.

and Matzler (2008), these scales were anchored from "very unsatisfied" (1) to "very satisfied" (5). For attribute satisfaction, 10 items were adapted from Alegre and Cladera (2006), eight items from Kozak and Rimmington (2000), and two items from Kozak (2001). These specific items were chosen because they have been validated in similar studies for measuring tourist satisfaction, such as those related to accommodations, climate, destination attractiveness, hospitality, prices, social life, tourist activities, tourist attractions and facilities, and tranquility. For RI and intention to recommend, the Juster scales were used (Kerr et al., 2012). A single question was used for the likelihood of WOM intention (WI; Hosany & Witham, 2010; Taplin, 2013), and another to gauge RI (Kim et al., 2011; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Taplin, 2013). However, importance is had in noting that the time horizon used here spans three years, divergent from the two-year timeframe employed by Kaplanidou and Vogt (2007). Information was also gathered on the respondents' past repeat visitation rate (RVR) using a ratio scale (Campo-Martínez et al., 2010), along with residence information and demographic details.

Before administering the survey, the instrument was pilot tested in Yokohama in 2017. Surveys were then conducted for the crew and passengers visiting Japan on 33 occasions in 2018. For every month of 2018, ships were chosen at random, resulting in a diverse list of locations throughout the country, as depicted in Figure 2. The survey sites span cities from north to south, including Fukuoka, Hakodate, Hiroshima, Ishigaki, Kagoshima, Miyako, Nagasaki, Naha, Osaka, Shimonoseki, Sakaiminato, Shimizu, and Yokohama. For the description and analysis of the first wave, the focus is on passenger data for 15 instances from July to December, pertinent to the hypotheses being tested and designated as the estimation partition. The remaining data from 18 cases before July, defined as the holdout data set, was used for split-sample validation. Participants provided their informed consent before completing the surveys, which were made available in Chinese, Korean, and English. Bilingual interviewers were trained to assist in conducting the surveys at each location. The ethics committee approval of this study was obtained from Soka University Institutional Review Board for Human Research (Date: 21.09.2017; Number: 29052). Due to a lack of a sampling frame, port access restrictions that eliminated the possibility of contacting all incoming passengers, and pilot test experiences, the convenience sampling approach was used. This approach aligns with previous research in similar settings (Hung & Petrick, 2011; Hsu & Huang, 2012).

For the first wave, data from 596 passengers surveyed in the latter half of 2018 were analyzed. While several items were initially adapted to measure attribute satisfaction, items with an indicator loading greater than 0.708 were selected, resulting in a final set of nine items for this construct. Missing value analysis eliminated 16 cases, corresponding to less than 3%. The remaining 580 cases had missingness values of less than 5% for all variables except for distance (7.2%) and repeat visitation rate (10%), which are not excessive (Hair et al., 2018). Separate variance t-tests and Little's test for Missing Completely at Random (MCAR) were nonsignificant as well. Consequently, missing data values were remedied via mean replacement (Hair et al., 2018). To address validity issues due to the adapted single-item scales, t-tests were used to compare first-time visitors and repeat visitors for overall satisfaction, revisit, and WOM intentions (Um et al., 2006), the assumption being that these two groups should be similar in satisfaction but differ in the latter two constructs (Chi, 2012). As expected, repeat visitors had significantly higher intentions than

Figure 2. Survey locations.

first-time visitors ($p < 0.01$); repeat visitors also had greater satisfaction levels, but the difference was not significant ($p = 0.432$). These results were replicated for the holdout partition for the first half of 2018 and demonstrate robustness ($p < 0.01$, $p = 0.596$).

For the second wave in 2022, the pretest and modifications due to the pilot test resulted in a 15-item survey. This paper focuses on three of those items. A minimum three-year window between the original visit in 2018 and the second wave in 2022 was intentionally scheduled to allow participants ample time to return to the cities they had visited. Two items asked the participants about the number of revisits and WOM frequency since their visit in 2018 using the ratio scales adapted from Kaplanidou and Vogt (2007) and Oliver (2015), respectively. WOM frequency was specifically measured by asking respondents about how many people they had talked to concerning the good or bad things about their visit to the destination city. The question did not differentiate among the mediums of WOM, as this was not a concern for this study. The third item used a 7-point Likert scale for WOM valence (WV) and was adapted from Oliver (2015), asking participants, "Did you tell these people mostly positive or mostly negative things about your visit to [the city name]?"

Participants from the first wave, including those from the holdout dataset, were contacted by email. The web-based survey was available from February-May 2022, with four follow-up reminders. Matching between the subjects of the two waves was accomplished using the email addresses provided in the first wave. Of the 557 emails sent successfully, 94 responses were received, resulting in a 17% response rate. However, the response rate for residents of China was low at 5%. As a result, the analysis for the second wave only focuses on respondents who do not reside in China, for whom the response rate was 28%. Although this rate is low, it is similar to those typically observed in web-based surveys (Beldona & Cobanoglu, 2007). For instance, a two-wave domestic tourism study by Hsu and Huang (2012) that utilized postal and email-based correspondence in China had a 21.4% response rate. T-tests were used to address the validity issue that may arise due to the lower-than-desired response rate by comparing early and late respondents for three key metrics: the number of revisits, WOM frequency, and WOM valence. No significant differences were found between these two subsegments. Respondents were also compared to nonrespondents for the critical metrics in the study's first wave via t-tests, and no significant differences were found in the revisit and WOM intention metrics (Armstrong & Overton, 1977; Lindner et al., 2001).

As stated above, the removal of Chinese respondents had resulted from a low response rate of 5%, which could introduce bias if retained. Noteworthily, the study's design did not emphasize or analyze cultural differences, and the exclusion was based on statistical considerations to help maintain the integrity of the results. After removing responses from residents of China and crew members, the resulting data consist of 77 responses. When considering the smaller data set and the fact that the focus of the second wave is on examining the link between intention and behavior, the latent variable of attribute satisfaction was also excluded from the model that was used. Excluding this variable allows the study to concentrate on the primary objectives of the second wave analysis. The percentage of missingness for all variables was less than 5.2%. Separate variance t-tests found significance in only two comparisons for WOM valence, and Little's MCAR test was nonsignificant, allowing the use of mean replacement (Hair et al., 2018). To address the single-item scale validity, first-time visitors were compared with repeat visitors regarding the number of revisits, WOM frequency, and WOM valence (Um et al., 2006). The only multiple-wave study within the context of hospitality found that prior experience is a marginal predictor of WOM valence ($p = 0.06$) but not of WOM activity ($p = 0.09$; Naylor & Kleiser, 2000). Therefore, t-tests were conducted using these assumptions, as well as the assumption that repeat visitors are more likely to revisit (Oppermann, 2000). The results confirmed the average number of revisits and WOM valence scores to be significantly greater for repeat visitors ($p = 0.04$, $p = 0.00$, respectively). On the other hand, even though WOM activity was greater for repeat visitors, the difference was not statistically significant ($p = 0.85$).

The regression-based hierarchical linear modeling was deemed to be inappropriate due to the same constructs not being repeatedly measured during both waves. Examining the Q-Q plot of Mahalanobis distance (Burdenski, 2000; Nunkoo et al, 2013) and z-values calculated from the skewness and kurtosis values shows that multivariate normality could not be assumed (Hair et al., 2018). Non-normality and the presence of metric and non-metric variables imply that PLS-SEM is better suited for understanding the predictive role of intentions for behavior than using covariance-based SEM (Hair et al., 2018; Evermann & Tate, 2016). All the calculations used SPSS 27.0.1.0 and SmartPLS 4.0.6.7 (Ringle et al., 2022). The consistent PLS-SEM (PLSc-SEM) algorithm was employed to correct for the reflective constructs' correlations. Before analyzing the results, the data were examined for outliers. Two potential outliers were detected in the first set, and five in the second. Nevertheless, they were retained as they were considered representative. Common method bias was checked using a variance-based technique for both data sets by measuring for full collinearity through variance inflation factors (VIF) for all constructs. All VIF values were determined to be less than 2.2, much lower than the recommended 3.3 value (Kock & Lynn, 2012), thus indicating common method bias to not be prevalent in this study.

Results

As shown in Table 1 for the first wave, most survey respondents are female, married, and traveling with others. The age groups are well represented, with a higher percentage of passengers being under 40. This observation aligns with research conducted in Asian contexts but diverges from findings in North America and Europe (Chen et al., 2016). Additionally, the passenger demographics reveal a predominantly well-educated cohort, with the number of passengers originating from China surpassing the total number of visitors from North America and Europe. The majority traveled with family or a partner, reflecting a preference for group travel, a common observation in cruise tourism, especially among Asian travelers who often emphasize communal experiences and shared enjoyment (Sun et al., 2019). Most of the surveys focused on Kyushu Island, followed by Okinawa and Honshu. Table 2 displays the statistics for the key variables in the first wave of the PLSc-SEM Model. Of the 20 attribute satisfaction items initially adapted, nine items that met the selection criteria outlined in the methodology (indicator loadings greater than 0.708; Hair et al., 2021) were kept for the attribute satisfaction construct. Destination attractiveness items (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000) and transport services received high ratings, while attributes such as shopping, tourist attractions, prices, and sightseeing tours received lower ratings, with the lowest average value being 3.72. Overall satisfaction is high at 4.15, which is comparable with results obtained in previous studies whose values range from 3.99 in Italy (Satta et al., 2015) to 4.49 in Aruba (DiPietro & Peterson, 2017).

The likelihood of RI is low at 50%, but that of WOM intention is higher at 68.6%. These low values are unsurprising because most cities surveyed are distant from top destinations like Tokyo. However, 86% of respondents were first-time visitors, so it is essential to pinpoint factors contributing to this low RI rate. The results confirm the positive correlation between repeat visitation rate and RI ($r = 0.182$, $p < 0.01$; Oppermann, 2000) and the negative correlation between distance and repeat visitation rates ($r = -0.173$, $p < 0.01$; McKercher & Tse, 2012). Before using the PLSc-SEM algorithm, the Pearson correlation coefficients were also examined, with overall satisfaction being found to positively correlate with RI ($r = 0.128$, $p < 0.01$) and intention to recommend ($r = 0.415$, $p < 0.01$).

As shown in Table 3, all item reliabilities for attribute satisfaction exceed 0.708, composite reliability is within the recommended range of 0.7-0.95, and the average variance extracted meets the minimum threshold of 0.5. Based on a bootstrap of 10,000 subsamples, the heterotrait monotrait (HTMT) method showed all values to be less than 0.85 and significantly lower than one. The correlation matrix in Table 4 shows that distance negatively correlates with repeat visitation rate and RI (McKercher & Tse, 2012). Overall satisfaction is strongly related to attribute satisfaction and correlates with behavioral intentions (Alegre & Cladera, 2006).

Table 1. *First-Wave Visitor Profile (July-December).*

	%		%
Gender:		*Traveling:*	
Female	58.8	Alone	3.1
Male	41.2	With a partner	37.3
Age:		With family	45.8
18-29 years	19.0	With a travel group	13.8
30-39 years	25.9	*Residence:*	
40-59 years	26.1	China and Taiwan	52.9
60+ years	29.0	USA	15.8
Marital status:		Australia	9.1
Married	72.3	UK, Germany, and France	7.1
Single	20.3	Canada	5.6
Separated/Widowed/Divorced	5.2	Korea	0.2
Cohabitation	2.1	Others	9.3
Education:		*Destinations:*	
High School or below	10.3	Kyushu	46.9
Some College	19.7	Okinawa	32.3
College Degree	39.1	Honshu	20.8
Postgraduate and beyond	30.9		
Income:			
Less than $50,000	28.8		
$50,001-$100,000	32.8		
$100,001-$150,000	17.9		
$150,001 or more	20.5		

Repeat visitation rate is also associated with behavioral intentions, but at a lower level (Oppermann, 2000). Attribute satisfaction correlates with behavioral intentions and has a stronger association with WOM intention than RI. Finally, WOM intention and RI are also associated with one another, thus supporting convergent, discriminant, and nomological validity (Hair et al., 2018).

The examination of VIF values (all less than 3 with the largest equaling 1.085) indicates that collinearity is not an issue (Hair et al., 2018). Bootstrapping with 10,000 subsamples demonstrates that all path coefficients are statistically significant. Hence, the data support the initial five hypotheses stated at the outset. Table 5 illustrates that overall satisfaction has a greater impact on WOM intention than on RI, which is consistent with previous research (Chang et al., 2016). As McKercher and Tse (2012) noted, distance is the most impactful factor on RI. Lastly, overall satisfaction is more impactful than repeat visitation rate for estimating RIs (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). All three values for repeat visitation rate, distance, and overall satisfaction appear to be low; however, a strong connection exists between attribute satisfaction and overall satisfaction. The positive path coefficients for hypotheses *H1, H2, H3*, and *H5* and the negative coefficient for *H4* support the theoretical framework, suggesting a complex interplay among satisfaction, distance, and intentions.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics for The First Wave (July-December).*

Constructs	Items	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Overall Satisfaction	Overall Travel Experience in the City Visited	4.15	0.981	-1.356	1.783
Attribute Satisfaction					
	Shopping	3.72	1.093	-0.670	-0.165
	Sightseeing Tours	3.92	1.058	-0.789	0.081
	Prices	3.93	0.968	-0.799	0.450
	Tourist Attractions	3.96	1.056	-0.925	0.366
	Restaurants and Food	4.11	1.028	-1.171	0.925
	Transportation	4.17	1.060	-1.376	1.393
	Hospitality	4.55	0.952	-2.480	5.714
	Safety	4.56	0.888	-2.557	6.697
	Cleanliness	4.60	0.877	-2.742	7.670
WOM Intention					
	How likely is it that you will recommend city visited as a tourist destination to others?	6.86	2.620	-0.589	-0.476
Revisit Intention					
	How likely is it that you will visit this city again within the next three years?	5.00	3.062	0.108	-1.090
Repeat Visitation Rate					
	Including this trip, I have made ___ trips to this city	1.48	1.974	8.190	94.037
Distance					
	LogDist	3.50	0.424	0.051	-1.609

The model estimates 62.4% of the variance for overall satisfaction with an f^2 effect size of 1.835, demonstrating the large effect of the exogenous construct of attribute satisfaction on overall satisfaction. The R^2 for overall satisfaction is close to the values reported by Chung and Petrick (2013) and Kozak and Rimmington (2000). The R^2 value for RI is 11%, which is relatively low but comparable with the results reported by Um et al. (2006) and Murphy et al. (2000), which range from 8%-14%. This low value is expected, due to the model not including additional predictors such as image and motivation and a competing model with different predictors not being the present study's focus. The f^2 effect sizes for repeat visitation rate, overall satisfaction, and distance on RI are 0.023, 0.039, and 0.066, respectively, which are all small. However, the impact of distance is again relatively larger than that of overall satisfaction and repeat visitation rate. Finally, the R^2 value for WOM intention is larger than that for RI, but still low at 17.2%. This is not of concern for the reasons previously stated regarding RI. Overall satisfaction has a medium effect on WOM intention, with an f^2 effect size of 0.208, which is consistent with the idea that overall satisfaction plays a larger role in predicting WOM intention than RI (Chang et al., 2016).

Table 3. *Measurement Model Statistics for The First Wave (July-December).*

Construct	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR	a
Attribute Satisfaction			0.544	0.915	0.915
	Shopping	0.766			
	Sightseeing Tours	0.716			
	Prices	0.713			
	Tourist Attractions	0.721			
	Restaurants and Food	0.732			
	Transportation	0.785			
	Hospitality	0.760			
	Safety	0.713			
	Cleanliness	0.728			

Table 4. *Nomological Validity For The First Wave (July-December).*

	AS	LogDist	OS	RVR	WI	RI
AS	1					
LogDist	0.188**	1				
OS	0.805**	0.227**	1			
RVR	0.014	-0.173**	-0.033	1		
WI	0.386**	0.251**	0.415**	0.094**	1	
RI	0.12*	-0.234**	0.128**	0.182**	0.482**	1

Significance level: * = .05, **=.01

Table 5. *Path Coefficients for The Structural Model for The First Wave (July-December).*

Hypotheses	Structural Relationships	Path Coefficients	Sample mean	T statistics	P values	95% Confidence Intervals
H1	AS->OS	0.81	0.80	37.04	0.000	(0.759, 0.844)
H2	OS->RI	0.19	0.19	4.27	0.000	(0.104, 0.277)
H3	RVR->RI	0.15	0.15	4.46	0.000	(0.093, 0.219)
H4	LogDist->RI	-0.25	-0.25	6.26	0.000	(-0.328, -0.170)
H5	OS->WI	0.42	0.42	9.24	0.000	(0.327, 0.503)

The studentized residuals and leverage plots were examined for outliers, identifying one potentially influential case; however, the results were not significantly different after its removal. The post hoc minimum sample size was also checked to confirm that the sample size met the requirement for a 5% significance level and 90% power for all relationships tested. Finally, the path coefficient confidence intervals were recalculated using the holdout dataset for split-sample validation. All path coefficients were significant

($p < 0.001$), and coefficients from the estimation and holdout datasets did not significantly differ from one another, thus indicating robustness.

For the data analysis in the second wave, the approach outlined in the methodology was followed by excluding the latent variable of attribute satisfaction from the model due to the smaller data set and the primary focus on testing the relationship between intention and behavior. Only 11.7% of the respondents returned to the cities they had visited in 2018, but 96.1% discussed their visit with others. The HTMT method with a bootstrap of 5,000 subsamples resulted in values less than 0.420, which is statistically significantly different from a value of 1. Table 6 shows overall satisfaction to correlate with intention and behavior, except for RI, for which the correlation is not statistically significant. Furthermore, WOM intention is observed to correlate with WOM valence and WOM behavior (WB). Finally, RI is associated with revisit behavior (RB). These results support the discriminant and nomological validity.

Table 6. *Latent Variable Score Correlations for The Second Wave.*

	LogDist	OS	RVR	WB	WI	RB	RI	WV
LogDist	1.00							
OS	0.273	1.00						
RVR	0.013	0.112**	1.00					
WB	0.076	0.230*	-0.103	1.00				
WI	0.081	0.420**	0.041	0.305**	1.00			
RB	0.024	0.183**	0.093	0.142	0.181**	1.00		
RI	-0.031	0.147	-0.043	0.114	0.348**	0.379**	1.00	
WV	0.080	0.077	0.103**	0.341**	0.291*	0.083	0.009	1.00

Significance level: * = .05, **=.01

Collinearity is also not a concern for the second wave, as all VIF values are less than 3. The results derived from a 5,000-subsample bootstrap (see Table 7) lend support to Hypotheses 6-8. The post-hoc minimum sample size required for a 5% significance level and 80% power is less than 77 for Rows 1-4 in Table 7. Therefore, only these four relationships can be interpreted, which forms a limitation for this study. As a result, intention is a statistically significant antecedent of both behaviors ($p < 0.01$). Furthermore, WOM intention is a potential precursor to WOM valence ($p = 0.05$); however, caution should be exercised as the p value equals 5%.

Table 7. *The Structural Model Path Coefficients for The Second Wave.*

Hypotheses	Structural Relationships	Path Coefficients	Sample mean	T statistics	P values	95% Confidence Intervals
H6	RI->RB	0.379	0.368	4.022	0	(0.161, 0.529)
H7	WI->WB	0.305	0.3	3.467	0.001	(0.104, 0.457)
H8	WI-> WV	0.291	0.29	1.964	0.05	(0.005, 0.576)
	OS->WI	0.42	0.425	4.849	0	(0.249, 0.585)
	OS->RI	0.175	0.178	1.557	0.119	(-0.043, 0.397)
	LogDist->RI	-0.078	-0.047	0.49	0.624	(-0.347, 0.264)
	RVR->RI	-0.062	0.015	0.344	0.731	(-0.228, 0.391)

Table 8 shows small effect sizes for WOM intention and medium effect sizes for RI and overall satisfaction. All predictors are statistically significant, with low predictive ability. However, the 14.4% R^2 value obtained for revisit behavior in this study is much larger than those in previous studies for domestic tourists, which were reported as 4.8% in China and 7% in the USA (Hsu & Huang, 2012; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007). Lastly, the absence of influential outliers is confirmed by examining residuals versus leverage plots.

Table 8. *R^2 and Effect Sizes For The Second Wave*

Predictor Construct	Endogenous Constructs WB	WI	RB	WV
OS		0.215		
WI	0.102			0.093
RI			0.168	
R^2	0.093	0.177	0.144	0.085

Conclusions and Implications

A conspicuous absence of empirical studies examining the intention-behavior relationship is found in the context of inbound tourism. While researchers and DMOs anticipate revisit behavior through revisit intention (RI) and intention to recommend (Chi & Qu, 2008; Hallak et al., 2018), empirical investigations of this relationship have been largely nonexistent. Moreover, despite the popularity of Japanese destinations among cruise goers, the research addressing cruise tourist behavior in Asia remains limited. Given this context, this study pioneers a two-wave exploration into the suitability of RI and WOM intention as surrogates for reported behaviors among cruise goers. This study also advances the theoretical understanding of tourist behavior in Japan by elucidating how intentions, behaviors, and destination attributes interplay within the complex tourism landscape via eight hypotheses. Building upon past research regarding the link between intention and revisit in domestic tourism, three major conclusions have emerged in the context of inbound cruise tourism.

The primary conclusion is that cruise goers' intentions correlate with self-reported behaviors for revisits and WOM. Although the non-experimental design prevents causal inferences, the empirical study supports the antecedent role of intentions, allowing for a more solid assessment of the proxy role of intention regarding behavior in inbound tourism. However, despite their significant role, intentions explain 14.4% and 9.3% of the variance observed in the respective revisit and WOM behaviors, which surpasses the explanatory powers observed of 4.8% in China and 7% in the USA. The larger values in this study may stem from the extended timeframe, the heterogeneous sample, or the travel motivation differences between cruise goers, sport tourists, and the general tourist population. The low explanatory power of intention observed in tourism studies is partly due to temporal factors. Ajzen (1985) stated that the time that elapses between the stated intention and the manifested behavior is inversely proportional to the accuracy of the prediction. Hence, when predicting tourist behavior, intention may have a limited role. Moreover, revisiting a destination may also be construed as a goal. Therefore, as Sheppard et al. (1988) noted, Fishbein and Ajzen's (1980) theory of reasoned action (TRA) performs inferiorly regarding goal prediction. In TRA and TPB studies, R^2 values for behavior range from 0.19-0.38 (Sutton, 2006). All three studies on tourism that have investigated the antecedent role of intention, including the present study, have reported R^2 values less than 0.15 (Hsu & Huang, 2012; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007). Therefore, difficulty is had in arguing intention to be useful as a standalone proxy for tourist behavior (Sutton, 2006). Consequently, tourism professionals are recommended to use context-specific constructs in conjunction with intention to serve as a proxy. The predictive power of intention on behavior regarding WOM is noteworthily lower than that for RI, thus further exploration of WOM intention's proxy role on behavior is required.

The second salient point concerns the relative role of distance in predicting revisit intentions compared to overall satisfaction and repeat visitation rates. Previous research has been limited to single-city cross-sectional studies and been unable to fully capture temporal effects across multiple destinations. The present study is distinctive in that it has relied on year-long, multi-city primary data for inbound cruise goers, corroborating that however satisfied cruise goers are, they are less likely to revisit the greater the distance they need to travel. This result behooves tourism authorities to subsegment potential visitors based on proximity to the destinations and repeat visitation rates when developing campaigns to incentivize revisits. This conclusion has been substantiated by split-sample validation and is importantly not limited to a single city or season. Therefore, the findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of the spatial factors regarding tourist behavior beyond the confines of single-city analyses by employing a more comprehensive year-long, multi-city dataset.

The third conclusion pertains to cruise goers' satisfaction with destination attributes, expanding upon the influential characteristics observed elsewhere. Notably, safety and prices have been key in both this study and others conducted in Hawaii, Europe, and South America (Satta et al., 2015; Alegre & Cladera, 2006; Silvestre et al., 2008; Brida et al., 2012; Ozturk & Gogtas, 2016). The subsequent implication is that surveys targeting cruise goers should gauge satisfaction with four essential factors: destination attractiveness, transportation, prices, and tourist attractions and facilities. These are also vital for land-based visitors; however, the services provided during tours and the quality of transportation infrastructure are more critical for cruise goers who evaluate destinations based on their limited exposure. Furthermore, stakeholders should heed these factors when developing coordinated strategies to elevate cruise goers' experiences and to foster RIs. These strategies should focus on diversifying shopping options, improving sightseeing tours, offering competitive pricing, highlighting tourist attractions, ensuring culinary excellence, enhancing transportation infrastructure, prioritizing hospitality and safety measures, and maintaining cleanliness. For example, DMOs can collaborate with tech companies to create augmented reality guides for passengers to enhance their exploration of attractions by providing informative and engaging digital content and elevating their engagement and satisfaction with the destination.

Moreover, despite the high satisfaction with destination attributes, some dissatisfaction exists with the shopping environment, short visit durations, and information about the visited sites (see Table 3). As noted above, collaboration between port bureaus and cruise operators can address this by enhancing the information about attractions and shopping options near the terminals. Additionally, extending the time ships spend at a port could encourage passengers to spend more time exploring the destination. The responses to the open-ended questions indicate that discounted airfares and accommodation, easily accessible public transport information in English, and the availability of ride-hailing companies that can be booked in English may increase the likelihood of revisits. Thus, port authorities and the Japan Tourism Agency (JTA) are recommended to collaborate further to improve the aspects noted in Table 3. For instance, regarding the price attribute, targeted discounts offered to potential inbound visitors could incentivize revisits to less well-known destinations in Japan. During the pandemic, JTA implemented the Go to Travel Campaign, which covered a portion of domestic tourists' expenses (Kelleher, 2020). When considering the role of distance decay, designing similar city-specific campaigns that offer inbound visitors discounted bundled packages (e.g., air, train, hotel, sightseeing, and food) is recommended. These could target inbound visitors who travel greater distances than the average visitor, who traverses approximately 5,313 km to visit Japan. Doing so could increase revisits to the cities noted in this study.

Limitations and Future Research Opportunities

While this study provides novel insights, recognizing the potential limitations in generalizing findings across diverse contexts within cruise tourism is important. A critical assessment is warranted for three main facets of the study. First, the low response rate among residents of China during the second wave prevented the generalization of results and limited the analysis to 77 valid responses. Although small, this dataset was deemed sufficient for a post-hoc power analysis. By comparison, the two-wave study by Naylor and Kleiser (2000) based its conclusions on 97 valid responses. However, residents of China being excluded from the second wave does not invalidate the results, analysis, or conclusions drawn for the first wave or the remaining subset of visitors for the second wave. Securing higher response rates in future research could provide a more robust interpretation of all paths in the structural model.

Second, although the passengers were asked about their travel intentions either via a cruise or land-based trip for the three years following the first wave in 2018, all visitors on average had 21.5 months to revisit the destinations before pandemic-related travel restrictions took effect. Given that the intention to travel's predictive power for actual travel decreases over time, this time horizon is sufficient for capturing revisits by loyal visitors. It is also much longer than the three-month, six-month, and one-year timeframes previous studies had adopted. Nonetheless, future studies may explore extending this period to examine the actualization of intentions over longer periods.

The third limitation lies in the use of single-item scales in the omnibus surveys. Although all scales were drawn from the literature and validated through t-tests, replicating results with multiple-item scales in future studies is recommended. Furthermore, not all findings may be extrapolated to the broader cruise market, thus necessitating cross-validation through two-wave studies encompassing cruise goers visiting other coastal cities. Lastly, passengers surveyed in the first wave were those who had time to participate. Addressing these challenges and exploring alternative surrogate measures for repeat visitation and WOM behaviors represent potential future research areas.

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